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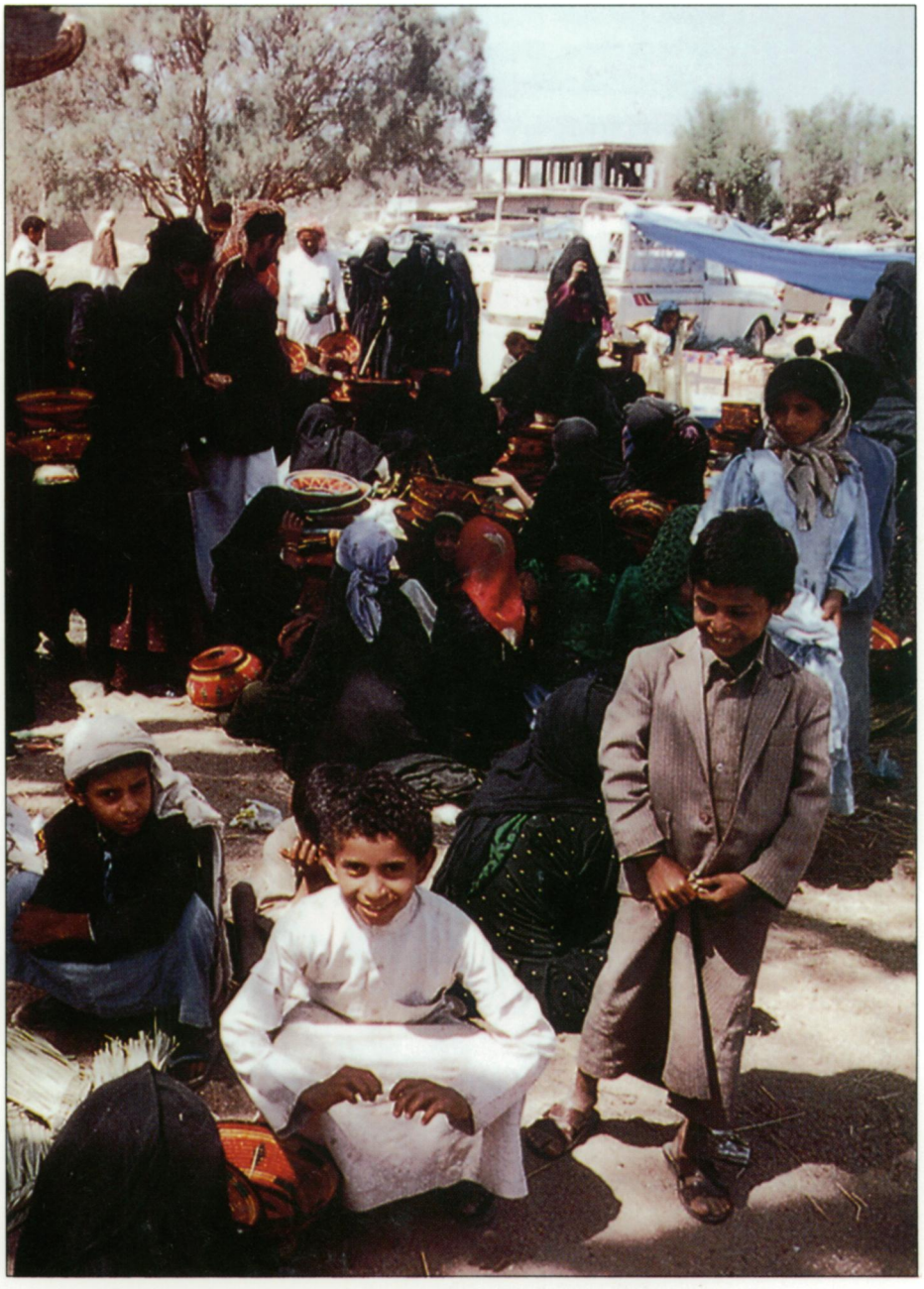

Articulated Meanings: Studies in Gender and the Politics of Culture / Sens et cohérence : études sur le vécu social des sexes et la politique de la culture

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Articulated Meanings: Studies in Gender and the Politics of Culture / Sens et cohérence : études sur le vécu social des sexes et la politique de la culture

Guest Editor: Pauline McKenzie Aucoin

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Cover

Women selling baskets in the market, Sa'ada, Suq al-Tahl, Republic of Yemen. Photo: Vaidila Banelis, July 1990.

Articulated Meanings: Studies in Gender and the Politics of Culture—Introduction

Pauline McKenzie Aucoin *University of Toronto*

La version français de cette introduction commence à la page 7.

> Rather than assume we understand, we search for meaning and for the context of its construction.
>
> — Couillard, 1996: 71

Over the past decade, the politics of culture has emerged as one of the most prominent fields of interest within social anthropology, embracing such issues as the politics of representation and self-representation (Conklin, 1997), cultural production and the politics of meaning (Williams, 1991), identity politics (Aretxaga, 1997; Handler, 1988), cultural authenticity (Kapac, 1998; Linnekin, 1992) and the invention of tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983; Wagner, 1981). Its rise in prominence has parallelled anthropology's retheorizing of the culture concept, a rethinking prompted in part by criticism of ethnography's focus on the homogeneous, ahistorical and undifferentiated aspects of cultures to the neglect of their "contested, temporal and emergent" (Clifford, 1986: 19) dimensions. This neglect has resulted, some have argued, in the construction of "dangerous fictions" (Abu-Lughod, 1993: 3): representations of cultures as bounded, timeless, unified entities, a view which has effected the "erasure" of both "time and conflict" (1993: 9) from certain ethnographic understandings.

This theoretical reflection in anthropology has coincided with an expanding discourse on culture and power within the social sciences, a discourse that is evident in the work of Raymond Williams (1983), Pierre Bourdieu (1977) and most recently Eric Wolf (1999), in writings on hegemony, and in the nascent field of cultural studies.[1] Central to this discourse is the argument that culture, particularly in complex societies, is not simply a given; but rather it is a process and in some cases a political resource—a shifting nexus of meanings whose control may be central to the continuance of any group's "claims to power over society" (Wolf, 1999: 290). A rising interest in minority/subaltern studies (of which feminist anthro-

pology has been a part) and a growing concern for the unempowered—those who may not "subscribe" to dominant views of culture—has led to recognition that the production, representation and valorization—or alternately contestation—of culture involves deeply political processes, and that access to the forums wherein dominant culture is formulated varies with one's social status.

While much research into cultural production has proceeded at the community level (be it ethnic, indigenous or national), the papers in this volume examine these issues as they relate to gender.[2] The cultural construction of gender has been a central issue in feminist anthropology since Ortner and Whitehead (1981) argued for a greater appreciation of how social meanings with respect to gender and sexuality vary cross-culturally. What has changed in feminist anthropology since their important volume appeared, however, is that culture has been problematized: not content to take culture or culturally defined notions of gender as a given, we want to understand how certain definitions of genders and gender roles have come about. How and by whom have these cultural constructions been negotiated or formulated? What degree of unanimity exists? What differences are there within gender groups that are internally differentiated by class, age, ethnicity or race, and how might gender constructs be contested within socially diverse societies? In short, is there a dynamic to be understood in the social construction of gender that can be appreciated through a "feminist cultural analysis" (Yanagisako and Delaney, 1995: 14)?

For feminist anthropologists, a heightened awareness of the politics of cultural production has long been tied to a recognition that what we do as ethnographers—the recording of cultures and gender as part of those cultures—has engaged us epistemologically in a politics of representation: insisting on understandings of other cultures that are accurate and inclusive with respect to women. As Diane Bell (1992: 30) has explained regarding her position as a feminist ethnographer, "... it is worth talking to women about their lives. Woman's knowledge I take to be grounded in her experience, practice, feeling, thinking and being. By privileging woman as knower, man is ethnographically decentred, and this is a profoundly political act."[3] Within this context, what then is feminist anthropology if not a politics of culture?[4]

The questions raised by the problematization of culture with respect to gender allow us to explore how various social factors intersect in the negotiation and portrayal of culture and collective identity and, at the intra-cultural level, how identity and perspective within gender groups vary as members are positioned differently within society. In these articles, we similarly examine issues relating to the construction and contestation of meaning, and this concern becomes the lens through which we explore the relationship between gender, culture and anthropology. Some of the specific issues regarding gender and the politics of culture that we address in these articles include: what social or political forums are involved in struggles over constructions of truth and value that dictate gender ideals and roles? How are notions of tradition employed as symbols of cultural meaning in debates regarding gender? What role do women as a status group play in cultural production, either as consumers of certain versions of reality or generators of alternative models? How are women implicated in activities that construct, naturalize or reproduce dominant ideologies or conversely engaged in struggles that contest and resist these? And finally, how are Western feminist anthropologists multiply engaged in local and Western discourses regarding gender and cultural politics?

The articles contributed to this volume speak to each other in varying ways. The papers by Petra Rethmann and Anne Meneley explore how various discourses of dominance with respect to gender intersect with racial, ethnic and class distinctions to form complex ideologies of identity and stratification. Claudie Gosselin's analysis of the politics of global feminist understandings and local Malian meanings attached to female circumcision intersects with Meneley's examination of local meanings of this practice as it relates to gender and status in the Middle East. And narrative and engendered subjectivity is treated in both Rethmann's and my (Aucoin's) articles: Rethmann explores subjectivity on an individual level, through the medium of one Koriak woman's life story, while I discuss collective subjectivity as it is formulated and contested through the medium of women's myths in Fiji. In all of these articles, we attempt to articulate the cultural meanings of gender and gender practices in various ethnographic contexts while illustrating how gender articulates with other facets of women's identities.

In my analysis of myths circulated among women in western Fiji, I explore the potential of myth as a forum for the contestation of hegemonic constructions of gender and status. Through their myths, women engage in a symbolic politics that transforms signs of male domination into their opposite: male supernatural figures are depicted as powerless; an order of space that privileges men is inverted; and, a system of knowledge that excludes women is challenged. By contravening prevail-

ing meanings, these myths challenge the symbolic dominance of men within this society's order of gender, space and knowledge. In so doing, myths form part of a larger insubordinate discourse through which women debunk reigning constructions of truth regarding gender. In this context, myth represents a medium through which a politics of representation is played out between women and men.

For the Koriak of Kamchatka, a group of recently settled reindeer herders, Rethmann explains how dominant Russian categories of race and a "rhetoric of primitivity" pit pejorative notions of "wildness and ignorance" against Russian self-conceptions of superiority and modernity. These notions for Koriak women are coupled with a Russian-centred gender hierarchy that embraces ideals of femininity, domesticity and morality. Responses to discrimination are traced by Rethmann in her sympathetic account of the life of one Koriak woman who, while struggling against condemnation and poverty, nonetheless attempts to construct a more positive self-identity.

In order to better understand the cultural politics underlying recent politically charged debates over female circumcision, Claudie Gosselin analyzes the various cultural meanings that these practices carry for Western feminists, anthropologists and local practitioners in Mali, West Africa. As she explains, international debates between Western and non-Western commentators have set cultural rights against human rights, Western feminism against anti-colonialism, cultural relativism against ethnocentrism and modernization and medicalization against tradition. Her research into factors contributing to the failure of campaigns for the eradication of this practice in Mali reveals that local positions for or against this practice, although seemingly similar to those held in the West, may be founded upon altogether different political and religious premises. The maelstrom of meanings surrounding these practices serves to remind us that global homogeneity for women in terms of both gender identity and a shared understanding of bodies as sites of cultural practice cannot always be assumed.

Anne Meneley's article examines the character of class and gender hierarchies among Muslim women in Zabid, Republic of Yemen. Among these women, hegemonic ideals concerning "appropriate behaviour, piety, morality and personhood" form the basis of a system of distinction that separates elite women from women of the servant class, the *akhdam*. In this politics of propriety and emotion, the "moral superiority" of the elite is used to legitimize status differences between these women. Differences in styles of consumption reinforce ideological distinctions as well for, through their access to surplus wealth, elite women are able to engage in competitive cycles of sociability and recognition that establish and maintain reputations relative to other members of the elite and that clearly exclude servant women. In complex societies such as this, where gender categories cross-cut different social strata, Meneley argues for a deeper understanding of how women may be controlled by dominant gender ideologies while simultaneously being implicated in their construction.

While addressing the theme of gender and culture through our work, we strive to reinvigorate some of the timeless concerns of social anthropology by rethinking some of its fundamental fields of interest: myth, conflict and dispute, gender hierarchy, narrative, the politics of meaning, the anthropology of the body, and personhood and the politics of emotion. Simultaneously, however, we also address current social issues such as identity politics, cultural relativism and human rights, race, class and gender, body politics and resistance to dominant ideologies of gender. It is hoped that the issues raised by this collection will establish gender as a key factor to be accounted for in studies of cultural politics in anthropology.

Notes

1 The field of cultural studies has focussed primarily on class-based societies, and within these, on culture as it is experienced by those who are not economically privileged or of the social or political elite (ethnic, racial or social subcultures, women, gays, youth, the working class). See especially de Certeau (1988), Hall and Jefferson (1976), Stanley (1990), Stallybrass and White (1986), Willis (1977). During (1993) and Hebdige (1979) provide overviews of contributions to this field.

2 Papers contributed to this volume by Anne Meneley, Petra Rethmann and Pauline Aucoin have developed out of the colloquium "Gender, Sexuality and the Politics of Culture" organized for the 1998 Canadian Anthropology Society Annual Meetings held in Toronto, Ontario. We thank Richard Lee for graciously accommodating our session, and are grateful to Micaela di Leonardo for the suggestions and comments on these papers she provided at this time as discussant for this session. I also thank Glynis George for discussions of this topic as it relates to feminist anthropology.

3 See also Dorothy Smith (1990) on feminist sociology.

4 This comes with a caution against the construction of "women's cultures" that engage in a cultural essentialism differing little from that employed elsewhere (di Leonardo, 1991).

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Sens et cohérence : études sur le vécu social des sexes et la politique de la culture – Introduction

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Traduction de Anne-Catherine Kennedy et Jean Lapointe

> Au lieu d'assumer que nous comprenons, nous cherchons le sens et le contexte de sa construction.
>
> — Couillard, 1996 : 71

Au cours de la dernière décennie, la politique de la culture est apparue comme un des domaines d'intérêt proéminent en anthropologie sociale. Elle aborde des questions telles la politique de la représentation et de la représentation de soi (Conklin, 1997), la production culturelle et la politique du sens (Williams, 1991), la politique de l'identité (Aretxaga, 1997; Handler, 1988), l'authenticité culturelle (Kapac, 1998; Linnekin, 1992) et l'invention de la tradition (Hobsbawn et Ranger, 1983; Wagner, 1981). Son ascension à la proéminence s'est faite parallèlement à la rethéorisation par l'anthropologie du concept de culture, une remise en question provoquée en partie par la critique du «focus» de l'ethnographie traditionnelle sur les aspects homogènes, intemporels et indifférenciés de la culture au détriment des dimensions de «contestation, de temporalité et d'émergence» (Clifford, 1986 : 19) inhérentes aux cultures humaines. Cette carence a conduit, selon certains, à la construction de «fictions dangereuses» (Abu Lughod, 1993 : 3) : des représentations des cultures comme des entités unifiées, intemporelles et isolées les unes des autres. Le résultat d'un tel point de vue est l'élimination «du temps et du conflit» (1993 : 9) de l'interprétation de certaines ethnographies.

Cette réflexion théorique en anthropologie coïncide avec un discours de plus en plus présent sur la culture et le pouvoir dans les sciences sociales, un discours évident dans les oeuvres de Raymond Williams (1983), Pierre Bourdieu (1977) et plus récemment Eric Wolf (1999), dans les écrits sur l'hégémonie et dans le nouveau domaine des études culturelles[1]. Central à ce discours est l'argument que la culture, plus particulièrement dans les sociétés complexes, n'est pas une réalité statique mais qu'elle constitue plutôt un processus et, dans certains cas, une ressource politique – un noyau de sens changeants dont le contrôle peut être indispensable au maintien des «prétentions au pouvoir sur la société» par certains groupes (Wolf,

1999 : 290). Un intérêt croissant dans les études des minorités ou des groupes subalternes (dont les anthropologues féministes font partie) et un soucis croissant pour ceux qui sont privés de pouvoir (ceux qui ne souscriraient pas nécéssairement aux croyances dominantes d'une culture) ont abouti à la constatation que la production, la représentation et la mise en valeur – de même que la contestation – d'une culture implique des processus politiques adéquats, et que l'accès aux débats où la culture dominante est élaborée varie selon le statut social.

Alors que nombre de recherches sur la production culturelle ont été réalisées au niveau des communautés (ethniques, indigènes ou nationales), les travaux de ce volume explorent ces questions du point de vue du vécu social des sexes[2]. L'élaboration culturelle du vécu social des sexes représente une question centrale en anthropologie féministe depuis que Ortner et Whitehead (1981) ont réclamé une attention plus grande à la variation interculturelle des significations sociales accordées au vécu social des sexes et à la sexualité. Ce qui a changé en anthropologie féministe depuis la parution de leur ouvrage, c'est que le concept de culture a été problématisé : nous n'acceptons plus de considérer les catégories sexuelles comme données d'avance, nous voulons comprendre comment les définitions de rôles sexuels ont été élaborées. Comment et par qui ces constructions culturelles ont-elles été négociées et formulées? Quel degré d'unanimité existe-t-il? À l'intérieur des groups définis par l'appartenance sexuelle, quelles différences peut-on signaler sur la base des classes sociales, de l'âge, de l'origines ethnique ou raciale et comment les distinctions sur la base du sexe peuvent-elles être contestées dans les sociétés diversifiées au niveau social? Bref, existe-t-il une dynamique dans la construction sociale des catégories sexuelles qui puisse être corroborée par une «analyse culturelle féministe» (Yanagisako et Delaney, 1995 : 14)?

Pour les anthropologues féministes, une conscience aiguë de la politique de production culturelle a depuis longtemps été liée à une reconnaissance que ce que nous faisons comme ethnographes – décrire les cultures et les rôles sexuels comme partie de ces cultures – nous a amenés à nous engager au plan épistémologique dans une politique de représentation : insister sur une compréhension des autres cultures qui soit adéquate et qui tienne compte des expériences des femmes. Diane Bell (1992 : 30) a exposé sa position comme ethnographe féministe « . . . il est important de parler aux femmes de leur vie. Je considère que le savoir de la femme est fondé dans son expérience, sa pratique, ses émotions, sa pensée et son être. En privilégiant la femme comme possédant un savoir, le mâle est déplacé du centre de l'univers ethnographique, ce qui constitue un acte profondément politique»[3]. Dans ce contexte, que peut être l'anthropologie féministe sinon une politique de la culture?[4]

Les questions soulevées par la prolématisation de la culture quant au vécu social des sexes nous permettent d'explorer comment des facteurs sociaux variés influencent la négociation et la représentation de la culture et de l'identité collective et elles nous permettent d'examiner, au niveau intra-culturel, comment l'identité et le point de vue à l'intérieur des groupes définis par le sexe varient selon la position sociale de leurs membres. Dans ce volume nous examinons les questions reliées à la construction et à la contestation des significations et c'est à travers ce prisme que nous abordons les relations entre les sexes, la culture et l'anthropologie. Parmi les questions que nous examinons, nous pouvons citer les suivantes : quels forums sociaux ou politiques sont impliqués dans les luttes la construction des notions et des valeurs qui déterminent les modèles et les rôles des sexes? Comment les notions de la tradition sont-elles employées comme symboles culturels dans les débats sur les positions respectives des sexes? Quel rôle les femmes, comme groupe de statut, jouent-elles dans la production culturelle, soit en tant que consommatrices de certaines versions de la réalité soit en tant que productrices de modèles alternatifs? Comment les femmes sont-elles engagées dans des activités qui appuient des idéologies dominantes ou au contraire comment sont-elles engagées dans des luttes contre ces idéologies? Finalement, comment les anthropologues féministes de l'Occident sont-elles engagées en Occident et ailleurs dans des discours qui concernent le vécu social des sexes et la politique culturelle?

Les articles de ce volume dialoguent entre eux de différentes façons. Ceux de Petra Rethmann et Anne Meneley explorent comment les divers discours de domination quant au vécu social des sexes s'allient aux distinctions raciales, ethniques et économico-politiques pour former des idéologies complexes d'identité et de stratification sociale. L'article de Claudie Gosselin, qui traite de la politique féministe globale et la signification locale de la circoncision féminine au Mali, recoupe les recherches de Meneley sur la signification de cette pratique en ce qui concerne le statut social des femmes au Moyen Orient. Rethmann et moi-même (Aucoin) examinons les récits de vie et la subjectivité qu'ils manifestent : tandis que Rethmann explore les notions de subjectivité au niveau individuel au moyen de l'histoire de vie d'une femme Koriak, j'examine les notions de subjectivité collective telles que formulées et contestées à travers les mythes des femmes fidjiennes. Dans tous ces articles nous tentons de trouver la signification culturelle du vécu social des sexes dans plusieurs contextes ethno-

graphiques tout en démontrant l'interaction entre le genre et les autres aspects de l'identité des femmes.

Dans mon analyse des mythes qui circulent parmi les femmes dans l'ouest fidjien, j'explore le pouvoir des mythes comme moyen de contester les constructions hégémoniques sur la position des sexes et le statut social. Les femmes utilisent leurs mythes dans le but d'inverser de façon symbolique le sens des signes de la domination masculine. Les figures surnaturelles masculines sont représentées comme des êtres dépourvus de pouvoir: un ordre spatial qui privilégie les hommes est inversé et un système de savoir qui exclut les femmes est contesté. En allant à l'encontre des significations admises, ces mythes mettent en question la dominance symbolique des hommes dans l'organisation des rapports de sexe, de l'espace et du savoir de cette société. De cette manières les mythes font partie d'un discours d'insubordination dans lequel les femmes démystifient les notions hégémoniques de la réalité concernant le genre. Dans ce contexte les mythes représentent un véhicule dans lequel un jeu sur la politique de la représentation se déroule entre les femmes et les hommes.

Pour les Koriaks de Kamchatka, un groupe de gardiens de troupeau de rennes récemment sédentarisé, Rethmann explique comment les conceptions dominantes des Russes sur la race et leur «rhétorique de primitivité» opposent une conception préjudiciable de la «sauvagerie et de l'ignorance» des Koriaks à leur propre prétention à la supériorité et à la modernité. Ces idées sont associées chez les femmes Koriak à une hiérarchie des sexes basée sur le monde russe qui définit des idéaux de féminité, de domesticité et de moralité. Les réactions des femmes contre ce type de discrimination sont décrites par Rethmann dans son récit sympathique de la vie d'une femme Koriak, qui face à la réprobation et la pauvreté, tente néanmoins de construire une image positive d'elle-même.

Afin de mieux comprendre la politique culturelle sous-jacente aux débats virulents concernant l'excision, Claudie Gosselin analyse les diverses significations culturelles que cette pratique représente pour les féministes occidentales, les anthropologues et les praticiennes au Mali (en Afrique de l'Ouest). Selon Gosselin, les débats internationaux entre les protagonistes occidentaux et non-occidentaux ont fait appel aux droits culturels contre les droits humains, au féminisme occidental contre l'anti-colonialisme, à la relativité culturelle contre l'ethnocentrisme, et finalement, à la modernisation/médecine scientifique contre la tradition. Ses études sur les facteurs contribuant à l'échec des campagnes contre l'excision au Mali révèlent que les opinions locales pour ou contre cette pratique, quoique apparemment semblables à celles des occidentaux, seraient fondées sur des principes politiques et religieux radicalement différents. Les diverses significations entourant cette pratique nous rappellent que nous ne pouvons présumer de l'homogénéité globale des femmes ni en ce qui concerne leur identité ni au plan de la perception de leur corp comme lieu de pratiques culturelles.

L'article de Anne Meneley examine la position hiérarchique des femmes Musulmanes à Zabid, en République du Yemen. Parmi ces femmes, les modèles hégémoniques au sujet des «comportements appropriés, de la piété, de la moralité et de la personnalité» forment la base d'un système de distinction qui sépare les femmes de l'élite des membres de la classes des domestiques, les *akhdam*. Dans cette politique des convenances et de l'émotivité, on se sert de la «supériorité morale» des femmes de l'élite pour légitimer les différences de statut social entre ces femmes. Les différences dans les modes de consommation renforcent aussi les distinctions idéologiques car, par leur accès à la richesse, les femmes de l'élite s'engagent dans des compétitions entre elles au plan de la sociabilité et de la notoriété, ce qui sert à établir et à maintenir les réputations de certaines femmes riches en relation à d'autres membres de l'élite, de même qu'à exclure les femmes domestiques. Dans les sociétés complexes, telles celle-ci, où la classification selon le genre recoupe d'autres strates sociales, Meneley plaide pour une compréhension plus profonde de la manière dont les femmes peuvent être contrôlées par les idéologies dominantes alors qu'elles sont elle-mêmes impliquées dans leur création.

En traitant du vécu social des sexes et de la culture, nous tentons de réactiver certaines des préoccupations intemporelles de l'anthropologie sociale en repensant certains de ses domaines d'intérêts fondamentaux, tels les mythes, les conflits et les disputes, le statut relié au sexe, les récits de vie, la politique de la signification, l'anthropologie du corps de même que la personnalité et la politique des émotions. Par contre, en même temps, nous examinons aussi des questions sociales telles la politique de l'identité, le relativisme culturel et les droits humains, les questions raciales, les classes sociales et les relations entre les sexes, la politique du corps, et la résistance aux idéologies dominantes sur le statut des sexes. Nous souhaitons que les questions soulevées par ce numéro établiront le vécu social des sexes comme un facteur essentiel dont il faut rendre compte dans les études de politique culturelle en anthropologie.

Notes

1 Les études culturelles se sont concentrées surtout sur les sociétés fondées sur les classes sociales et sur la culture

comme elle est vécue par ceux qui ne sont pas privélégiés au niveau économique ou par ceux qui ne sont pas membres des élites sociales ou politiques (sous-cultures ethniques, raciales, les femmes, les homosexuels, les jeunes, les classes ouvrières). Voir surtout : de Certeau (1988), Hall et Jefferson (1976), Stallybrass et White (1986), Stanley (1990), Willis (1977). During (1993) et Hebdige (1979) apportent des vues d'ensemble des contributions à cette discipline.

2 Les contributions à ce volume par Anne Meneley, Petra Rethmann et Pauline Aucoin proviennent du Colloque «Genre, sexualité et la politique de la culture», organisé en 1998 à Toronto, en Ontario pour la réunion annuelle de la Société canadienne d'anthropologie. Nous remercions Richard Lee pour son accueil chaleureux, et Micaela di Leonardo pour ses suggestions et commentaires en que commentatrice lors de cette session. Je remercie aussi Glynis George pour ses commentaires sur ce sujet en rapport avec l'anthropologie féministe.

3 Voir aussi Dorothy Smith (1990) sur la sociologie féministe

4 Ceci est accompagné d'une mise en garde contre la construction des «cultures des femmes» qui fait appel à un essentialisme culturel qui diffère de peu de celui qui est employé ailleurs (di Leonardo, 1991).

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Blinding the Snake: Women's Myths as Insubordinate Discourse in Western Fiji

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Abstract: How and in what cultural arenas do women contest, contradict or invert dominant ideologies of gender? This article examines how myths told by women in western Viti Levu, Fiji, represent a site of resistance (Abu-Lughod, 1990) wherein hegemonic understandings of gender are contested. This is achieved through a "transformation of signs" (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke and Roberts, 1978) that sees authoritative male figures depicted as powerless, challenges a spatial order that privileges men, and attacks an order of knowledge that declares vision the dominant mode for the apperception of knowledge. By contravening dominant meanings, these myths present a "rupture of representation" (Sharpe, 1995) that subverts reigning constructions of truth. I argue that anthropology's understanding of the legitimizing role of myth must be tempered by an appreciation of its potential as a "risk to the sense of signs" (Sahlins, 1987: 149).

Résumé: Comment et dans quels domaines culturels est-ce que les femmes contestent, contredisent ou inversent les idéologies liées à la condition sexuelle? Cet article examine comment les mythes racontés par les femmes de l'Ouest de Viti Levu, Fiji, représentent un site de résistance (Abu-Lughod, 1990) où les perceptions hégémoniques de la condition sexuelle sont contestées. Cette contestation s'accomplit par une «transformation de signes» (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke and Roberts, 1978) qui voit les figures d'autorité masculines dépeintes comme sans pouvoir, qui défie un ordre spatial qui privilégie les hommes et attaque un ordre de connaissance qui prend pour acquis le mode dominant de perception de la connaissance. En s'opposant aux significations dominantes, ces mythes présentent une «rupture de représentation» (Sharpe, 1995) qui subvertit les constructions reconnues de la vérité. Je soumets que la compréhension anthropologique du rôle légitimant du mythe doit être tempérée par une reconnaissance de son potentiel comme «risque du sens des signes» (Sahlins, 1987: 149)

> Copies that are not copies: But just when it looked so neat and tidy, the ground starts to shift.
>
> — Taussig, 1993: 115

Introduction

Over the past 20 years anthropologists have so radically altered their view of culture as an object of study that Jocelyn Linnekin has referred to this change as a paradigm shift within our discipline (1992: 250). Rather than regard culture simply as a consensual, homogeneous system of understanding, it has come to be seen as a socially constructed, sometimes socially imposed and much negotiated discourse. This shift in perspective is reflected in an increased concern with the political processes involved in the production, legitimization and representation of culture. Specifically, where are dominant meanings formulated within a culture? Who wields the power to control the processes of cultural production, elevating some versions and denouncing others?[1] How are cultural meanings inscribed and validated or alternatively debated and contested? What media constitute potential "sites of discourse" (Stallybrass and White, 1986: 194) for the circulation of ideas regarding the nature of society, being used either to forward "elite" models (Linnekin, 1992: 253) or generate contested renderings of social reality (Williams, 1991: 14)? And finally, how and why are certain versions silenced? Within this field several important issues have been raised concerning the politics of culture as it relates specifically to gender. What role do women as a status group within society play in cultural production, either as consumers of certain versions of reality or as "generators of signs" (Levi-Strauss, 1969: 496),[2] and how and in what cultural arenas do women contest, contradict or resist dominant ideologies of gender?

In this article I explore the politics of meaning as it relates to gender ideology by examining how myths told by women in Magodro, western Fiji, represent a site of resistance (Abu-Lughod, 1990: 324) wherein hegemonic

constructions of gender are challenged.[3] The understanding of the concept "gender ideology" that I apply here takes into account three factors: distinction (Bourdieu, 1984)—being the culturally informed discrimination of gender categories and their attending roles; value—where categories are assigned an equal or different social value as reflected in their status or prestige level (Ortner, 1990: 37); and cultural representation—which takes into account "socially dominant representations" (Moore, 1996: 178) of genders as well as the ability to produce subversive ones.

Myth consists of a specific type of narrative whose anthropological significance rests in their addressing the "central philosophical and intellectual concerns" of a culture (Cruikshank, 1983: 16). These issues include world origins, cosmology or the design of the supernatural and natural worlds, the lives of heroic and supernatural figures, and the nature of human social order, including gender differentiation. I identify the narratives of women related here as myths for the western Fijian word used to describe them, *na kwalekwale*,[4] is also the term used to refer to those tales about deities, heroic figures and supernatural beings that are told by men.[5]

In the Magodro district of Fiji, there is one genre of myth told amongst women that centres around the activities of a grandmother and her young granddaughter. These narratives recount the often-amusing adventures and conversations of this pair as they weave mats, prepare meals or work together in Grandmother's garden. In this paper, I analyze two myths of this genre that illustrate how these stories provide a site wherein a number of this society's primary hierarchizing structures are contravened: authoritative images of male power and superiority are challenged, a spatial order that symbolically elevates men above women is disregarded and a dominant system of knowledge that empowers men through the exclusion of women is attacked. In so doing these myths serve as one means by which women maintain a continuous critical commentary on social practice, one that challenges an order of meaning that both defines respective gender categories, rules and powers and sets the relative value of each as status groups within this hierarchical society.

For this analysis, I regard myth as a reservoir of social knowledge, in this case one that contests a hegemonic order of knowledge and truth that ideologically privileges men in Magodro society. Here I am concerned with the politics of knowledge, a field situated within the study of knowledge and power and drawing on the "political economy of cultural meanings." In Eickelman's terms this field examines "the reproduction and transmission of systems of meaning and how these shape and in turn are shaped by configurations of power and economic relations" within society (1979: 386). Studies of the political economy of knowledge (Keesing, 1981: 296) recognize that orders of meaning are an essential part of dominant ideologies and that the ability to define social reality—to bestow meaning, set values, and produce "authoritative knowledge" (Lambek, 1993) within a culture—is a crucial instrument of domination and its legitimization particularly, as Bourdieu (1994: 167) points out, where that definition of the social world is consistent with one's own interests. But while the production, legitimization and control of knowledge play a crucial role in sustaining practices of power in stratified societies, I argue that it is equally important to take account of how such knowledge is undermined: that is, how it may be delegitimized either through its contestation or through the production of alternative or counter-knowledges (Foucault, 1980; Ginzburg, 1982). In the course of my research in western Fiji, it was evident that while a culture of male dominance was continually being asserted and reproduced by men on several different fronts—through ritual, myth, kinship ideology, economic control and the use of force (see Aucoin, 1990), it was also apparent that in a variety of ways women participated in the denunciation of that order, a process that constitutes a truth-debunking as opposed to truth-building strategy and one that may potentially subvert reigning constructions of truth.

I argue further that rather than regard a culture's mythology as a set of narratives that simply justifies or legitimizes a shared view of social reality, it should be recognized as a potential arena for debate amongst members of a society and a possible "tactic of resistance" (Ong, 1987: 202) for some. Malinowski's (1931) view of myth as a "charter" that carries the power of "fixing custom" and strengthening tradition has long held sway in anthropology (see Cohen, 1969; Leach, 1982) and continues to prevail in current discussions that compare myth with ideology. Paul Friedrich (1989: 300), for example, describes myth as a way to "legitimate, validate or hallow customary ways of doing things," one that "often informs ideological tactics and parallels ideological superstructures." Yet others, such as Myron Aronoff (1980) and Maurice Bloch (1992), see its role not solely in terms of the orchestration of hegemonic meanings but also appreciate its potential as a site for contestation and the formulation of rival or "competing ideologies" (Aronoff, 1980: 25). Bloch (1992: 99) argues that myth and practice can no longer be viewed simply as being in a "direct relation" to one another for at times they may be

dialectically opposed. In contrast to organized practices such as ritual, myth may allow for a "freer speculation" (ibid.: 92) or forward a "potential challenge to order" (ibid.: 101), one that may be critical of existing relationships. Bloch proposes that "such speculation may hover in the background and occur quite frequently in the minds of [people]... but, nonetheless, only rarely achieve the public formulation which would make the recording of this type of thinking likely" (ibid.: 99). In this it may represent a "radical intellectual adventurousness" (ibid.: 100), thus constituting not merely a means of reality construction but also of contestation.

Any understanding of the significance of myth to society must take into account its role as a forum for representation and identity formation as well. As Yanagisako and Delaney (1995: 2) have noted, "we have ignored the extraordinary power of myth to provide identity to a community and meaning to individual lives"; in their words, myths "affect how people imagine themselves to be." Yet here the issue of contested subjectivities is raised: do members of specific social groups within society conceive of and portray themselves and each other similarly through mythology and/or accept their respective representations uncritically?

This view of myth raises issues of inclusion and narrative authority with respect to ethnographic practice and the politics of representation, particularly in gender-stratified societies. Whose narratives have been recorded and included in ethnographic texts and to what extent do they constitute a selective representation that presupposes a "unitary, authoritative narrative voice" (Linnekin, 1992: 251-252) as opposed to accommodating multiple renderings and differently positioned voices with respect to gender, rank, age, race or class? If presenting only an elite or master narrative about society, one that "articulates an interested perspective" (Lederman, 1990: 54), then how can they be approached as anything but ideological constructions? Analyzed in this light, the comparison of both women's and men's myths may reveal something of what Linnekin (1992: 252) has described as the "dialectical symbolic process" that is involved in the negotiation and representation of culture—and of genders as part of culture.[6] While presenting a greater challenge to ethnography, this accommodation would enable anthropology to better account for the role of myth in maintaining ideological dominance as well as explain how our webs of meaning come to "fall apart" (Williams, 1991: 14).

In the analysis below, I briefly outline the social organization and gender system of Magodro. This is followed by the texts of two myths and a description of the social contexts within which they are told, contexts which allow us to see them as part of a wider critical discourse conducted by women on male dominance. I then provide an ethnographic account of the hierarchical political order within which this commentary is situated. As my analysis of women's myths as contravening texts refers to these practices, an understanding of this system is essential to an appreciation of its contravention.

Gender Differentiation and Structures of Male Dominance

The political district or *yavusa* of Magodro lies in an interior, densely forested region of Ba Province, on the western side of Viti Levu, the largest of the Fiji Islands, and is distinguished as an area where the Western Fijian dialect is spoken (Biggs, 1948; Pawley and Sayaba, 1971). Western regions of Viti Levu have historically been characterized as less stratified in terms of chiefly rank than eastern areas (Spencer, 1941), though over the past century British colonial practice has strengthened hierarchy throughout Fiji by administering through "local chiefs."[7] Greater respect for age is expressed here however, and in his ethnographic comparison of eastern and western Viti Levu, Nayacakalou (1978: 58) has observed that in western areas women demonstrate "definitely more respect" toward men: they "retire more readily to the background when men are present" and are "less free and more respectful in expressing themselves in the presence of men."

There are six villages in Magodro, with the village housing the district chief's residence being the focus of my research. Adjacent to this village is a small government compound, Methodist church and elementary school. This village is divided into six clans, these being the primary landholding and controlling units within the larger district. Subsistence relies on shifting cultivation, hunting, fishing, domestication and the sale of cash crops such as bananas, yams and *yagona* or *kava* root, though some revenues are also realized from the rent of district lands nearer the coast for sugar cane production.

Clan membership is reckoned patrilineally, marriage is strictly clan exogamous and residence is virilocal. Primogeniture and birth order are important principles of seniority within patrilineal units, hierarchically ordering individuals within the family and ranking families within each clan. As well, seniority by age gives elders authority over juniors, though it should be noted that skill, personality and knowledge contribute to an individual's prominence within each village or clan. While patrilineal relationships are hierarchical, however, relations be-

tween cross-cousins, *na vei kila* (also referred to using the Bauan term *tavale*)[8] and hence between affines (for ideally all marriages take place between cross-cousins) are not. These relationships are marked by equality over rank, co-operation and sometimes competition rather than obedience and obligation, and informality over restraint and respectfulness.

In Magodro, men exercise authority over women. Men are said to be the owners, *na leya*, of land, clans, house sites and villages and hold and control leadership positions at the clan, village and district levels as well as within the family.[9] The authority of men stems from several sources and is asserted through a number of hierarchizing structures and practices. Being leaders at every societal level justifies extension of their "traditional authority" (Weber, 1958: 296) over family members, including wives. They control traditional religious practices that centre in the clan's men's houses, *na beto*, from which women are excluded, and they are physically more powerful than women and strength is valued and practised in this society (Aucoin, 1990).

Gender distinctions between men and women are perceived to be marked. Men, *na tagone* or *na turaga* (the latter also refers in a general sense to chiefs or to older men; see Hocart, 1913) are described as "*qwaqwa*," meaning strong, hard or resistant while women, *na lewa,* are said to be *malumaluma*, meaning soft, weak and easygoing (the term *malumaluma* also refers to one who is ill). Men's character is said to be illustrated in their bodies: in the strength of the right, *matau*, arm when throwing a hunting spear or fishing lance, of their shoulders on which they carry heavy loads, or in their fortitude as when they withstand the effects of vast amounts of the mildly narcotic drink *yagona*, or *kava*.[10] Women, *na lewa*, are associated with the left, *mauwi*, side, and with fluidity, *wai*. Their perceived weakness is said to be demonstrated by their need for baskets in which they carry loads on the midsection of their backs. They do not spear fish as men do, they collect them. Women's bodies are described as soft, as epitomized by the lower, *bale*, abdomen or stomach, *na wa*; they are likened to the pawpaw, *na wi*, a soft, juicy fruit that is said to be drunk rather than eaten. They are fluid or pliant, moving between clans or villages over the course of their lives. Men, who own and control the clan and village sites on which they reside throughout their lives, are considered rigid and likened to enduring, hard substances. They are associated with the sacred world inhabited by the ancestor spirits, *na nitu*, a world considered to be higher (*tu* or *i yate*) symbolically than the human world. As Asesela Ravuvu notes of Fiji in general, men are "the manifestation of the spirit and the link with the supernatural world" (1987: 340, n.6); "men and their ceremonial objects of value occupy the position between the supernatural and the temporal, whereas women and their valued objects are relegated to the temporal, secular sector" (1987: 263). In being connected with the profane, lower (*bale* or *i ra*) realm,[11] women are also associated with the earth: when pregnant, women are said to be *bukete*, their rounded bodies being similar to *na buke*, the raised mounds of earth in which the root crop taro, or *dalo*, is planted, both of which nurture life.

This system of gender differentiation is reflected in the language of Magodro, particularly the language of the body. The word *tu*, meaning to stand, be above or erect, or to be immortal or enduring (Capell, 1984: 239-240), is an important root which forms part of a complex of meaning that brings into association words referring to status, gender, power and space. It is found in the lexical terms *tui, turanga, nitu, tutua, vatu, tua*, all associated with maleness, where *tui* refers to the district chief (who is always male), *turaga* to chiefs in general or to older or married men, *na nitu* to ancestral spirits, *tutua* to senior patrilineal kin, *vatu* to stones or mountains and *tua* to bone, the latter two being perceived to be hard and strong and closely associated with masculinity. In contrast, terms tied to femaleness configure the roots *wa* and *wi* in a set of words that draws together the meanings soft, lower, weak/left and fluid: where *lewa* means women, *wa* the soft lower, *bale*, stomach area—with *bawale* meaning lower abdomen or genitals, a *tabu* or prohibited area, *wai* meaning water, *wi* a soft fruit, *waciwaci* a variety of watercress that grows only in wet locations—also significant in that the root *ci* means vagina, and *mauwi* meaning the left, less powerful side.

These meanings reverberate in the language of kin terms.[12] Relationships within the patrilineal clan are hierarchically ordered and are distinguished terminologically according to their senior or junior status, with status being determined by birth order or primogeniture. Those of senior patrilineal status, who are referred to as *tutua*, are figures of authority and power, kin to whom those of junior patrilineal status, known as *tacia*, demonstrate respect and deference.

Significant, linguistically, to this hierarchical system of gender is the embedding within the kin terms for senior and junior status (*tutua* and *tacia*) of words whose meanings are cognitively linked to male and female respectively. Within the term *tutua* are found two morphemes, *tu* and *tua*. As noted briefly above, *tu* translated loosely means to be above, immortal, or fixed in one place; while *tua* means bone—a hard, enduring sub-

stance associated with men. As well, metathesis or reconfiguration (see Leach, 1967, 1971)[13] of *tua* gives us *uta*, a *tabu* word meaning penis, an association that loads this kin term with connotations of masculinity; a second term (being the Bauan word) used in Magodro for penis, *uti*, is significant to gender differentiation as well for metathesis of this term gives us *tui*, the term of address for the district chief. In contrast, the kin word for those of junior status, *tacia*, contains within it the root *ci*, which refers to the vagina. The presence of this root in the kin term for junior status, *tacia,* brings notions of powerlessness and deferential status into association with words tied to femininity and its attending attributes softness and weakness.

Gender differentiation in Magodro can therefore be summarized by the following set of distinctions:

> male:female :: hard:soft :: strong:weak :: fixed:fluid :: right:left :: senior:junior kin :: chief:commoner :: sacred:profane :: immortal:mortal :: high:low :: empowered:compliant

This symbolic axis or "network of oppositions" (Bourdieu, 1984: 468) forms the basis for those "schemes of perception" (ibid.) which underlie Magodro's hegemonic mode of gender classification, schemes which intertwine gender ideology with its kinship, religious and political systems.

Yet it must be noted here that in the interrelationships between men and women, the contrast between patrilineal hierarchy and affinal egalitarianism provides an element of contradiction in the reckoning of women's status. Upon marriage, virilocal residence sees a woman leave her natal clan and reside with her husband's family where she is drawn into its system of ranked relationships, a system that permeates husband-wife relations as well. Yet the husband-wife tie is made, ideally, between cross-cousins who are status equals.[14] A woman's incorporation into her husband's clan is enacted as part of their marriage ceremony (and confirmed when she is buried in its grave site), but throughout her life she will continue to reaffirm social ties with her natal kin by attending and contributing gifts to their ceremonial exchanges. These lines of contact are especially important during times of crisis, such as marital violence, when a woman will seek refuge with her matrilineal kin. Thus a married woman's identity with her natal kin group and status as a cross-cousin are never totally dissolved by marriage. This cultural inconsistency allows for the potentiality of male-female equality after marriage even though this is not realized in practice. Women's myths countering male dominance perhaps emerge from this ambivalence, allowing the possibility of a radical change in women's status in relation to men to be conceptualized, even if not experienced.

Women's Narratives and Their Social Context

The two myths I relate and discuss in this article fall into a category of myth or *kwalekwale* that I have identified as Grandmother-Granddaughter narratives, being a genre of stories that I group together because they share a common theme.[15] Myths of this type similarly recount the adventures and conversations of a grandmother and her young granddaughter (*tatai* and *karua*). Their tone is usually comedic and descriptions of this pair's adventures or misadventures are met with laughter. They are told by women to an audience of women and possibly their very young children. The stories discussed here are distinguished according to their subject matter as "Looking Up Grandmother's Skirt" and "Blinding the Snake."

Several different social contexts exist wherein women gather and where occasion for the telling of stories might arise. Women who have married into the same clan occasionally work together on a collective project, such as collecting and processing pandanus leaves and weaving mats in preparation for an upcoming wedding, or planning and preparing food for a clan feast. Their collective work will see them meet together for several days to complete their project. Women also visit informally during the evening when chores are done and children settled for the night. They gather near the fireplace in their kitchens or in their houses to socialize and exchange news. As they visit or work together, their conversations cover a wide range of topics, recounting baffling events they might have witnessed during their last trip to the coastal markets (an elderly Indo-Fijian beggar rummaging through a trash can for food for example), commenting on eerie sounds they heard while at the stream doing laundry, sounds believed to have been made by spirits, or describing recent trips they have made to visit kin. One occasion heard a woman describe a trip made to visit her daughter, who lived near the capital, Suva. En route, the bus passed by a valley which appeared to be rich in wild yams. She exclaimed in frustration, and to the great amusement of her friends, "I wanted to stop the bus, to tell the driver to pull over! The yams were right there, just outside on the hill! But we couldn't stop. I wanted to get out and dig them (*akeli na vitua*). But we went right by!" Other visits found women exchanging notes on the location of nearby sites

for collecting wild foods, discussing preparations for upcoming village events, or reflecting on the behaviour or misbehaviour of other villagers, including men.

Some of their commentaries on men's behaviour are highly critical and some are extremely funny, paralleling what Abu-Lughod (1990: 320) describes for the Bedouin as "sexually irreverent discourse." Examples of this irreverent discourse among women abound, including an episode when a woman ridiculed her father-in-law who, after spending all morning at his garden site, had returned complaining of fatigue yet boasting of his hard work and all he had accomplished. Relating her story to her sisters-in-law, she exclaimed that when she returned to this garden later the same day, she found he had actually done very little work; in fact, he had scarcely cleared three small *tavioka* or cassava mounds (approximately one metre square each). As she spoke, she imitated in a ridiculous manner the slashing motion of a machete wielded in the heavy work of gardening—but instead of swinging its blade expansively through the air as one would when clearing weeds, she pretended to grasp its handle with two hands while making small, mincing jabs with the tip of its blade into the earth, actions which made her father-in-law's boasting seem ridiculous and her audience laugh.

A different conversation heard a woman tell sympathetically that one of her sisters-in-law had come again to borrow food (*kerekere*, a term sometimes translated as "to beg" though it usually carries the expectation of a return). This woman's time was taken in the care of an infant, and as a result she depended on her husband to work their garden and bring them food.[16] However the husband was considered lazy and was suspected of stealing food from other people's gardens to support his family. An older woman clucked disapprovingly when she heard that the woman had had to request food of others again, and shook her head as they discussed her husband's laziness. She then said jestingly, "If he comes around here asking for food we'll just cut off his carrot" (*karoti*, from the English), and made a chopping motion with the side of her hand while indicating that she was referring to his penis, a gesture which made her companions laugh loudly. During another visit, a joke made at the expense of men was heard when a young boy, about 18 months old, knocked over a pile of pots making a loud clattering noise that interrupted the conversation of several women. One woman turned and scolded him sharply. She then teased him by telling him to get away from the pots or she would cut his penis, using the *tabu* or prohibited verb *niti* that describes the manner of cutting used during an older boy's circumcision. This small boy was too young to understand what she had said or its implications, but her companions laughed at her threats. She would certainly not have spoken to him in this way had he been old enough to understand her meaning, just as women are ever cautious and respectful in their conversations when men are present.

Women's critical comments regarding men are not always humourous, however. On one occasion, a young woman went out of her way to arrange to meet with me in private, asking if I would teach her to sew. We happened to meet during a downpour and the sound of the rain pounding on the tin roof of my house provided insulation against possible eavesdroppers. Here she told me unhappily of the circumstances of her forced marriage, an arrangement which had been agreed to by her father's brothers (her *momo*, or classificatory fathers), with whom she had grown up.[17] She had tried to resist this marriage by running away with her then boyfriend, but her kinsmen followed her. They surrounded the house in which the couple were hiding and after threatening the young man, he fled. She was very frightened, *mataku va levu*. Her male kin continued to wait and threaten her, and when she finally surrendered, escorted her to the village of her proposed husband. This young woman asked rhetorically, in a sad and lamenting voice, "How could my uncles [classificatory fathers] do this to me?" her quiet voice evoking her sense of betrayal.[18]

Another visit among women saw a woman ask me about the lives of women in Canada, specifically whether women may eat at the same time as men, which is not the case in Fiji where women dine only after men have eaten and withdrawn from the dining area in accordance with rules of seniority which prescribe a hierarchical order of service. Upon hearing that women and men eat at the same time, she expressed her displeasure with Fijian customs in a loud stream of invective. This was not the only time I heard women express criticism about the nature of male-female relations. During several conversations, women described to me violence suffered by women in their village or families, severe violence that saw them hospitalized or even killed. One 12-year-old girl told me of the death of her mother who had been killed by her father some years ago; another woman's mother was permanently hospitalized after an attack by her father; and a four-year-old girl offered that if my husband ever hit me (*kwita*, meaning to hit with a stick), I could come to stay with her. Women also express displeasure over the control men exercise over their lives. At a meeting of the local women's group, *Na Sogosogo Vakamarama*, which had been convened to discuss the organization of the village women's co-operative store,

women discussed rumours that the men of the village were planning to take over their business. One woman, who had been closely involved with this store since its earliest planning, expressed vehemently and with some pride, "We cannot give up our store. We planned this store. We work for our store. It is the women's store!"[19]

Women take the opportunity to comment on and even ridicule men and their behaviour during weddings when they gather for a ceremony known as *na tevutevu*. A marriage consists of a series of four rituals which may be enacted over the course of two to three years. The *tevutevu* will take place immediately following the last of these ceremonies and is held in one of the houses belonging to a member of the groom's clan. At this time upwards of 30 women from both the bride and groom's clans come together to collect and lay out, or *tevu*, the pandanus mats, *na loga*, they have woven as gifts for the new bride and her husband. With these mats they also display other household goods such as blankets, curtains, tablecloths, pillows and sheets they have produced or purchased as gifts for the couple. Some of the gifts of these women (referred to as *na yau ni lewa,* or the wealth of women, cf. Ravuvu, 1987: 261) have been laid out in preparation for this gathering but the ceremony also encompasses the procession of women into the house with their mats, rolled lengthwise and carried under their arms in a manner that conspicuously displays the gift and its giver. As a mat is spread out for other guests to see, the giver's generosity is acknowledged with clapping and greetings of "*Vinaka*! *Vinaka*!"—"It is good! Thank you!" These gifts are important to the cementing and continuance of social ties between women after marriage, ties which, as noted above, are critical to providing sites of refuge in crisis.

As the women gather for this ceremony, the curtains are drawn at the windows; men are not present, though young teenaged boys often try to peer in the door to watch the goings on. During the *tevutevu* women will drum, sing, dance, mix and drink *yagona* and visit, exchanging news with female kin and friends from whom they have been separated through marriage. The atmosphere of these gatherings is both festive and rowdy. While a group of several women sings and drums on bamboo slit gongs, others joke, dance together side-by-side with arms crossed behind each other's backs (a form of dancing known as *taralala*), tell stories (*talanoa*) and relate myths (*na kwalekwale*). Especially comical are the clowning performances of certain older women.[20] These performances are keyed by an abrupt change in drum rhythm from a melodious singing to a raucous beat. This shift prompts women who have been singing to stop and who have been dancing together to sit while others stand or move forward to begin their clowning.

With hair and faces whitened with powder, two or three women at a time will come to the fore and begin to imitate in a comical fashion others' behaviour or act out through exaggerated gestures the body and facial expressions of animals such as the mongoose whose distinctive pawing gestures are easily mimicked. At certain times during these gatherings, an older woman acting as a clown will enter the gathering dressed as a man. Typically, she will wear sunglasses (which men don after consuming *kava* to protect their then light-sensitive eyes), trousers (which women never wear)[21] and a man's shirt, both put on backwards and with shirttails hanging out. She walks stooped over, carrying a sack over her shoulders and leaning on a stick as if old or bowed under the weight of a heavy load carried high on her shoulders in the manner that men carry sacks (in contrast to women who carry them on their backs). As well, some may have a ribbon tied around their heads, as young men proudly do when riding their horses out to their gardens. Decoration of the head within the confines of the village is in violation of village rules that preserve the right to adorn the head solely for the district chief, the wrapping of barkcloth or *tapa* (known in western Fiji also as *kumi*) around his head being a potent symbol during his installation ceremony: for anyone else to adorn their head is a sign of disrespect toward him, *sa tam varokoroko*. As this clown proceeds around the room, she will grip her cane as it wobbles wildly or pretend to stumble, her cane slipping out from under her. Such antics bring shrieks of laughter from her audience.

On several occasions during these performances, I have seen women mimic in a highly comical way the formal and ritualized manner in which men serve *yagona* or *kava*, lifting their arms up as if to raise a *yagona* bowl only to then throw them about wildly in a way that would send this drink splashing across the room were their bowls actually full. At another time I saw a woman fall down on her stomach, her body shaking in an exaggerated manner, antics that brought uproarious laughter from her audience. The only other occasion for such shaking or trembling behaviour occurs during episodes of spirit possession among older men (see Katz, 1993; Williams, 1985 [1858]).

Finally, during a clowning performance in a nearby village one woman repeatedly mimed the gestures of drawing a knife across her throat and then falling down. This occurred at the wedding of a man whose mother had been murdered in this way by her husband following a dispute over her alleged adultery. As this clown acted out

these gestures most women laughed, though a few also looked about warily to ensure that several men who were sitting some distance away were not watching.

The humour produced at the expense of men through these performances and through the episodes of irreverent and critical discourse recounted above is also evident in the *kwalekwale* told by women, including the two myths I relate here. I heard the first of these, "Looking Up Grandmother's Skirt," related several times by different women and one of its phrases is often used to make a pun-like joke. Its telling was always met with deep, tearful laughter. In this tale Grandmother and Granddaughter are working in Grandmother's garden when suddenly it starts to rain (*sa luvu*). Grandmother tells her granddaughter to seek shelter under some nearby trees, and when she does Grandmother resumes her work. But the rain continues more heavily and Granddaughter begins to get wet again. "Go stand under the leaves of the banana tree," Grandmother instructs her, and again she continues weeding. As the rain turns into a downpour, Granddaughter complains again. This time, Grandmother tells her to come stand under her skirt, or *liku*, which Granddaughter proceeds to do. As she stands there, Granddaughter looks up and when she does she sees Grandmother's pubic hair. "What's that Grandmother?" she asks pointing upwards, to which Grandmother replies, "*Na vulu*," meaning hair or feathers. "*Na vulu ni cava*?" "What kind of hair/feathers?" Granddaughter asks, the tone of her voice rising distinctively on the third word, *ni*, in anticipation. Grandmother replies with the punch line, "Chicken feathers"—"*Na vula ni toa*." This response is received with uproarious laughter. On several occasions when the topic of hair arose for some reason in conversation among women, I heard the phrase "*Na vula ni*?"—with its characteristic rise on the word *ni*—injected into their discussion, a phrase which in recalling this myth remakes this joke amongst women.

The second myth, "Blinding the Snake," begins with Grandmother and Granddaughter weeding in Grandmother's garden. As she is working, Granddaughter comes across a small snake, *na gwata*. She shows the snake to Grandmother and much to their surprise as they look at it, it begins to sing: "I am the small snake; I live in bamboo, I live in wood; Bursting, bursting forth [*cibote mai*][22] come I; I am the small snake." [*O'au na gwata lailai; Gi no e na bitu, no e na kai; Cibote 'bote mai; O'au na gwata lailai*]. The pair gather up the snake and carry it home to Grandmother's house where they place it in a small woven basket. But the following day, to their amazement and fear, they find that the snake has grown larger and in so doing has burst apart or torn open (*cidresu*) the basket. Fearful of the snake, they bring in a small hen to destroy it but instead the snake kills the hen, eats it and again recites its song. Frightened, they approach it, gather it up and put it into a large clay pot. The next day they find that the snake has grown larger still, this time bursting or breaking apart (*cibote*) the pot. They bring a small goat to destroy it, but the snake kills and eats this animal too, singing its song again. This pattern of containment, growth, bursting forth or breaking out and then destruction and consumption is repeated several more times with the snake growing larger and larger and eating ever larger animals, until at last it eats a cow. At this point, frightened Grandmother and Granddaughter find a mongoose and bring it to the snake. The snake sings its song again and is about to attack the mongoose but before it can, the mongoose leaps up and attacks the snake's eyes, blinding it and in so doing, killing it. The myth ends, and with this the audience responds with surprise and great laughter.

Both of the myths recounted here are significant as contravening texts, but what do they contravene? In order to comprehend this dimension, we must turn our attention to the political practices of space, knowledge and representation that prevail in Magodro for these are practices saturated with meaning with respect to gender politics.

Practices of Male Dominance

One of the most important practices of male dominance found in Magodro is an order of space that establishes and reflects hierarchical status; that is, the status of the chief relative to all other villagers, of the chiefly clan in relation to non-chiefly ones, higher ranking families to lower ranked ones, clan chiefs and elders to junior clansmen and the status of men in relation to women.[23] Hierarchical status is expressed according to a "spatial axis" (Toren, 1987) of high or above *versus* low or below. Above, *i yate*, or upper, *tu*, is symbolically associated with the sacred, supernatural, everlasting and more powerful realm while below, *i ra*, or lower, *bale*, is linked to the profane, less powerful one. According to this spatial order, men's higher status in Magodro is writ large in the geo-symbolic organization of public space throughout the village, the arrangement of clans, positioning of buildings and their internal divisions, and in the division of the body into upper/sacred and lower/profane areas.[24]

Each clan in this village occupies a geographically separate hamlet, with that of the chiefly clan being at the westernmost end of the village, west being its seaward side and east its landward or interior side.[25] The chiefly clan's site occupies the highest elevation of land in the

village, and the house of the chief, referred to as *na suwe levu* or great house, is on the highest piece of ground within this hamlet, facing inland or eastward. The chief is referred to as *Tui Magodro*, the word *tui* incorporating within it the root *tu* which means to stand, be upright or erect or to be immortal.[26] From this vantage, the chief looks out over all other village space, a position signifying his symbolically highest, most sacred and powerful identity. His house is built into one of the slopes of Magodro Mountain, known as *Ulu Magodro* (where *ulu* also means head), which is the highest peak of this region. Being on the slope of this mountain, the cultural order of space within the village is seemingly synchronized with the surrounding topographical landscape. The chief's house is surrounded by those of other members of his clan, all at a slightly lower elevation relative to his. The village's other clan sites stretch to the east, and each of these consists of a men's house, *na beto*, in front of which is found each clan's ceremonial field, or *durata*, surrounded by the clan's domestic houses, *na suwe*, which encircle and face the ceremonial field. Grave sites for each clan are usually removed somewhat from clan sites, set on pieces of land that are higher in relation to most of the house sites. This is spatially appropriate for this is where the clan ancestors (*na nitu*) reside (literally, *ni* meaning "of the" and *tu* meaning "above or everlasting"). The grave site of the chief's clan is positioned highest of all.

Within clan sites, the men's houses are located at one end of the ceremonial field, set apart and located on the highest stretch of land of the hamlet. Its one central door opens onto this field and from this vantage point one can see across the whole of it as well as the surrounding clan houses. These houses are arranged with families of higher rank nearer the men's house and those of lower status below and farther away. Within the men's house the symbolic reckoning of space and status is illustrated by three separately demarcated seating areas: a small raised and comfortably padded platform, nearest the fire pit, along the wall opposite the door in the "upper" end of the building being reserved for clan elders and the clan head; a second larger, mat-covered platform along the right wall reserved for middle-aged married men or guests; and a large, uncovered space immediately inside the door occupying the "lowest" area being allocated to youths and young married men.[27] The domestic houses are similarly divided into "higher" and "lower" areas, higher ones being associated with men and lower ones with women and children. Seating arrangements reflect this order as well. The district chief is always accorded the highest position at any gathering, with other elders or men of high rank being seated above and served before those of lower rank, and men being seated above and served before women and children.

Around the perimeter of each clan site are found the kitchens and taps, areas where women spend much of their time preparing meals, washing clothes, bathing or washing children (where bathing areas are located in streams, men bathe "upstream" while women bathe "downstream"). As Foucault's (1979) discussion of panopticism has revealed, the ability to oversee is crucial to one's ability to see, to know, and to direct: the chief overlooking the village, the men's houses overlooking their clan sites, higher-ranking families above lower ones, elders above juniors and men's areas above women's.

The spatial ordering of above and below is imposed upon the body as well as on village space. The head, *na ulu*, is the body's highest part and is considered *tabu* or sacred, with the district chief's head being altogether untouchable. One never touches any other person's head either or moves or stands above them without first asking permission; and one *never* steps over another person's body for this would entail a disordering of this axis with the positioning of one person's "lower" body above the other's "higher." Lower parts of the abdomen are profane, particularly for women. Genitals must always be covered under one's skirt, even when bathing. The need to cover this area is firmly instilled in young children, especially girls, who are threatened with a thrashing if they do not cover themselves and admonished with the scolding, "*Sa tabu!*"—"It is forbidden!" A woman's proper manner of sitting in the company of men, with legs together and curled to one side, redirects this area away from others seated around her and is described as respectful, *va rokoroko*. As well, women do not ride horses (which were introduced by the British) in the same fashion as men but instead ride sidesaddle; to sit as a man would, with one leg on either side of a horse, is said to look vile, *rairai ca*. The lowest part of the body, the feet, while not being considered *tabu* are nonetheless symbolically below. This is illustrated by a gesture that is made when making a request or asking a favour (*kerekere*) of someone. When making this request, one touches the other person's foot, a gesture that symbolically puts the requester in a lower position. This establishes a hierarchical relationship between the two with its accompanying tone of obligation for the person put in a senior/upper position who is then made to feel obliged to respond favourably to the request.

Magodro's spatial-symbolic order reproduces and reinforces status differences in many different social environments: in the physical outlay of the village, the

positioning of the chief's house above all others, the arrangement of the men's house, domestic houses and the work areas of women within each hamlet, all of which are overseen by grave sites from which ancestors look down on their descendants. This geo-spatial arrangement both symbolizes and enacts social distinctions and stratification. Sociologically, this repetitive, symbolic structuring is important for as Eric Wolf (1982: 388) points out

> the development of an overall hegemonic pattern or "design for living" is not so much the victory of a collective cognitive logic or aesthetic impulse as the development of redundance—the continuous repetition, in diverse instrumental domains, of the basic propositions regarding the nature of constructed reality.

The second hierarchizing structure that is significant to the understanding of the contravening nature of women's myths is the traditional religious system of Magodro, including myths told by men in which the central figure is the snake, *na gwata*. Although Magodro is officially Methodist, traditional religious beliefs are deeply held in the villages and daily life is permeated by their rituals.[28] Most of these centre in the clans' men's houses, *na beto*, which are exclusively male arenas. Men gather in their clan's men's house every night to socialize, exchange news or hold meetings to organize upcoming clan events such as weddings, gift exchanges or collective work projects. The *beto* is also the main site for interaction between clansmen and their ancestral spirits, *na nitu*. Gatherings in the men's house always include the drinking of *kava*, or *yagona*. Its preparation follows a ritualized pattern that is accompanied by prayer. Once mixed it is sanctified and must be drunk; it cannot be thrown away. Men take turns donating *kava* for these gatherings, and each donation constitutes a small religious offering, *na madrali*, dedicated to clan spirits or *nitu* whom they propitiate for the protection of their families, their health, the fertility of their land and their crops.[29] On specific occasions (such as after the unexpected death of a clansman) meetings may be called specifically for elders to communicate with these spirits, which they do through dreams or visions. During these interactions ancestors convey knowledge (the identity of a sorcerer for example) that would otherwise be unavailable to these men.

Women are excluded from rituals in the men's houses. As well, I was told that during funeral preparations for the district chief, who died in 1992, men with clubs patrolled the village road in front of the chief's residence where his body lay before burial. At this time women and children were forbidden from entering or disturbing this area on threat of death; some even left the village in fear, going to stay with relatives.

A central figure in Magodro religion (and throughout much of Fiji) is the snake figure, *na gwata*, who is prominent in myths circulated by men. At the time of contact, Fiji's supreme male supernatural figure was Degei, a half- snake, half-man deity responsible for the creation of the world and establishment of its social order (see Capell, 1984; Williams, 1985 [1858]).[30] In several myths told by men in Magodro, the snake's shedding of its skin effects a transformation which sees this figure change into a man and with its redonning, back into a snake. As a mythological figure it represents a potent symbol of immortality, endurance and rebirth. Williams (1985 [1858]: 217) described the snake as the "impersonation of the abstract idea of eternal existence . . . [s]ome traditions represent him with the head and part of the body of that reptile, the rest of his form being stone, emblematic of everlasting and unchangeable duration." Themes of ritual transformation, rebirth and immortality continue to run deep in Magodro where the circumcision rituals of boys are conceived of as "small deaths," *na mate lailai*, followed by rebirths that separate and elevate circumcised youths and men from women as twice-born humans. Similarly, installation ceremonies for the chief are rites of empowerment that elevate and separate him from other men as a thrice-born figure. In contrast, Valerio Valeri (1985) comments on the twice-born character of chiefs in Hawai'i, their ritual rebirth upon installation being central to the establishment and confirmation of their *mana* or supernatural power. In the case of Magodro, where women are doubly excluded—from rituals held in the men's houses and from holding chiefly positions, I argue that through ritual men in general are held to be twice-born and the chief thrice-born, the circumcision ceremony that boys undergo representing their second birth and the installation of the chief, his third.

One widely known Fijian myth of creation recorded in 1929 by the Fijian ethnographer Rokowaqa, and translated by the contemporary Fijian ethnographer Asesela Ravuvu (1987: 263-266), describes not only the creation of the world by the snake god Degei but also the circumstances leading to the subordination of women to men and justification for their exclusion from ritual practices. In this myth, this occurred when the female character disobeyed Degei's commands, an event that angered this god and led him to banish her and her children from the supernatural world. He then made men more powerful than women, enabling them to continue their interactions with the supernatural, and assigned them their rit-

ual role as intercessors between the human and sacred worlds, in Ravuvu's words (1987: 266), making men the "agents of god."

The snake figure represents a potent "key" symbol (Ortner, 1973) in myths told by men in Magodro. There is a continued belief in the snake's supernatural power, or *mana*, as well and, whenever encountered in the bush, snakes are dealt with cautiously. The belief prevails that an encounter with a snake may bring about the viewer's death. During the course of my research I was told of two occasions when a snake was seen in the forest, both of which involved women. At separate times later in the year, each of the women died and their deaths were directly attributed to their having earlier seen a snake.

Finally, myths told by women must be understood within the context of the prevailing order of knowledge that exists in Magodro. Magodro's system of knowledge is one that excludes women from participation in or the observance of male ritual practices, many of which are performed in the men's houses. During other ceremonial occasions (such as weddings or funerals) which bring together large numbers of men from different clans, temporary shelters are built on a ceremonial field. These are enclosed nearly all the way around and their walls obstruct the view of ceremonies from outside, although they do not prevent the events inside from being heard. Ritual exclusion for women then is both physical and visual in a double sense, being unable to watch certain rituals taking place within ritualized spaces or participate in visions that impart knowledge from ancestors. On the one occasion when a woman may observe these rituals, her wedding, she is referred to as "*matai*," meaning wise or knowledgeable, referring to the fact she had witnessed these ceremonies. The word *mata* means, literally, the eyes, and thus the word *matai*, knowledgeable, indicates a privileging of the sense of sight as the dominant mode for the apperception of knowledge according to Magodro's "hierarchy of the senses."[31] Recognition of this hierarchy of knowledge is essential for an appreciation of women's myths in Magodro.

Symbolic Transgressions: The Politics of Signification

Both of the myths recounted here are significant as contravening texts for they carry within them descriptions of behaviour or episodes that invert and transgress Magodro's dominant order of space and knowledge, particularly with respect to gender and the status prescribed for men and women. The first of these myths, "Looking Up Grandmother's Skirt," carries within it an inversion of Magodro's spatial order, a contravention of its ordering of the body, and a transgression of one of its most stringent of bodily rules. Flaunting the rule which prescribes that genitals be covered, Grandmother invites Granddaughter to stand under her skirt for shelter from the rain (*na luvu*) and in so doing exposes herself (in particular, her *vulu*) an event she should always protect against. Through this positioning, Granddaughter is placed so as to "look up" at this part of Grandmother's body, seemingly a contradiction as this is prescribed as a "low" area relative to the eyes or face according to Magodro's symbolic and spatial order of the body. In this position, the sequence that finds Granddaughter "looking up" to "see below" runs counter to and challenges dominant meanings of the body, particularly for women where this area is negatively indicated or *tabu*. Such symbolic reconfigurations of meaning effect what Stuart Hall et al. (1978: 357), in their discussion of symbolic politics, have described as "transformations of signs." In this case, this transformation involves an inversion of dominant meanings (that is, meanings that have been assigned through domination) ascribed to women's bodies such that the part of their body signifying or carrying the negative quality "below" is placed so as to be accorded the positive meaning "above." This process of inversion is paralleled in this myth by the syllabic inversion found in the words *luvu* and *vulu*, each of these being words whose very meanings epitomize the essence of aboveness (rain deriving from above) and below (the genitals being the body's symbolically lowest point), an inversion which, in itself, bespeaks this mix of meanings. Through this myth, such "shifts in signification" (Hall et al., 1978: 330) call into question the dominant meanings attached to these signs by introducing to them an element of ambivalence. As Homi Bhabha (1995: 33) has pointed out, the presence of ambivalence is central in strategies of subversion for resistance is not simply "an oppositional act of political intention"; rather it "is the effect of an ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference and reimplicate them within the deferential relations of [colonial] power." Transgressions which produce ambivalence such as those introduced in this Grandmother-Granddaughter myth serve to suspend the essential nature of Magodro's order of meanings for space, gender and the body.

In the second of these stories, "Blinding the Snake," Grandmother and Granddaughter's coming upon a snake is a significant enough event in western Fiji to warrant comment for the snake is a dominant and powerful religious figure here. Belief in its *mana* and potential power

to destroy is still very strong and the fear it inspires is apparent throughout this tale. The snake's power is made evident in this myth in its ability to kill and consume creatures much larger than itself and to repeatedly break out of each of the "enclosures" it is placed in by Grandmother and Granddaughter. This sequence closely parallels the mythological snake's continual rebirth as it sheds its old skin and emerges renewed and enduring, a sequence that demonstrates its immortality. Yet in this myth, following its series of "rebirths," rather than emerge renewed the snake is killed, a violent deviation from its ascribed mythology. Such an abrupt departure from the hegemonic pattern is significant and constitutes a "rupture of representation," one that introduces movement into "the fixity of signification" (Sharpe, 1995: 99-101) that holds for dominant, powerful male figures as represented through men's myths: the snake is powerful, supernatural, immortal; the snake is dead. That this moment should represent a humour-producing episode is significant for humour denies this death its dignity and divests it of a tragic cast.

But this break is not all that is culturally significant in this Grandmother-Granddaughter myth. Important also is the manner by which this death is brought on, the meaning of which touches on Magodro's order of knowledge, its exclusion of women from men's rituals, and its privileging of the sense of sight in its hierarchy of the senses. It is not insignificant that the death of the snake in this women's myth was brought about by a blinding attack to its eyes.[32]

An understanding of the cultural content of the inversions and transgressions contained within these myths is essential to this analysis, as is an appreciation of their place within the wider social context of women's critical commentaries. In their daily conversations, women observe and criticize the behaviour of men and their treatment of women, sometimes belittling them and at other times simply offering sad reflection. During *tevu-tevu* ceremonies, women mimic the actions of men by parodying their ritual serving of *kava*. These parodies imitate the "semiology" of those in power but here it is an "emulation without deference" (Keesing, 1991: 19), one which constitutes a form of symbolic resistance. Women's use of parody continues in their clowning performances during which they portray elderly men in a ridiculous manner, as stumblers, falling "down," dependant on the assistance of a cane to steady them and keep themselves aright, that is to stay *tu*, upright. These actions expose their human weakness and counter their claims to strength and power, claims which hold to Magodro's hegemonic logic that elderly men, *na turanga*, are symbolically positioned higher, coming closer to the sacred world as they advance in years and occupy an ever-more-revered stature. The cross dressing of women as men, but with their shirts askew and trousers on backwards, amplifies the wit of these performances as well as their acerbity, pointing to a reversal of both roles as well as meanings.[33]

Such parodies as are represented in these satirical performances and narratives constitute a form of resistance discourse, where semiotic inversion represents both a transgression of and challenge to a hegemonic gender ideology, a resistance to "codification" (Hall, 1993) that is part of a struggle against those powers that confer meaning. On the political significance of this form of resistance, Roger Keesing (1991: 21-22) has eloquently explained (with respect to the Kwaio of the Solomon Islands):

> [t]he oppositional cast of discourses of resistance reflects a strategic realization that one must meet the enemy on his own turf. The Kwaio case shows how deep and subtle this process is. If one wants to challenge colonial assertions of sovereignty, one must do it in a language of flags and ancestors-on-coins, in place of Kings. If one wants to challenge colonial legal statutes and Biblical rules by asserting the legitimacy of ancestral rules and customary codes, one must do so through codification, through writing a counter-Bible/counter-lawbook. A recognition that if counterclaims are to be recognized and effective, they must be cast in the terms and categories and semiology of hegemonic discourse, is politically astute, not blindly reactive.

Given the prevailing religious system and order of knowledge in Magodro, and given the real power that men wield in this society, I was surprised to hear these myths and the irreverent and critical comments made by women. I was also shocked to witness the mimicry and satirical dancing of women, and to see the response—laughter—of their audiences. Their myths and commentaries refer directly to figures and themes cast as paramount in a hegemonic male world. Yet in these myths and in the parodies of men's rituals, these themes are both recognizable and yet distorted, divested of their dignity. The respect that is usually attached to them is withheld and thus their meanings are denied. In providing a distorted image of this world, any notion I might have had that the social reality created by men was a seamless, uncontroversial whole was shattered, *cibote*.

Conclusion

Such moments of disorder as are present in these women's myths are subversive and are significant to society as representing compelling moments of deep political play, a politics of cognition if you will. As Mary Douglas (1968: 372) has explained, such cognitive incongruities serve to bring about "an awareness of the provisional nature of categories of thought... lifting the pressure for a moment and suggesting other ways of structuring reality." Being tales that involve challenges to powerful male figures and themes, a disregard of taboos and the order of the body, and an inversion of a knowledge and ritual system that privileges men, such myths of women serve to contravene "heroizing male themes" (Eileen Cantrell, cited in Knauft, 1994: 423) and contradict received, hegemonic understandings of men and women: in so doing, they subvert dominant meanings and may potentially "pervert" (de Certeau, 1988) reigning truths in this society.

In order to appreciate the dialectical nature of the politics of knowledge within western Fiji, therefore, and the role that myth plays in setting out this dialectic, account must be taken of both the construction and disputation of authoritative discourse, the assertions of those with power and those without—which James Scott (1990: 202) refers to as the "public transcripts of dominant groups" as well as the "backstage transcripts of subordinate ones."[34] I view women's myths such as these as examples of such "backstage transcripts," ones that constitute a form of insubordinate, as opposed to merely subordinate, discourse. Subordinate discourse as a concept has been applied by Messick (1987: 217) and refers to "a form of expression characterized by its power relation to a dominant ideology with which it coexists"; a "counterdiscourse" in Janice Boddy's words (1989: 305). I introduce the term insubordinate discourse for this Fijian case as it more closely captures the subversive quality of these women's commentaries.

In conclusion, to view mythology merely as a set of grand narratives that relates positively to hegemonic views of a socially constructed world is to ignore its potential as a place where models of culture can be both "reified, thought about, and contested" (Linnekin, 1992: 253). Anthropology's appreciation of mythology's role as a legitimizer of dominant ideologies must be tempered by an understanding of the potential it poses as a "risk to the sense of signs" (Sahlins, 1985), and recognition must be given to women as generators of those signs.

Dedication

This paper is dedicated to Robert Shirley, with thanks, on the occasion of his retirement from the University of Toronto.

Notes

1 A discussion of how insights drawn from the study of cultural production can be fruitfully joined with those of political economy is provided in Roseberry (1991: 36). Eric Wolf's (1999) ethnographic comparison of cosmology, ideology and claims to power, *Envisioning Power*, brings together just such insights.

2 Micaela di Leonardo (1991: 233) has commented on the significance of women as generators of signs for feminist anthropology.

3 Research in Fiji was conducted between November 1986 and January 1988, and again in November 1993, and was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and University of Toronto Doctoral Fellowships. I thank Michael Lambek, Janice Boddy and Jack Kapac for extremely helpful discussions and comments on this work, and Sally Cole and the anonymous reviewers of *Anthropologica* for their suggestions and encouragement. I am indebted to Roger Keesing for discussions, in 1991, of the significance of symbolic reversal to cultural politics in the Pacific, and to Ivan Kalmar for discussions of the semiotics of humour.

4 Fijian orthography is employed in this article for western Fijian words, where "c" represents the voiced th, "b" represents "mb," "d" represents "nd," "g" represents the "ng," and "q" represents the voiced "ng"sounds.

5 In western Fiji, words used to describe other types of narrative include *talanoa*, meaning to chat or to relate anecdotes, a word I heard translated several times by Fijians as "yarning." The word *talanoa* is given by Capell (1984: 354) to mean a legend as well, though *na kwalekwale* was consistently used in Magodro in this sense. The term *na i tukatuka* is used to refer to "the news," and indicates the relating of current or upcoming events.

6 In her analysis of the Gimi of Papua New Guinea, Gillian Gillison (1993) has argued that in some contexts myth may serve as a form of "covert dispute" between men and women.

7 Keesing (1991: 16) provides insightful comments on the unintended ironies produced by the introduction of "chiefs" among the egalitarian Kwaio of the Solomon Islands during British colonial rule.

8 The Bauan dialect of eastern Fiji was adopted by the British as the standard for the islands stemming from the influence exerted by the island of Bau during the 1800s.

9 Although a nationally based Fijian women's group, *Na Soqosoqo Vakamarama*, operates at the village level, women are restricted from performing leadership roles outside this organization. I was repeatedly told that women in Magodro never serve as chiefs or clan heads.

10 *Kava*, or *yagona*, is a mildly narcotic drink made from the dried roots of the *Piper methysticum* plant whose relaxant effects are cumulative. Initially one feels a tingling or numb-

ness in the lips and throat, accompanied by slurred speech and drowsiness. Repeated and prolonged use may bring numbness in the legs, with consequent stumbling or befuddlement. I have also seen individuals in a falling-down, drunken-like state. Its narcotic effect may also bring vivid dreaming (conceived of as visions, *na yadra*). *Kava* has the negative morning-after effect of bad temper, which women fear in their husbands as it may precipitate domestic violence. Variations in the strength of this narcotic result from the use of the freshly cut *versus* dried root, the fresh being more potent. Its religious significance is discussed more fully below.

11 I have analyzed gender hierarchy and the symbolic organization of space elsewhere (Aucoin, 1999).

12 For a more detailed explanation of the language of kin terms in Magodro, see Aucoin (n.d.).

13 See Edmund Leach's work (1967, 1971) on the semantics of kin terms, and the use of the concept metathesis as a means of identifying connotative meanings.

14 Kinship in Magodro is Dravidian, a system characterized by cross-cousin marriage.

15 The kin term *tatai* refers to one's real or classificatory maternal and paternal grandmothers as well as one's real and classificatory maternal grandfathers. The relationship between *tatai* and *karua*, grandchildren, is one of affection, with the grandchild often being left in the care of the grandmother, especially the paternal grandmother, when parents are busy or away. In these situations, the grandmother will demonstrate patience while teaching the grandchild, and will joke and entertain her or him. In contrast, the paternal grandfather, *tutua*, relationship is marked by the formality and deference owed to a figure of senior rank within the patrilineage.

16 Women usually return to active food production approximately 10 to 12 months after the birth of a child. At this time, although still breast-feeding, an infant will stay with other female kin for short periods of time and takes solid food well while her/his mother is absent.

17 This type of marriage is not uncommon in this area of Fiji. I met several young women whose marriages had been arranged, but the degree of force and threat applied in this woman's case made her story particularly poignant. In one of these other cases, a man who was in a *vasu*, or sister's son, relationship to a young woman's father, who was his *koko* or mother's brother, asked to marry this man's daughter. The request brought great distress to this family: the young woman did not want to marry this man, and her parents sympathized with her deeply. Yet a request made by one's *vasu* cannot be refused. The young woman went unhappily as a bride while her parents wept.

18 This woman referred to these male patrilineal kin using the English term uncle, but their kin relationship to her was as classificatory fathers, *momo*: her father's younger (*momo sewa*) and older (*momo levu*) real and classificatory brothers. These are men with whom she would have grown up, and whose children she would consider her classificatory sisters and brothers (*vei tacini*).

19 It is impossible to go into the history of this organization here, but it should be noted that during the year of my research in Fiji, women of this village met regularly to raise funds for the building and stocking of this store, and once opened, they met weekly to discuss its operation. After a year's operation, they had raised enough money to purchase a kerosene freezer, and hoped in future to contribute money toward village projects such as improvements to the water system. I learned, upon my return in 1993, that plans were underway for a man, the sister's son or *vasu* (see note 17) of the previous district chief, to take over operation of this store on behalf of the men.

20 Important studies of clowning performances in the Pacific include Hereniko (1995), Counts and Counts (1992) and Mitchell (1992).

21 The wearing of pants by women is akin to their riding horseback "men's style," that is, with either leg astride a horse's back. Both are said to "*rairai ca*," to look very bad (*ca*). Proper bodily comportment for a woman in public is to ride sidesaddle, wear a skirt and sit with legs together and curved around to one side. Men on the contrary sit cross-legged.

22 The word *cibote*, meaning to crack open or break apart—as when a pottery vessel cracks, contains within it the *tabu* word for vagina. In this, it is similar to the word *cidresu*, meaning to tear—as when a mat or piece of cloth tears apart. Use of either of these words in everyday speech elicits a giggling and uncomfortable recognition from women as they are aware of their breech of this *tabu*.

23 See Aucoin (1999) on the order of space.

24 Ortner (1990: 64) reaffirms the importance of understanding distinctions such as sacred/profane within gender systems, the aim of their study being twofold: to determine the role they play "in constituting a given order of gender relations" and to identify "the ways in which their gender claims may be culturally subverted over time."

25 Martha Kaplan (1988) notes the significance of seaward/land orientation in the chiefly/commoner divisions of villages in northeastern areas of Viti Levu, but this spatial axis seems less well articulated than high-low elevations in Magodro.

26 The concept of immortality, as encompassed by the word *tu*, is central to traditional Fijian constructions of the sacred. This notion has been prominent in post-colonial religious expressions, such as the *tuka* movement, as well. The history of this movement has been analyzed in detail by Kaplan (1988).

27 I am indebted to Richard Aucoin for descriptions of the interior of the men's house and their seating arrangements.

28 Katz (1993) has discussed the intersection of traditional and Western religions in Fiji.

29 Details of these *madrali* ceremonies are provided in Spencer (1941).

30 The snake is a prevalent mythical figure in many areas of the Pacific. For the Huli of Papua New Guinea (Clark, 1993: 749), the symbolic significance of the mythical snake figure is strikingly similar to that in Fiji in that it also carries an association with immortality: "the shedding of skin by which the snake emerges "renewed" appear[s] to form the basis for an association of the snake . . . with life and continuity." See also Gillison (1993).

31 I thank Christine Jourdan for introducing me to the concept "hierarchy of the senses" in relation to this work. See also David Howes' *The Varieties of Sensory Experience* (1991).

32 It should be noted here that the mongoose is an animal imported by the British to control cane rats. That it is associated with Europeans may be significant to an understanding of this myth insofar as it may symbolically represent the British/colonization as destroyers of Fijian culture. However, as this animal was never described to me by any Fijian as having been introduced by the British, I would not argue for this interpretation.

33 Such incongruities are essential to the generation of humour. See Milner, 1972; Apte, 1985.

34 See also Wolf (1999: 290) on "aspirations" and "claims" to power.

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A Hopeless Life? The Story of a Koriak Woman in the Russian Far East

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Abstract: In Koriak villages on the northeastern shore of Kamchatka peninsula, the idea that Koriak women are morally debauched and domestically inept is frequently met. On the one hand, this idea draws on the bias that Koriak women as members of one "primitive," indigenous group in the Russian Far East are "slothful" and do not exhibit a "civilized" propriety; on the other hand, it rests on Russian-centred notions of femininity. Furthermore, interactions between Russian and Koriak men have given rise to an authoritative rhetoric which debases women who are said to keep unclean houses, to neglect their children and to drink. How do women respond to these ideas of cultural difference and male power? In this essay, I explore this question by means of a story. Lidiia's story shows how Koriak women actively engage the circumstances of social possibility, while simultaneously struggling with broader configurations of gender and political asymmetry.

Résumé: Dans les villages Koriak, sur les côtes Nord-Est de la Péninsule Kamchatka, on trouve souvent la perception que les femmes koriak sont débauchées et incapables d'accomplir les travaux domestiques. D'un côté, cette idée vient de la conception qu'en tant que membre d'un groupe indigène «primitif» de l'extrême Est de la Russie, les femmes koriak sont paresseuses et ne se conforment pas aux convenances de la civilisation; d'un autre côté, elle provient de notions de féminité dérivées du monde russe. De plus, les hommes russes et koriak ont imposé une rhétorique qui dénigre les femmes dont on dit qu'elles ne maintiennent pas leur maison propre, qu'elles négligent leurs enfants et qu'elles boivent. Comment les femmes répondent-elles à ces idées sur les différences culturelles et le pouvoir masculin? Dans cet article, j'explore cette question au moyen d'une histoire individuelle. L'histoire de Lidiia montre comment les femmes koriak tirent parti des conditions sociales tout en affrontant la situation plus globale des asymétries sexuelles et politiques.

In Koriak villages on the northeastern shore of Kamchatka peninsula in the Russian Far East, the idea that Koriak women are morally debauched and domestically inept is frequently met.[1] On the one hand, this idea draws on the bias that Koriak women as members of one "primitive," indigenous group in this region are slothful and do not exhibit a "civilized" propriety; on the other hand, it rests on Russian-centred notions of femininity. Within this context of social and gender power, Koriak men, like Russian men, use claims of a male-oriented, authoritative discourse which deprecates Koriak women who are said to keep unclean houses, to neglect their children and to drink. As a site of male commentary, women sometimes find it hard to respond to issues of regional and gender inequality; their position does not easily allow them to tap into both local and transcultural conversations to challenge sexual conventions and assume oppositional positionings not just in relation to their alleged domestic inability but on a variety of related issues. In order to lend substance to this claim, it seems best to describe a scene that conveys some of the dynamics in which claims of cultural and male authority are set.

> In the summer of 1994, I met a Russian writer who was traveling across the northern Kamchatka peninsula to collect material for a book on the contemporary lives of Koriak women and men. When he arrived in the village of Ossora on the northeastern shore he stopped by the home of Lidiia, a woman whom he had known for several years, and whom I, by comparison, had then known for approximately one year. Their encounter was neither casual nor accidental; in fact, he had stopped by to ask her how she, an impoverished, middle-aged widow with three children, managed to get by. While he sat on the only chair in the only room of her apartment and she was in the midst of preparing a meal, he began to comment on the domestic disarray he discerned. The cooking pots were not cleaned, the window shutters were askew, and the floor was soiled with pebbles and small

chunks of mud. Silence ensued. While the conversation among us dragged, her lover, a young Russian man, unexpectedly appeared. Not yet ready with the preparation of the meal, she sent her youngest daughter Lena—who was eleven years at that time—to buy several bottles of samogon (self-distilled schnapps). Slipping her daughter some ruble notes, she also reminded her not to forget to pick up some videos.[2] Once Lena was on her way, the rest of us continued our awkward conversation. When Lena reappeared with the alcohol and videos, the writer and I decided to leave. We had barely stepped out of the house when he turned to me and explained, "She is a hopeless (*beznadezhnaia*) case. She is already far gone."

Lidiia had a brother, not much younger than she, who too had known the writer for a long time. Indeed, he liked the man so much that he had arranged several meetings to help facilitate his project. By nature accommodating and helpful, he also took us along to meet his male Russian and Koriak colleagues at the power station where he worked. It was on our way to this station that the Russian writer shared his thoughts about Lidiia with her brother. Initially I was surprised to hear that her brother did not raise his voice in protest but *de facto* agreed. Yes, he also thought that his sister was really going to the dogs and, worse, had no decent bone left in her. Why, he wondered, did she not take better care of herself and the children? It was a mystery to him. In the end she might end up with nothing left, on the street. But, shrugging his shoulders, he asked, "What can someone like me do?"

The way in which I have chosen to tell this story centres on the perspective of these two men. It shows Lidiia as a scruffy and vulgar woman who cannot keep her house clean, neglects her children and embarks on sexual relations with Russian men. Indeed, their commentary frames my ability to ask about the structure of Russian-Koriak relations, issues of regional domination, and male-centred stereotypes about Koriak women. Why can the Russian writer "afford" to describe Lidiia in a disparaging way? What kind of cultural perspectives and political relations shape how Koriak women are portrayed in regional (and national) discourses on cultural difference and sexuality? What is more, why does Lidiia's brother not feel the need to defend his sister but rather supports the writer's comments? His agreement suggests that both men use transcultural, common understandings of sexual and domestic propriety that confirm themselves as privileged users of sexual authority. How do these shared understandings come about? Why do Koriak men use bold and aggressive claims to establish sexual authority and power? Even more importantly, how does Lidiia respond to these ideas of cultural difference and claims to men's authority? How do Koriak women engage the conditions that endow men with the power to pass on moral judgments and "sentence" female faults? In this essay I tell a long story, one that draws from insights of how national frameworks of gender are enacted and play out in locally specific ways, and how regional structures of social inequality create sites of gendered vulnerability and exclusion. In many places I visited on the northeastern shore, stories similar to Lidiia's surfaced in various yet equally troubling ways.

A story such as Lidiia's is difficult to tell for several reasons. First, it finds little precedence in social science writings on issues of gender in the post-Soviet context. Analysis of gender in contemporary Russia, embracing the transition period from state socialism to a market economy, tends to pay special attention to common economic tendencies and, generally, offers locally unspecific explanations.[3] In examining the economic and social forces that give rise to the current problems in Russia, scholars usually examine these processes from the perspective of collective-oriented analysis; they rarely ask how individuals experience and live out the historic changes that ravage Russia today. Recently, however, cultural critics have shown that stories are one important means of drawing attention to the ways in which individuals experience and engage broader regional and local configurations of power and domination.[4] Stories disrupt the possibility of reading for generalizations and repetition; they show social process from the perspective of idiosyncratic alignments and personal stakes. They draw readers into the experience of individuals, while simultaneously showing how political categories and social standards give shape to experience in the first place (Scott, 1992). In telling Lidiia's story here the challenge is to construct an account of her response to change and yet to attend to the social formations of her practice.

Second, stories such as Lidiia's are uncommon in the anthropological record of the Russian North. The ways in which Soviet ethnography has produced highly self-conscious texts that bespeak a buoyant utopianism and an unswerving belief in the master narrative of progress has recently received much scrutiny,[5] and has stimulated a number of important responses.[6] In North American and European scholarship, one frequent reaction has been to study issues of nationality and identity most commonly in relation to Soviet narratives of progress—with a heightened emphasis on political structures and state policies but little emphasis on local struggles over power and meaning.[7] Apart from the fact that gender has not been an important category in northern Russia research, so far

analysts have rarely asked their readers to immerse themselves in the fate of particular individuals. But stories of individuals give shape to politics and are, in turn, shaped by the political contours of regional inequality and identity. They open up a space in which analysts can ask about an individual's relation to government programs and state agendas; they focus attention not on the structure but on the effects of such agendas.

And third, the story I am about to tell might not be the kind of story Koriak subjects might want to be told about them.[8] The critique of anthropology as a form of Western colonial discourse is by now well known, and has opened a discussion about the political assumptions and cultural representations in which such a colonialism is bred.[9] This is a discourse that anthropologists, as well as anyone interested in cultural dialogue and interaction, can no longer afford to neglect. Yet at the same time it seems important to note that any form of cultural engagement depends upon an engagement with the questions and political challenges that emerge out of particular social and cultural formations. Also I cannot avoid such issues; I can only manoeuvre within them. Some anthropologists (for example Aretxaga, 1997: 17) fear that if anthropologists shy away from engaging potentially contentious issues they will give up their voice in matters of public debates. To emphasize the possibility for dialogue and communication across cultural and political borders, then, West (1990: 34), for example, writes of "the importance of creating a culture of critical sensibility and personal accountability." In cross-cultural debates, West's argument for accountability requires the willingness of a self-critical engagement with the conditions of one's own thinking and effects of one's writing. I do not exclude my own responsibilities and practices.

Conditions of Living

I first met Lidiia in 1992 and, again, in 1994. When I knew her, she lived in the village of Ossora, a central administrative unit linking several clusters of settlements in the northern Kamchatka peninsula. The Ossora of the mid-1990s very much resembled other villages I visited in the region. Nestling in one of the manifold bays that skirt the northeastern shore, it opened itself up to the northern Pacific Ocean and the harsh winds that blew in from across the sea. Wooden, plank-supported homes clustered along two pebbly and pot-holed streets; the brick-walled sidings of its administrative, public buildings still featured slogans reminiscent of bygone days ("War/Victory/Communism"; "Lenin is the Father of all Soviet Children"). But although the slogans—once proclaiming the promise of economic well-being and social equality—still touched up Ossora's buildings and walls, they had faded away from the minds of many residents. As in numerous other places in the "new" Russia, feelings of hopelessness and a fair amount of cynicism prevailed.

Lidiia lived in one of the decrepit houses that skirt the edges of the village. Here she inhabited, with her two teenage daughters and a six-year-old son, a rickety, one-room apartment. While she slept on the creaky bed with thin, musty-smelling pillows that was set against one wall, her youngest daughter and son were bedded down in a cubbyhole built into the narrow hallway. Her eldest daughter continually complained that during the night she could feel cold drafts of air spinning around the air mattress on which she slept; the apartment offered no insulation against the cold. Crumbling cement flakes chipped off the wall and divulged an ugly skeleton of morose, prefab architecture. Shamefully hidden in the entrance corner of their place was a stained bucket that served as toilet. A water pump across the muddy road provided water for drinking and cooking; and, in a limited way, allowed them to wash away the "daily grime."

But although in its "feel" Ossora was very much like the other villages on the northeastern shore, it was also different. Built in the 1920s and 1930s to become the administrative centre of the Karaginskii district (one of the four administrative districts in the northern peninsula), its residents (approximately 4 000) were a conglomerate of Russian and Ukrainian newcomers (92.0%), resettled Koriaks (8.0%) and a small minority of Itelmen, Chukchi and Armenians. In the mid-1950s Ossora had been part of an extensive government labour program. To incite and augment the planned production of fish in the Russian Far East, in particular dog salmon and red caviar, regional authorities had pushed for the increased presence of Ukrainian and Russian workers on the northeastern shore. The incentives were attractive: the wages were three times higher than on the mainland, the family of every worker received a well-equipped apartment,[10] and many were even able to afford a car.[11] The Koriak women and men I knew referred to their Russian and Ukrainian newcomers in the region as Whites (*belye*) who thought of Ossora as a place of "passing through" and good cash. In contrast, most Koriak women and men thought of Ossora as a place of resettlement and state-inflicted absence from their homes.

Since the 1920s, the government has operated a program for the settlement of migratory, reindeer-herding "minority" populations such as the Koriak.[12] In an effort to impose order and stability on Koriak reindeer herders, one government priority had been the creation of nucle-

ated settlements that would make for ordered places of living. Although there were already a few scattered settlements on the northeastern shore, state agendas demanded that these be expanded and new ones built. At the same time, other settlements were closed, and the Koriak families who had lived in them were forcefully removed to reside in government-prescribed locations.[13] But even though in the government-sponsored rhetoric of development, centralization and expansion of settlement were understood as a necessary step towards progress, better houses, hygiene and education, many Koriak women and men I met did not share the opinion that settlement had offered them improved standards of living. In contrast, they argued that life in resettlement villages had helped to create poverty and weaken Koriak traditional cultural understandings. That is why, many explained, a general sense of fatigue and dejection prevailed.

Decisions

Lidiia, too, felt caught in poverty and generally felt dejected. But one important difference was that Lidiia had once had, as she said, "the opportunity to live a different life." When she was still a young girl, one of her teachers in the *internat*[14] recognized Lidiia's fine talents as a student, and suggested that she attend a special school in the city of Novosibirsk (a major urban centre in Central Siberia; approximately 1 400 000 residents) to become a forest warden. The teacher was so convinced that Lidiia would do well that she went to discuss the matter with her parents. They did not want to let Lidiia go, but they also knew that they did not have enough authority over the process. Lidiia left.

Lidiia was approximately 17 when she moved to Novosibirsk. It was not the first time that she had been separated from her siblings, parents and friends. When she was a student in the *internat*, her brother and two sisters had, for reasons unknown to her, attended a different school. Lidiia remembers the long nights she lay awake, thinking especially about her younger brother with whom she was very close, and the two short months she was allowed to spend with her family in the summer. She also remembers the isolation she had felt, and her deep wish to be with her parents and siblings.

In the institute in Novosibirsk she had not felt so alone; she liked to learn and found friends quickly. She also liked the city and the excitement, but in the end she decided to discontinue her education. Four years of training meant a long time away from her family. Even more importantly, in the long run she could not imagine living her life as a forest warden for this would have meant a life away from her home. There is no forest in northern Kamchatka; above all, there are tundra, muskeg and bog, and sheets of water that layer the soil. In northern Kamchatka there would have been no work for her. Thus she opted to give up a career as a forest warden and return to her home.

Today, Lidiia often regrets her decision. She believes that she (and her family) would be much better off if she had finished her education. She would have more chances of well-paid work if she had stayed in Novosibirsk, she explains. Why would this be? One important factor, she explained, was that all students were forced to take English lessons in the institute. Today in Russia—where a consumer-oriented market economy, entrepreneurship, and privatization of collective property regimes call attention to the unstable conditions of transition—speaking English is a much-sought skill. But as Lidiia says, "At that time [in the mid-1970s] I did not know why I should waste my time with it, anyway. Then it was of no use. Now I wish I had spent more time learning English and taken my studies more seriously. But what did it matter at that time? Who could then foresee the future? Who could know what would happen to Russia and to us?"

How did state-endorsed constructions of gender make it possible for Lidiia to move to Novosibirsk in the first place? This is not only a question of ethnographic importance; it also involves attention to the irrevocable power of decisions made. Every decision lays the ground for further ones. Every decision entails the future.

To some extent, the possibility of education Lidiia was offered needs to be seen in the light of Soviet state models of gender and government programs. In the mid-1970s when Lidiia lived in Novosibirsk, Soviet programs encouraged the active participation of women in industry and labour. Indeed, the state-endorsed ideal of the "Soviet Woman"—the idea that women were not separated from men but should be their equals in economic and social relations—was deeply integrated in the gendered fabric of Soviet everyday life. Born in the revolution and the civil war, the Soviet Woman became the leading, pan-national ideal for all women workers (Clements, 1985: 220). Spending her days toiling in factories, plowing fields of gigantic proportions or fighting bravely in wars, the Soviet Woman was deeply imbricated in, and shaped, the gendered fabric of Soviet life. Indeed, her history has been written as one of conspicuous achievement, in which prestige was won through the heroic performance of work ("Heroines of the Soviet Union," "Heroines of Socialist Labour" and all the other heroines of the five-year plans),[15] together with the display of modesty, courage, boldness and dedication (see Bridger,

Kay and Pinnick, 1996; Clements, 1985: 220). Thus linked in its political origins to a revolutionary ethos and ideal of economic emancipation and work, labour was the key category of femininity. Ethnographic records, too, imply that Koriak women had professional expertise and were engaged in wage-labour, just like men (Antropova, 1971: 192). It was in this context of state encouragement and programs that Lidiia was offered the opportunity to prosper and learn. But then she decided that this was not the kind of education she wanted.

Marriage

Back in Ossora, she met again one of her former schoolmates, Oleg. It was not long before they decided to marry. Their families agreed. The marriage, Lidiia explained, was a joyous occasion. Out of white reindeer furs, one aunt sewed her a dress, and after the wedding registration her mother drew a Greek cross with reindeer blood on the couple's foreheads. Many of their relatives attended the wedding. There were crisp cakes, cold dishes of chopped fruit, vegetables and fish, seal fat, fish soup and even some frozen reindeer brain and marrow. Lidiia said that she thought that she and Oleg were off to a good start.

And so it seemed. They had no difficulty in finding an apartment in Ossora. One of Lidiia's maternal uncles, who had worked all his life as a herder in one of Ossora's state-run reindeer brigades, had obtained occupancy of an apartment nearby the house in which Lidiia's mother lived. Preferring a life in the tundra to, as he said, the "dull" life in the village, he did not find it hard to offer the newlywed couple his one-room suite. In light of the notorious housing shortages in the Soviet Union, and the local conditions that privileged Russian and Ukrainian families in obtaining adequate housing, the couple felt lucky indeed. Unlike other young Koriak (and sometimes Russian) couples who were forced to spend the first years of their marriage in their parent's home, they had in no time at all a place of their own.

In the beginning their marriage went well. Lidiia worked as a clerk behind the counter in one of Ossora's collectively owned food stores, while Oleg earned his living as a machinist. In Ossora these were standard work activities for many Koriak women and men I met. Because Koriaks are considered to be bumbling know-nothings who are inept at technical skills, they are frequently denied work or get poorly paid jobs. Many Koriak women and men I knew find it hard to challenge the insidious indications of this argument and retreat either into quiet despair or silence. But Lidiia and Oleg were content making their living with what they knew best. They earned the money they needed, and they could even afford to buy a refrigerator. Two years into their marriage Lidiia gave birth to a daughter, and three years later their second daughter was born. Lidiia felt that her life was going well.

He was, she thought, also satisfied. Since the beginning of their lives Oleg had doted on his daughters; he played with them and took them out to fish and camp. They also adored him. But slowly fissures appeared. He appeared discontented, tense, worked-up. His answers grew short, and he ceased spending much time with his family. Lidiia remembered how he began to talk about wanting a son. He loved his daughters, he said, but only with a son could he go hunting and explain machinery and other technical devices. He also complained about the narrow space in the apartment. There was not enough room for everybody in the family, he said. He began to stay away from home; he also began to drink.

To allay her husband's yearning for a son, Lidiia decided to give in to her husband's desire and complaints. The couple adopted a six-month-old boy.[16] Lidiia also hoped that she could persuade Oleg again to take care of his daughters and spend more time at home. Although she had never been entirely sure if adopting one more child was truly a good idea, she remained hopeful that in the end everything would work out. She expressed some of her doubts about the rightness of their decision in explaining, "I gave in to Oleg because I wanted to do him a favour. I hoped he would come back to the family."

Hanging On

But although Oleg very much cared for his infant son, he continued to drink. He also continued to stay out all night long. Sometimes, bingeing with his friends from the village, he would not come home for days. Lidiia grew weary and flew quickly into a rage. The children either withdrew into silence, or threw fits like the ones they had seen. In the end, after several years of alcohol and hard drinking, Oleg collapsed dead on the wooden staircase of the house. Although Lidiia, Oleg's neighbours and close kin explained that his death had been imminent ("the way he was drinking he was bound to die"), it still came as a shock. Not allowing anyone to lay blame on her husband or his friends, Lidiia explained, "He was tired. He was fed up." And she continued to explain that he simply had not wanted to live in this world anymore, "Look at us! Look at how we live! Do you call that a life? Even the dogs here live better than we do." And the worst thing, she added, is that only a few believed in the possibility of betterment or could muster even a bit of hope.

Among Lidiia's family and friends, Oleg's death sparked different and contradictory responses. Members of Lidiia's family each helped in their own way. Her mother and eldest sister, who lived together in a neighbouring house, cooked for Lidiia's children. Lidiia's brother, who spent much time—often weeks on end—at their mother's place, helped the children with their homework and school assignments; he also took them fishing and took Lidiia's son on hikes in the tundra. Lidiia's youngest sister showed her nieces how to use make-up, how to alter skirts so that they looked like new and talked with them about contraception and various means of birth control.[17] Lidiia gratefully appreciated the loyalty and efforts of her kin, but she also began to express some anger and dissatisfaction about the pressure she experienced from them. For all the help they were able to give and willing to provide, they also began to express opinions that Lidiia was losing her footing in life, that she was becoming irresponsible with her children and unresponsive to criticism, that her behaviour was erratic and her changes in mood hard to bear. Lidiia's neighbours agreed. In the house they could hear her scream and yell, they complained. And often they would hear strange sounds, as if something was falling with a thud. Maybe Lidiia was drunk? To this question Lidiia only sharply replied that her neighbours were drinking as well, she had known that for a long time, and they should keep their noses in their own affairs. And other friends could go to hell if they really thought that she had turned into a slovenly and bedraggled woman.

This was not the kind of answer her family and neighbours expected, and they grew increasingly impatient with her. But Lidiia's snappishness and fits of anger were not exclusively fueled by her husband's death and her feelings of dependence on her kin. They also need to be seen in the larger context of economic and social changes that have exacerbated life in Koriak communities to such an extent that I heard many Koriak women and men frequently lamenting the weariness and gloom of village life. Increasing poverty, food shortages, and the daily strains of uncertainty press down on communities. Alcoholism and high blood pressure kills women and men before they reach their mid-40s; and one of the biggest problems with which communities struggle is how to avoid the violent deaths of many young men who die on, or because of, drinking sprees.[18] But while it is certainly true that alcoholism is a problem in Koriak communities, it is equally true that it is also a problem in the wider Russian society.[19] The problem is that Koriaks are part of a prejudiced discourse in which Whites view drinking as a serious sign of the loss of traditional Koriak "culture," and of the inability of indigenous peoples to adopt to social change (for comparison see Povinelli, 1993: 94).

Frustration

Together with other Koriak women and men, Lidiia also experienced the sharpening of poverty and financial worries in the mid-1990s when many workers in Ossora did not receive salaries for three or four months at a time, and others, including Lidiia, went unpaid for as much as eight or nine months. But she also felt fortunate that she had been able to keep her job. In Russia, one serious consequence of market reforms, a renewed emphasis on economic initiative, and private entrepreneurship has been chronic unemployment, the consequences of which, in Ossora, are directly experienced by those who worked in former state-run economic structures and institutions. At the same time, runaway inflation and the failure of government to agree on charges for even such essential products as bread and tea had spiraled prices to previously unimaginable heights and left many in dire poverty and without any economic possibility. In this context, women are generally acknowledged as one group that are seriously disadvantaged by this process of economic restructuring. Women have been hit much harder than men by unemployment, and are expected to suffer severely as mass layoffs in the industrial sector become an inevitable step in the privatization of state enterprises. For Lidiia this fear was doubled by structures of regional inequality that disadvantaged Koriak women and men. Her daily work—heaving countless kilo-heavy sacks of sugar, flour, barley, rice and grains into the storeroom behind the counter, lifting parcels of sugar, coffee, tea and cans of bottled fruit and greens onto high racks and shelves, and arranging glasses of conserves such as tomatoes and hot peppers into artful pyramids—still gave her an income, albeit one that was rarely paid. The work also exhausted her. She was frustrated. In the evening hours she began to stay behind with her colleagues, spending increasing portions of her salary on drink.

Thus, Lidiia's drinking increased. She also worried that, maybe, she lacked the strength to keep her family together. This concern was particularly stirred by the fact that her eldest daughter, Zina, had turned into a difficult and self-willed teen. When Zina was approximately 15 years old she decided to leave home and move in with her boyfriend, a young Koriak man from a neighbouring village. Thus she moved to his settlement; the couple had no money, and lived in a small, tin-roofed debilitated shack close to the shore. Rumours flew to Ossora that Zina's husband did not allow his wife to leave the hut;

that she had to stay all day long with his grandmother who did not speak Russian (and Zina spoke no Koriak); that Zina looked disheveled and starved; and that she was pregnant. Lidiia became angry; communication between mother and daughter ceased. In public Lidiia voiced her vexation in strong words: "He is handsome, but he is also fucking nuts. I cannot see how she throws her life away. She doesn't go anywhere. All day she sits at home. Waiting for him. She lives in dirt. He ruins her life."

But in spite of her public display of rage and lack of forbearance, Lidiia was not the tough-minded parent she seemed. She began to blame herself for allowing the situation to erode the way it had. She troubled herself with questions of why she could not take care of her children well enough and why their father had to die. She also thought about the ways in which she could improve her situation. Should she leave Ossora and move to another place? Or become a street-trader, open her own kiosk where she would sell clothing, cosmetics and other articles?[20] In the end, however, she dismissed these options as foolish and absurd. They were unrealistic because she did not have the money to carry them out. And this fact was part of the problem, she said. Indeed, it had created the problems between her and Zina in the first place. How would she have been able to provide some space for the couple? She did not have the money to buy a new place. And, of course, she could understand that Zina wanted to leave home because she had no room of her own, that she was fed up with taking care of her younger brother all the time only because her mother could not afford to keep her son in daycare, that she wanted to go out with boys. Which teen in Ossora didn't? But she also thought about the fact that Zina was young. She wanted Zina to make her decisions carefully and without haste. She didn't want her to miss any opportunities, didn't want her to live in poverty, to end up without money or an education. It was enough that it had happened to her, why should Zina be affected by it? But now, look what she did? Fifteen years old, a drop-out from school, pregnant and without any visibly worthwhile future. Lidiia was both worried and enraged. But in the end Lidiia's concerns could not affect Zina's decision. Zina had moved out.

For what it is worth, Lidiia's open condemnations of Zina's actions did not mean that she refused to assist her daughter when she asked for help. When Zina was seven months pregnant, she left her husband and decided to return home. Lidiia offered to clear out one corner of the apartment so Zina and the newborn could stay. And that is what she did.

Love

As Lidiia found it increasingly difficult to hold her life together, she also incurred the anger of her kin. In 1994 a Russian racketeer, Dimitrii, was Lidiia's lover. Dimitrii was handsome and young; he was also aggressive and bold. Unwilling to put up with his illegal business practices and the bragging of his friends, his mother had thrown him out of her house, not caring about his whereabouts. Dimitrii had walked straight to Lidiia's place. This situation was quite disturbing to her family, who expected her to be more temperate and reliable. Her children complained that they were often not allowed into the apartment's only room but were forced to stay in the kitchen or hallway. They sought solace in slighting remarks and sneered in rage and scorn at both adults. Lidiia's sisters expressed their contempt for her lovers, and said if she would continue to act like a promiscuous woman she would soon be on her own. Her brother slowly turned his back on her, and explained that he could not understand what had gotten into her. Lidiia's mother remained silent.

Lidiia's romance with Dimitrii was a romance of ambiguity. Initially, Lidiia said, she took him as a lover because, truly, she was fed up with the depressing conditions of her life, that what she needed was a change and a lover was good for just that. But then, Dimitrii continued to stay at Lidiia's place for weeks on end. She prepared him meals and bought vodka, cigarettes and hard-to-come-by luxury foods such as butter and cheese. But although she lived with him she refused to take care of his laundry, invite his friends or keep her house clean for him in a special way. She was no maid, she said. She had no master.

But her argument did not bode well with some of the Koriak women who lived in Lidiia's immediate neighbourhood. Many of them, like Lidiia, were forced to raise their children without the help of husbands or former lovers; yet in contrast to her they lived in even more distressing conditions. There is a dark, damp, bunker-like place at the edge of the village; women without any form of support from kin or friends move here with their children. Because I knew some of these women well, I often visited them. They doubted Lidiia's concern for her children, saying that as a mother she should take better care of them. What, they challenged, had her lover to offer? That bit of fun he could provide was surely not enough to take him in. And on top of that, Lidiia even fed him. Why would she do that? To these questions Lidiia only piercingly replied that she had heard this all before, thank you very much, she was the one to make decisions in her

own life and anyway her children were not worse off than theirs. Sure Dimitrii stayed at her place, and although he was commanding and arrogant, she did not give in to all of his demands.

The different opinions swirling around Lidiia's affair draw attention to a regional pattern of power and meaning: as the sweethearts of non-Koriak men, Koriak women are often viewed as women of sexual docility and lewd passion. This is a kind of meaning that, in the Russian context, organizes much of its alleged insight around conventional ideas of economically marginalized women and, more internationally, helps to create a world in which Westerners (or other privileged groups and individuals) are not surprised, or even expect, that socially disfranchised women, including Koriak women in northern Russia, may become personal sexual slaves. It is in this context of such widely accepted truisms about "these kinds of women" in which the Russian writer's comment is set (I will return to the issue of dismissive Koriak women's interpretations of Lidiia's affair later). Yet to discuss the culturally specific and power-differentiated contours by which conventional knowledge about Koriak women is shaped, I turn to the interrelated discourses of "primitive nature" and femininity on Kamchatka's northeastern shore. In the following section the tone of my analysis must shift as I describe the political and ethnic contours of regional dominance and gender differentiation.

Difference

On Kamchatka's northeastern shore, common formulations about cultural difference and social hierarchy are framed in Koriak-Russian dialogue by drawing distinctions between the civilized and the wild *(dikii)*. Although most Koriak women and men who live in Ossora rarely spend time in the tundra (except in summer and in the fall when everybody—Russians and Koriaks alike—harvests berries or mushrooms) in the Russian imagination they are nevertheless linked to the ignorant and untamed. The Russian women and men I knew often warned me not to travel through the tundra, saying that wild animals would attack me. My reply that there were no particularly aggressive animals in the area[21] was frequently greeted with disbelief or mild smiles at my naïveté. The kind of advice I received was usually accompanied by explanations that Koriak women and men "still sleep on fur" (that is, reindeer hides), and "eat raw flesh" and "rotten fish heads" (*kislye golovki*). It was at this point that I began to think about the comments and explanations that should prevent me from traveling through the tundra in the context of cultural differentiation and boundary-making. Fur, flesh and rottenness—from a vantage point outside the tundra the imagery of raw nature truly infests White-Koriak relations along the northeastern shore.

Although Koriak women and men do not easily shrug off the negative characterizations of their Russian and Ukrainian neighbours, the terms of these interpretations do not go unchallenged. In being associated with the wild, Koriak women and men are not at a loss for words. They often choose to turn these accusations around; their strategy is one that involves transforming the rhetoric of primitivity into the rhetoric of knowledge. The Koriak women and men I knew made fun of Russian women and men who "do not know how to dress in the tundra" and thus constantly complain about the cold; about Russian women "who walk with high heels in the tundra" whereupon they then cannot walk but instead dangerously stumble along, and who shriek when they hear stories about "wild animals" such as bears. They emphasize, too, that tundra places as spaces of living require forms of knowledge that can be claimed as expert knowledge in the context of White-Koriak social relations. Consider reindeer herding, for example. In a world in which the physical and spiritual proximity between reindeer and Koriak women and men is of fundamental significance for the existence of humans, reindeer are at the centre of this world. Self-reliant as to harsh weather conditions and human-made disaster, they are largely self-producing. Yet to sustain the capacity of reindeer herds, animals have to be cared for. Reindeer herders check on their animals every day. They know where animals graze, how many animals are ill, which animals feel weak, how many heifers will calf in the spring, what the chances are for calves to survive and so forth. If necessary, a herder will look for hours on end to find one lost animal. Herders also know which reindeer are well suited to carry baggage and pull sleds. And they debate the number and tentative strength of animals before they decide on a kill. These are forms of knowledge, Koriak women and men explain, that also their Russian and Ukrainian neighbours depend on to live well in the northern peninsula. Yet in contrast to the latter, for Koriak women and men these forms of knowledge do not invoke a threatening nature but involve familiarity with animals and the land.

The cultural bias expressed in White regional conversations about Koriak women and men as simple, primitive and wild is only one component in the discourse of cultural relations at Kamchatka's northeastern shore. A second dimension emerges when the alleged lack of propriety and cultivation of Koriaks and the deval-

uation of women comes together in images of Koriak women as racially deformed or as submissive women who need not be convinced to spend amorous and sexually defined time with men. This recognition was powerfully impressed on me when I met a Russian biologist who had hiked the peninsula up and down to produce a book on its bird life. Literally within the first minutes of our acquaintance, and without further ado, he asked me if I also took the view that Koriak women are "physically bad-looking." "Their necks sink in their shoulders," he explained, and "their protruding lips are clearly markers of another race." But the most memorable incident that pointed to the entrapment of Koriak women as willing sexual servants in the double-crossed discourses of cultural difference and gender was when another ethnographer and I were invited by two local newspaper reporters to give an interview on our work in northern Kamchatka. While we were finishing up the interview one reporter decided to feature a picture of us ("as a joint venture, so to speak") on the front page. For the picture, however, he asked me to sit on my colleague's lap; I refused. The man began to press for me to sit on his lap. I refused again. After some quarreling back and forth the reporter ended the argument by saying, "You are just not like a Koriak woman." I tensed at this, but no one seemed to think much of it. After all, this comment only reflected what nearly everybody thought.

Here, however, let me hasten to clarify one important issue before I move on to explore how Russian-centred notions of femininity are extended into Koriak women's lives. I am not arguing here that Koriak women and men consider all White women and men in Ossora with the same insolence and disdain, as if the latter were a homogenous group. Some of the Koriak women and men I knew were good friends with their Russian neighbours, and they helped one another by sharing food and, if they were younger women, cosmetics and clothes. They also (albeit not very often) visited each other to party, dance or play cards. But in the broader picture of Koriak-Russian relations, Koriaks and Russians stuck to themselves and associated rarely with each other. In this sense, I have shown how categories of cultural difference are a site of critical engagement with social hierarchy.

The intertwining of cultural difference and naturalized hierarchy is only one set of meanings in which to explain Lidiia's story. Recalling her words that she does not consider her White lover as her master makes it a little less possible to assume that she fully accepts the terms in which the power of Whites is set. Lidiia does not see herself as the docile lover and sexual servant of a Russian racketeer. Although she cooks meals for the man she lives with, allows him to sleep in the only bed and takes care of his comfort, she is not overwhelmed by his power. Yet while her insistence on her own (albeit limited) autonomy offers a context that allows us to see why Lidiia is not (entirely) part of the sexual docility with which White men frame Koriak women, it does not entirely explain the domestic dimensions of the writer's comment. To explore these dimensions, I must, once more, return to the politicized context of gender in Soviet Russia and its concomitants in Russia today.

One much-commented on feature of the order of gender in contemporary Russian life is the bias that women are expected to carry the burden of domestic labour.[22] Indeed, in contemporary analyses one key concern is to examine how and why women are expected to perform the myriad chores of housekeeping: cooking, cleaning, mending and caring for children. These studies are not satisfied with exposing the "terrible weight of the double burden," of the combination of domestic and familial obligations that have been ascribed (with the support of the state) to women; they are also interested in how these assignments are involved in the creation of feminine subject formations. To some extent, feminist scholars (Clements, 1985; Kay, 1997) suggest, the return of the feminine can be read as one reaction against the idea of the Soviet Woman; that is, the public endorsement and appreciation of feminine values.

As one response to the notion of the Soviet Woman, then, hackneyed stereotypes of women as fragile, home keeping, and family minded make headway in newspaper columns and public behaviour and talk. Along with a renewed emphasis on the "essentially feminine" (Kay, 1997: 81) has come a public endorsement and affirmation of traditionally restrained notions of femininity. But while the labours of the house and the conspicuous display of beauty, freshness and the prestige granted through fashion are imperative in the ceremonial display of femininity, they are also an important element in gender boundary maintenance: that is, in setting female and male worlds apart.

Yet why does Lidiia's brother agree with the Russian writer?

In contemporary life, young and middle-aged Koriak men—like many White men—use claims of a bold and aggressive sexuality to establish male power and reputations. Yet at the same time, marked as black and as part of the "wild," they also enter into racialized discourses and are often humiliated in front of Russian men. These experiences are painful and can be destructive, yet they also encourage the idea that male strength is linked to expressions of sexual assertion. This common under-

standing makes it possible for many younger Koriak men to transform their "discursive" impotence in interethnic relations to sexual prowess at home. Because such notions are supported by White men, they also accrue additional political meaning.

But this strategy of transforming humiliation into strength is not one of Koriak men's own making; it is also one that has been, perhaps unwittingly, endorsed by the state. Let us return, for a moment, to the experience of the *internat*, of Soviet residential-school type education. As in the 1930s and 1940s, this education was imposed on all Koriak children, the majority of women and men around and below 50 years of age lived for 10 months a year in the *internat*. Although these government programs and interventions were not intended to create distinctions defined by gender, they created gendered distinctions to the extent that Koriak men were encouraged to assume authoritative roles in their families and vis-à-vis female kin. This is not the kind of gender segregation Koriak women and men elders describe. Although they explain that they knew divisions of gender in connection with household tasks and raising children, they also point to the fact that both women and men were quite capable of performing each other's tasks. In particular, Koriak women elders reprimand young Koriak men for behaving in boisterous and assuming ways. Theirs, they say, should be a behaviour of respect and consideration, not of joining acts of female humiliation and male self-admiration.

And Dignity

Many Koriak women like Lidiia have no choice but to deal with the issues of difference and the conventions of gender in relation to both regional inequalities and local male authority. They are not demure; even the most shy offered criticisms and ironic remarks. Their comments make it less possible to assume that such assumptions are stable.

In the summer of 1994, what had only been rumoured in Ossora for several months, came true: a bar was soon to open its doors. Much anticipated, this was a noteworthy event in Ossora. Although cheap stand-up *pivnoj*s (beer-halls) had sprawled across Russia, Ossora had never housed such a place. Neither had it a *dom kultury* (literally "house of culture"),[23] a gussied-up counter at which alcoholic drinks were served. But for the young Russian man who opened the bar, and the customers who frequented it, the bar was not a marker of decadence but one of new middle-class aspirations, a sign to map the new Russia of money and enjoyment onto Ossorian space. It was part of the desire to participate in the "new Russia" and to capitalize on a peculiar moment in its history.

Asked to work as daily help in the bar, Lidiia was hesitant to take the job. To be sure, most of all it would have meant more money. Maybe she would be able to buy a larger apartment? Maybe she could afford to buy some clothes for her children, and something for Zina's baby? But maybe she would fall even deeper into drink and despair? Would people begin to think that she was low-minded and risqué? Would she, in the end, prove them right by becoming unkempt and promiscuous? On the one hand, the offer was seductive enough for her to give it some serious thought. On the other hand it would associate her, even more so than before, with uncouth behaviour and the stigma of drinking.

Her fears were plausible and quite judicious. Apart from being a marker of middle-class aspiration in Ossora, the bar is also a threshold space, lying seductively, yet within easy reach, in the zone between pleasure and degeneration. Lidiia was quite aware of these meanings. I remember one particular evening in which she struggled hard to find some answers to her questions. Wavering back and forth between making the decision whether or not to take the job, she asked everybody she met what she should do. Yet she felt unable to make the decision.

In the end Lidiia decided not to take the job. She explained it would not be good for her reputation, and her family would probably take it quite badly too. More importantly, in the long run it might harm her children. Although her life might be filled with poverty and not much to go by, she also worked to craft a personal agency involving dignity and pride. For that was what it meant to be a person.

A Hopeless Case?

Here, of course, I have been describing only one Koriak woman's story in one area at one moment of time. Yet Lidiia's story is not a solitary example of a Koriak woman's social predicaments; nor is it a particularly exceptional illustration of the interconnections between gender, ethnic difference and social disadvantage on Kamchatka's northeastern shore. I could invoke at least a half-dozen examples of women who lived in structurally comparable situations and have made choices, including romances with White men as lovers, similar to Lidiia. But instead of centring on the economic issues and social disadvantages that engaged all Koriak women I knew, I have tried to show social processes from the perspective of one woman's idiosyncratic positioning within wider regional webs of inequality and power. In this way, I have diverged from most other accounts on the Russian Far East in my approach to cultural analysis. By examining one woman's

difficult relationship with dominant, Russian-centred models of femininity and primitivity, government policies and social change, I hope to open up an alternative view to post-Soviet analyses that focus on frameworks of nationality and cultural identity. Such analyses can easily isolate the people represented from the world of readers in a dichotomy that presumes a false homogeneity on both sides. In contrast, Lidiia's story makes room for the recognition of one person's individual desires. Attention to individual stories can bring local issues into the centre of wider affairs.

The title of this article has taken its cue from the writer's comment. As regional (and national) configurations of gender and cultural inequality support the position of men as authoritative judges of morally commanding sexual and domestic standards, women find it hard to challenge the conventions in which such standards are set. In telling Lidiia's story I have invoked a common world, full of cultural stereotypes, social hierarchies and political disadvantage. Because Koriak men frequently support such norms, these kinds of assertions gain additional political meaning. As long as Koriak men agree with commentaries such as the writer's, "impotence" in interethnic relations is transformed into sexual prowess at home. This is a world which inspires a variety of personal and political agendas. Instead of condemning Lidiia as "hopeless" or morally inept, it might be more helpful to show her own positioning and stakes in this matter. To argue for recognition and respect for a welter of divergent agendas, as Tsing (1993: 17) so perceptively remarks, is not the same as a naïve endorsement of cultural (and political) diversity. The point is to specify the political challenges at hand.

In this context of struggle, however, a different kind of gender differentiation is created as well. As Koriak women share the perspective of unruly women as morally debauched and domestically inept, they join men in the project to tame women into female propriety and domesticity. I think specifically of the way Lidiia criticizes her daughter in similar terms in which she was criticized. This is unusual terrain for an anthropology of marginalized minorities and anti-colonial struggle.[24] A great deal of research on indigenous minorities is content to show the struggle of and social disadvantage experienced by women from the perspective of community. Ethnographic studies of gender have rarely asked questions about the social dynamics in which internal gender differentiations among women can emerge. Yet a central challenge for feminist anthropology is to position the social statements of cultural subjects politically. Raising the issue of gender differentiation calls attention to community formation and hierarchy, along with attention to gender as both an imaginative construct and a point of diverging positionings. It also involves attention to the social and political possibilities as well as constraints inherent in existent gender configurations.

Part of the problem for Koriak women on Kamchatka's northeastern shore is that—until now—they had few social possibilities to deal with issues of poverty in a way that they consider promising and fair. As long as Russia's contemporary struggle for democracy, economic growth and an international identity uses familiar colonial logics to refuse political recognition to indigenous minorities; as long as cultural communities find that Russia presents laws for legal and cultural equality but equality is restrained by the continuation of regional structures of power; and as long as political standards privilege national assumptions of gender and cultural difference, women may find it hard to offer challenges to formations of political and gender inequality. In this context, women's own agendas find no clearly articulated political voice. Their opposing strategies exist, instead, in unspoken protest and fleeting refusals of men's desires. As women are differentially positioned in relation to both regional and gendered authority, throwing out irreverent remarks can become a form of back talk against these various forms of authority. Thus, Lidiia did not dare to publicly challenge the writer. But, later, when I asked her what she thought about him she unambiguously answered that she thought him "stupid" and "arrogant."

In giving Lidiia the last word, I wish to stress that although women see few possibilities to respond to commentaries that describe them in derogatory terms, the terms of such remarks do not go unchallenged. Lidiia's own comment, I hope, gives the reader a sense that women try to carve out dignity and self-respect. Here I can only begin to break up the moral monolith created by the discourse of Russian-centred femininity by showing one woman's story. Holding on to Lidiia's words, I believe it would be misleading and wrong to see her as "hopeless" and "already gone." In this article I have offered little evidence to support an analysis of Lidiia as defying or even "resisting." But neither is her story rooted in passive acceptance.

Notes

1 Between 1992 and 1994, I conducted field work in northern Kamchatka for 14 months. Here I am especially indebted to Lidiia who allowed me so generously to enter her life. Research in northern Kamchatka was funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and a research grant from the Centre for Development, Technol-

ogy, and Society at McGill University. I would also like to thank Pauline Aucoin for her gracious invitation to present parts of Lidiia's story in a session entitled "Gender and the Politics of Culture" at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Anthropology Society in Toronto in 1998. The story of another Koriak woman, structurally somewhat similar to Lidiia's, was presented in the anthropology departmental speaker series at York University. I would like to express my thanks to Ken Little for his invitation, and to faculty and students for their insightful questions and support.

2 Videotapes, especially pirated videotapes, arrived in Russia in the beginning of the 1990s. Hollywood-style romances are particularly successful; Ossora's market is flooded with horror films and pornography.

3 Important volumes on issues of gender in the post-Soviet context include Buckley (1992); Marsh (1996); and Buckley (1997).

4 Thus, for example, anthropologists have used positioned storytelling as one kind of discursive practice to disrupt the power of homogenizing analytical styles (see, for example, Abu-Lughod, 1993; Tsing, 1993). Ridington (1990), Cruikshank (1998) and Goulet (1998) have shown the relevance of this discussion for northern anthropology. In a somewhat different vein, Cruikshank (1990) has also shown how storytelling is one important means of calling attention to the linked formation of identity and community organization. Other scholars have used storytelling as one means to describe individuals' creativity and struggle (see, for example, Behar, 1993; Cole, 1991; Ries, 1997).

5 For an in-depth critique of Soviet social science narratives of economic advancement and progress see Slezkine (1994: 323-335) and Grant (1995).

6 For a critique of Soviet anthropology see, for example, Vakhtin, 1994. For critical analysis of ethnographic representations see Batia'nova and Kalabanov, 1998.

7 My generalizations here, however, miss important exceptions. These are dealt with in Balzer, 1993; Anderson, 1996; and Kerttula, 1997.

8 I have to thank Alona Yerofima for reminding me of the importance of this point.

9 See, for example, Trinh, 1989; Spivak, 1993; hooks, 1989; and Mohanty, Russo and Torres, 1991.

Indigenous scholars and scholars of minority groups have long argued against the use of any form of biographical and personal information that may lead to an exposure of private life (for example, Bentz, 1997; Allen, 1998). They call into question the conventions and practices of anthropologists that often use individual's lives and stories to demonstrate the idiosyncrasies and limits of dominant cultural categories and cultural formations of power. They rightfully argue, too, that anthropologists feature private lives in great detail without paying attention to the negative repercussions such descriptions might have for the person described. From this criticism, then, detailed descriptions of individuals are one form of cultural analysis that is potentially hurtful and offensive.

Other indigenous scholars, however, have suggested that life histories and individuals' stories are a good place for cultural analysis. For example, writer Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (1998) takes issue with the idea that one actually needs to be native to understand some of the issues and complexities that involve native life. She argues that stories of individuals may further communication and understanding because they touch readers on a more personal level than distant academic descriptions.

10 In the Soviet Union apartments were not privately rented by property owners but distributed and run under the auspices of the state. Usually a person had to apply to the local authorities to be eligible for an apartment. The waiting lists were long and one could wait for several years.

11 Ossora was the only settlement on the northeastern shore where there were cars. Two roads in Ossora offered the only possibility for driving, with one street leading to the settlement Karaga, approximately six kilometres to the south.

12 The term "minority," here, is my own awkward positioning of Koriak women and men in broader ethnographic discourses but also government practices and regional administrative divisions. A history of political inequality has labeled indigenous peoples in Russia, such as the Koriaks, as the "Small Peoples of the North" (*malye narody severa*). Koriaks were called a *narodnost'*; politically too insignificant to be offered constitutional influence and weight; numerically too small to be called a nation.

13 The Koriak population of Ossora consists of resettled Koriaks from four different villages. The village Kichiga was one of the first settlements to be closed on Kamchatka's northeastern shore. Closed in 1956, residents were resettled to either Tymlat (a village north of Ossora) or Ossora. In 1974, it was decided that the village of Anapka (north of Ossora and Tymlat) should be closed. The water, it was said, was too shallow during the tide; freighters and other cargo ships could not anchor in Anapka's harbour. Its population had lived there for approximately 20 years when they were relocated to the respective villages of Il'pyr' (north of Anapka), Tymlat or Ossora. Their first dislocation had taken place in 1952 when the old village of Anapka was looked at as economically non-viable because it was too far away from the shore. The people of Rekinniki were relocated more often than anybody else in the region, namely, on three occasions. Until 1947 their village was located in the northwestern tundra near the river Pustoe. The population still lived in tents; transport was difficult and goods needed to be carried to and from the shore across the land. In that year villagers were resettled to a newly built Rekinniki, once again close to the river Pustoe but this time only 12 kilometres from the ocean. Ten years later, in 1957, the villagers were moved again, this time to a location directly on the coast. This village was closed in 1980; everybody was moved to either Tymlat or Ossora.

14 Usually translated as "boarding school," the term *internat* describes a type of residential school system for indigenous peoples in Russia. In northern Kamchatka—again, as elsewhere in the Russian North—children were forcefully removed from their parents and families to grow up in educational environments of state-endorsed models of ideology. Housing, clothing and education were free for northern indigenous peoples, yet so was—as many argue—their alienation from prior generations and their ways of life. I refer readers interested in these issues to the analyses of Vakhtin (1994) and Bloch (1996).

15 The idea of the "Heroine Mother" was also part of this rhetoric, but it was never allowed to take precedence over toughness and bravery as female values.

16 Lidiia and Oleg adopted their son from a young Koriak woman who had had an affair with a Russian man.

17 Issues of birth control are important community concerns at the northeastern shore. In particular young women and teenage girls suffer from and express themselves about the problems unwanted pregnancies can bring.

18 See also Pika's (1993) research on suicide among northern indigenous peoples in Russia. I refer readers interested in the social conditions of living in the Russian North to the work of Pika, Dahl and Larsen (1995).

19 See, for example, White (1996), and Rethmann (1999).

20 As new economic institutions and business practices develop in Russia, entrepreneurship has become an attractive economic means for women who find it difficult to find wage labour or set up their own companies. If they succeed in becoming entrepreneurs, they are usually limited to the service sector, or textile and fashion businesses. On this issue, see Bruno (1997) and Humphrey (1995).

21 Except—maybe and only sometimes—for bears. But that is a very, very different story.

22 There is a rich literature on this issue. For issues of domesticity and the "double burden" in Russia, see, for example, Attwood (1996); Goscilo (1993); Koval (1995); Kay (1997); and Waters (1992). For historical analyses see Clements (1994) and Dunham (1976). For an analysis of the tensions between traditional female roles of docility and recent economic desires see Ries (1997).

23 A *dom kultury* is a place in which people would conduct political meetings and engage in social activities. The house of culture was a widespread institution in Soviet Russia; indeed, every village I visited on the northeastern shore had one.

24 The way in which I have represented this issue should not divert attention from the fact that cultural homogeneity, non-differentiation and so forth, can be powerful political and strategic tools to force the issue of minority status into government debates and public recognition.

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Feminism, Anthropology and the Politics of Excision in Mali: Global and Local Debates in a Postcolonial World

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Abstract: This article examines the politics and discourses surrounding female circumcision, and explores ethical approaches to its study for feminist anthropologists. First I present an overview of the international debate on these operations, and review the literature on "female genital mutilation." Unfortunately these writings that are meant to help empower African women can "colonize" them (after Mohanty, 1991). Second, the current debates around the practice in Mali are discussed. The issue has become a metonym for politically, ideologically and economically motivated discussions on gender, age, caste, Islam and Westernization.

Résumé: Cet article explore les discours et les relations de pouvoir qui entourent et sous-tendent les débats sur la circoncision féminine. L'auteure explore des approches éthiques qui pourraient être adoptées par les anthropologues féministes. Tout d'abord, un survol historique des débats sur la scène internationale est présenté, incluant une revue des publications sur les «mutilations génitales». Malheureusement ces écrits qui se veulent libérateurs pour les femmes africaines peuvent avoir comme conséquence de les coloniser à nouveau (cf. Mohanty, 1991). Dans une deuxième partie l'auteure présente les résultats de ses recherches sur les débats actuels sur l'excision au Mali. Le débat sur l'excision fonctionne comme une métonymie à travers laquelle sont débattue d'autres grandes questions sociales et politiques sur les rapports sociaux entre les sexes et entre les jeunes et les aîné-e-s, sur la stratification sociale par castes, et sur les mérites comparés de l'Islam et de l'occidentalisation.

Introduction

For a feminist anthropologist, there is no comfortable position from which to study female circumcision. The very decision to write (or not) about the topic becomes a political statement, and so is one's choice of tone and terminology. The issue has become a highly sensitive nexus where converge some of the most difficult ethical debates in feminism and anthropology: the issues of cultural relativism, international human rights, difference, ethnocentrism and Western imperialism.

This article examines the politics and the different discourses surrounding the issue of female circumcision, and explores ethical approaches to their study for feminist anthropologists. The first part presents an historical overview of the international debate on these operations, sketching the meanings that they have come to carry for feminists, anthropologists and human-rights activists. A review of the literature on "female genital mutilation" illustrates how most anti-circumcision activists dismiss "tradition" and try to inscribe new meanings onto the practices, categorizing them as "violence against women." Yet writings which are meant to help free women from oppression unfortunately have often been seen to "colonize" (after Mohanty, 1991) African and Muslim women. This predicament suggests a role that anthropologists can play in this debate: helping to both contextualize these operations, discussing their local functions and cultural meanings and to understand why efforts to eradicate what are considered by Western feminists to be such offensive, patriarchal practices, are resisted by women themselves.

The specific cultural meanings of female circumcision, however, are multiple and changing. The research I recently completed in southern Mali[1] was based on an understanding of culture as a complex "network of perspectives," as "an ongoing debate" (Hannerz, 1992: 262). Malian society is one in which ethnicity has always been fluid and where cultural meanings, as well as indi-

viduals, have long and extensively crossed group boundaries (cf. Amselle, 1990), particularly in urban areas where I worked. The current debates and discourses on and around excision in Mali that I survey in the second part of this article reveal that this issue has become a metonym for politically, ideologically and economically motivated discussions on gender, age, caste, Islam, Westernization and the role of the state. Throughout the article I discuss the dilemmas that obtain for a Western feminist anthropologist researching and writing about a topic so politically charged.

Formulation of a Global Debate: Feminism, Anthropology and Human Rights

Two decades ago, the various operations which anthropologists usually refer to as "female circumcision," but which activists make a point of calling "female genital mutilation,"[2] became symbols *par excellence* of patriarchal oppression for radical Western feminists—the "mutilation to end all mutilations" (Keyi-Ayema, 1995). A chapter of Mary Daly's influential 1978 book, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, was devoted to "African Genital Mutilation: The Unspeakable Atrocities." Fran Hosken, the self-appointed American champion of the international campaign for the abolition of the practices, started publishing in the late 1970s. The issue became part of a global debate at the 1980 Non-Governmental Organizations Forum in Copenhagen, the parallel meeting to the mid-decade United Nations World Conference on Women, where it bitterly divided Western and African feminists (Dorkenoo, 1994: 61-63; Gilliam, 1991: 218).

For Angela Gilliam, the 1980 debate in Copenhagen epitomized the division in the women's movement "between those who believe that the major struggle for women is increasing their access to, and control over, the world's resources and those who believe that the main issue is access to, and control over, orgasms" (1991: 217). In her analysis, the way that outraged "Western" women championed the issue at Copenhagen revealed "latent racism," "intellectual neocolonialism" and "anti-Arab and anti-Islamic fervour" (ibid.: 218). Because the issue was presented as " 'savage customs' from 'backward' African and Arab cultures," African representatives, even those who had been advocating the abolition of the practices on health grounds, felt compelled to defend the custom (ibid.). Clearly and rightly so, Gilliam faults Western feminists for their pejorative tone and for their failure to denounce with equivalent vigour the economic and political oppression of women in Africa (see also Gruenbaum, 1982, 1996). An Ethiopian participant at the Conference explained that "Western women should stop their 'crusade against female circumcision' and help African women with more basic health concerns, such as food and water" (Boulware-Miller, 1985: 172). However, a look at Efua Dorkenoo's account of the same event reveals that Gilliam has simplified and polarized the debate.

Dorkenoo is widely recognized internationally as one of the leading experts on "female genital mutilation." Born in Ghana and a nurse by training, she is currently the Director of FORWARD International, a London-based non-governmental organization (NGO) active on health issues for African women in the UK and internationally. She has recently published on the issue (Dorkenoo, 1994), and in 1994 was awarded the Order of the British Empire for her "tireless work campaigning against FGM" (Anonymous, 1995). Her agenda in writing *Cutting the Rose* (1994) clearly was to rally as many people as possible in a global effort to eradicate "female genital mutilation." Hence her account (1994: 62-63) of the events at the NGO Forum in Copenhagen in 1980 is carefully phrased to avoid alienating any group. Despite this obvious political agenda, her narrative highlights the fact that African feminists are themselves divided on the issue. She contrasts the reactions of African delegates from East Africa to those from West Africa, pointing out that in some East African countries such as Sudan and Somalia, where the most extensive form of surgery, infibulation,[3] predominates, local eradication campaigns by 1980 already had a long history—were "more advanced," in Dorkenoo's typical evolutionary discourse. On the other hand, delegates from West Africa, where the most common types of female circumcision found are clitoridectomy and excision,[4] were shocked at what they saw as Western neocolonialist interest. According to Dorkenoo, it was the media who sensationalized the issue and caused hostility on the part of African delegates. She focusses on the *learning process* of "some Westerners who initially had strong views on immediate abolition of this 'barbaric custom' " (ibid.: 63). In her optimistic interpretation, Western participants at the Conference, after listening to the African delegates, "became convinced that the only efficient way to support African women working against the practice was by financing and supporting specific projects and educational activities planned and implemented by and with those in the countries concerned, and on their terms" (ibid.).

The debate in Copenhagen is significant because it gives some clues to the reasons why female circumcision has become so divisive an issue for the feminist commu-

nity. While it is increasingly conceptualized as a human rights issue under the rubric "violence against women," female circumcision is unlike any other gender-specific violence in the fact that, despite attempts by activists such as Dorkenoo to portray it as a global issue, as a cultural norm it is fundamentally an African phenomenon (Fitzpatrick, 1994: 542).[5] Therefore in the international human rights discourse, this issue seems to pit the West *qua* International Community against Africa, a situation which, considering the continued economic exploitation of the African continent and the history of missionaries' and colonialists' efforts at eradicating female circumcision, readily leads to accusations of Western imperialism. As Rhoda E. Howard observes, "[i]n the present world economic situation, in which many African economies continue to spiral downward, culture can be seen as the last bastion of national pride. When all else in gone, culture can be preserved" (1995: 111). As Michel Erlich (1991) argues for France and Sondra Hale (1994) for the United States, outrage at female circumcision still too often serves as an outlet through which racist anti-African and anti-Muslim feelings are vented. Christine Walley (1997: 409) elaborates: "interest in Europe and in the United States stems not only from feminist or humanist concerns, but also from the desire to sensationalize, to titillate, and to call attention to differences between 'us' and 'them' in ways that reaffirm notions of Western cultural superiority."

Since the 1993 UN Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, female genital mutilation has increasingly been presented as a violation of human rights. In Vienna, Sudanese surgeon and anti-circumcision activist Nahid Toubia made a presentation arguing for the conceptualization of female circumcision as a violation of the rights of children and of women (Sullivan and Toubia, 1993). While the recent strategy by the international women's movement of using a human rights approach to further gender equality (see Kerr, 1993) has undeniably been successful and empowering, in the case of female circumcision this strategy has been problematic for several reasons. First, in this process female genital operations have been homogenized and decontextualized. Further, this approach generates legal and political difficulties, as Hope Lewis has summarized (1995: 15):

> First, female genital surgery practitioners are private citizens operating without express state sanction. Second, FGS is generally performed with the "consent" of the parents of minor girls, at least some of whom are aware of the attendant health risks. Third, FGS is generally performed by females on other females. Finally, FGS has both deep cultural roots and powerful political implications for practising groups.

Additionally, as discussed above, unlike other forms of violence against women, it is non-universal.

Opposing the practice on the basis of its being a violation of the rights of the child or a violation of women's right to sexual and corporeal integrity poses other strategic problems, as argued by Kay Boulware-Miller (1985). The first approach "suggests that women who permit the operation are incompetent and abusive mothers who, in some ways, do not love their children" (1985: 166). Understandably mothers of circumcised girls feel profoundly insulted by this allegation. As Boulware-Miller argues (ibid.: 169-172), the second focus—the rights of women to sexual and corporeal integrity—alienates many African women. This is evidenced in the 1980 Copenhagen dispute mentioned above and in a recent article by Fuambai Ahmadu (1995). A young African woman and graduate student of anthropology in England, Ahmadu has published an article in *Pride* magazine defending female circumcision. She forcefully writes (1995: 45): "Protecting the rights of a minority of women who oppose the practice is a legitimate and noble cause. But mounting an international campaign to coerce 80 million adult African women to give up their tradition is unjustified." Ahmadu's personal testimony (ibid.: 44) puts in question the very premise that clitoridectomy necessarily prevents sexual pleasure. In Mali, while a few of my informants attributed their lack of sexual desire or enjoyment to excision, the great majority denied having any sexual problems, some describing satisfactory stimulation of the scar area. In the case of infibulation, Gruenbaum (1996: 462) and Lightfoot-Klein (1989: 84-86) have reported conversations with Sudanese women who gave convincing descriptions of orgasm.

The "right to health" argument is a more culturally sensitive approach. This approach is less problematic for local governments, as appeals to end female circumcision can be integrated into wider health-promotion campaigns that enjoy public support. However this requires political and financial commitment on the part of the state and of health workers. In countries where the practice has become medicalized—such as is increasingly the case in Mali—those who are or would be entrusted with the task of educating the public on the health hazards of female circumcision (nurses, midwives and doctors) are sometimes the very people who operate on girls. Additionally, this medicalization of the practice is at least in part an unwanted result of anti-circumcision health campaigns, as the public in many cases has started to de-

mand safer operations. A final difficulty with the health approach is that the biomedical discourse—as we will see later—tends to dehumanize and decontextualize circumcision, reducing women and girls to their genitals. Despite these difficulties, the right to health argument is still favoured by most local activists because it is not socially acceptable for most women from groups that practise female circumcision publicly to demand the right to enjoy sex—leaving aside the question of whether they in fact do or not.

For most Western feminists, women's emancipation includes sexual liberation, and this reluctance of many African and Muslim women to argue for the right to sexual pleasure seems suspicious. In the West, the clitoris has become a powerful symbol of women's emancipation. One need only recall the 1970s debates surrounding the "myth of the vaginal orgasm" (Koedt, 1994 [1970]) and the efforts to ascribe a positive value to masturbation, clitoral orgasm and lesbian sex, to realize the potent symbolism of the clitoris in Western women's struggle for sexual equality. In the United States, Shere Hite's influential 1976 *Hite Report* celebrated clitoral stimulation as the main path to orgasm, sexual satisfaction and, as such, sexual liberation for women. In a 1979 article in *Ms.* magazine, Gloria Steinem and Robin Morgan drew an analogy between clitoridectomy and Sigmund Freud's view of the vaginal orgasm as a sign of psychological maturity and health. In Steinem and Morgan's colourful prose, Freud is accused of performing "psychic clitoridectomies" on millions of European and North American women. This focus on sexuality in the women's movement needs to be historically located in the wider predominant Western culture which places a high value on sexuality and pleasure, as opposed to fertility (cf. Ahmadu, 1995; see also Boddy, 1982 and 1989, for a discussion of the opposite situation in Sudan).

Having therefore fought for the right to clitoral orgasm and sexual satisfaction, the aspect of the problem of female circumcision that is most incomprehensible to Western feminists is the fact that it is usually women who are the operators and strongest advocates of the practice. Alice Walker expresses a typical reaction of horror and disbelief when she recalls her thoughts while preparing to interview a female circumcisor in the Gambia for the film *Warrior Marks*:[6] "Why have women become the instruments of men in torturing their daughters? What would such a woman have to say for herself?" (Walker and Parmar, 1993: 301; see also Walker, 1992). Other, more sensitive feminists who avoid such vilification of circumcisors—generally highly respected local women—are often left grappling with the patronizing overtones of explaining this apparent contradiction as "false consciousness." While this is "a common enough reaction especially for feminists schooled in 'consciousness-raising' groups of the 1960s," as Gruenbaum (1996: 462) points out, it fails to acknowledge the strength and diversity of cultural constructs regarding gender, personhood, sexuality, pain and morality.

However, unless one disavows Western medicine's truth claims completely, the pain and the risk of negative health consequences for girls subjected to female circumcision and especially infibulation, although often exaggerated or misreported in the literature, are undeniable. According to Toubia (1994: 712-713):

> Because the specialized sensory tissue of the clitoris is concentrated in a rich neurovascular area of few centimeters, the removal of a small amount of tissue is dangerous and has serious and irreversible effects. Common early complications of all types of circumcision are hemorrhage and severe pain, which can lead to shock and death. Prolonged lesser bleeding may lead to severe anemia and can affect the growth of a poorly nourished child. Local and systemic infections are also common. Infection of the wound, abscesses, ulcers, delayed healing, septicemia, tetanus, and gangrene have all been reported.

For most Westerners, generally encultured in a society where bodies are managed by medicine and where pain is considered something to be avoided, the descriptions of the various operations, usually performed in non-medical settings, evoke strong feelings of horror. This partly explains why anthropologists who have tried to render an emic version of the procedures by stressing the social functions of the practice have often been accused of inhumane ethical relativism, collusion with patriarchy or even advocacy of the practice. A review of Janice Boddy's 1989 book, *Wombs and Alien Spirits*, is a case in point. Boddy's complex analysis shows that for her Sudanese female informants, infibulation is an assertive practice, which celebrates their main socio-economic asset: their fertility. She also reveals the rich cultural meanings of the practice and its integration in local symbolism (see also Boddy, 1982). This, and the rest of Boddy's analysis, Joanne Richardson (1991: 559) has disparaged as "what appears to be a striving after some anachronistic and clearly unexamined notion of cultural relativism."

Anthropology and Cultural Relativism: Human Rights vs. Cultural Difference

The above type of critique is not limited to feminists. Melvin Konner (1990) and Daniel Gordon (1991), the former a biological anthropologist and the other a student of medicine and anthropology, have both suggested that the practice is one example where anthropologists ought to "draw the line" in terms of the limits of cultural relativism. The debate on cultural relativism in anthropology in general is still very current, and has become linked to a global debate on the universality of human rights (see Preis, 1996). In a recent article in which she deplored anthropologists' "reified notion of culture," Nancy Scheper-Hughes asserted that "cultural relativism, read as moral relativism, is no longer appropriate to the world in which we live and that anthropology, if it is to be worth anything at all, must be ethically grounded" (1995: 410). To support her argument, she points to what she sees as "a growing global consensus ('Western,' 'bourgeois,' 'hegemonic,' if you will) defending the rights of women, children, sexual minorities, the accused, and the sick against 'traditional and customary law'" (ibid.: 240).

Tragically, cultural relativism has been used as an argument by states to justify abuses of the rights of citizens (see Afkahmi, 1995 for a discussion of the effects on women's rights of the appropriation of the concept by some Islamists). This is sadly ironic because the concept was developed in American anthropology—by, notably, Franz Boas, Ruth Benedict and Melville Herskovits—as a political and ethical stance against racism (Renteln, 1988: 57-58; Spiro, 1986: 263-264). Boas and his followers rejected social and cultural evolutionism, and insisted that the notion of "progress" was an expression of Western ethnocentrism (Spiro, 1986: 263-264). Harriett Lyons (1981) provides us with a useful reminder that circumcision rituals, both male and female, were important in the development of 19th-century social evolutionist theory. As she notes, "[b]oth male and female genital mutilations are found among peoples whose cultures were of inordinate interest to the fabricators of racial hierarchies" (ibid.: 500). She charts the development of anthropological theory about male and female circumcision from a Victorian emphasis on the "barbarity" of "primitives" to more sober functional analyses explaining circumcision as a socially important "rite de passage." As Lyons (ibid.) points out, the latter were an attempt to counteract the racist sensationalism of the former—and many of the most recent anthropological writings on female circumcision share the same purpose.

Cultural relativism, however, can be understood in a way that allows anthropologists to explain the symbolic and social functions of circumcision without condoning it. In her lucid analysis of the concept of relativism and how it can be reconciled with the notion of human rights, Alison Dundes Renteln (1988) argues that, contrary to general understanding, the central insight of relativism is "enculturation" (or socialization) and not "tolerance" (what Scheper-Hughes calls "moral relativism"). Socialization fundamentally shapes an individual's perception of the world and of moral and ethical issues, and this applies as much to the anthropologist as to her informants. Hence, a certain degree of ethnocentrism is inescapable when working in a foreign culture: the ethnographer is limited in her/his understanding and acceptance, even if s/he, through re-enculturation, gains insight into the "inner cultural logic" of the other cultural sphere (ibid.: 57). Moral universals, which would provide a basis for cross-cultural criticism, have yet to be agreed upon on a global scale, but students of a foreign culture are entitled to moral criticism as long as they "acknowledge that the criticism is based on [their] own ethnocentric standards and realize also that the condemnation may be a form of cultural imperialism" (1988: 64). Whether or not the condemnation is perceived as a form of cultural imperialism will depend on the current and historical power relationships between the critic and those advocating the practice being criticized. In certain circumstances and when it is done in a respectful and informed way, intercultural criticism can result in a fruitful exchange and may eventually lead to culture change when the initially extraneous point of view is adopted by individuals within the culture. In other circumstances criticism might be impossible.

Since the theory of relativism is a theory about cultural perception and the unavoidable ethnocentrism underlying value judgments, it "says nothing about the desirability of social criticism" (Renteln, 1988: 64): ultimately, what one does when faced with conflicting moral standards "depends not on relativism but on the role one wishes to play in the international community." This brings us back to the question Boddy (1991: 16) asked: "to say, like Konner, that 'female circumcision is one place where we ought to draw the line' of relativism is little more than a just-so statement: true, but of what practical consequence?" Practically, the polarization (cf. Walley, 1997) that has taken place in the international feminist community, as outlined above, means that at the present Western anthropologists and Westerners in general who choose to campaign actively against female circumcision risk contributing to a backlash against eradication campaigns. As Ellen Gruenbaum (1996: 456) has

written, "the most useful role [for anthropologists] is to provide cultural perspectives on it [female circumcision], offer a sophisticated analysis of why these practices continue, and describe the forces for change in various cultural contexts." Along these lines, my own work aims at analysing the forces for and against changes to excision practices in urban contexts in Mali, as is sketched below.

Walley (1997) has also recently called for approaches that highlight the conflicting "voices"—the politics of culture—in local debates on female circumcision, and Preis (1996) even contends that only such studies can lead us beyond the relativist/universalist impasse in human rights debates. While poststructuralists such as Preis are concerned by the reification of culture, however, a look at the anti-circumcision literature shows that on the contrary, "culture" has been dismissed by activists. Before attempting a description of the forces for and against change in Mali, a critical look at the anti-circumcision literature will show why situated cultural analyses of female circumcision are needed. Here culture is understood to be a particular historical cluster of meanings, as local debates in the politics of culture are influenced by local constellations of power as well as by external discourses.

The Trivialization of Culture in the Political Literature

An important contribution anthropologists can make to the growing international discourse on female genital mutilation is to counter the trivialization of culture as "tradition" and the condescending portrayal of women who defend female circumcision. To illustrate this, I refer to the work of Dorkenoo (1994), Koso-Thomas (1987) and Toubia (1995), and make use of Vicki Kirby's (1987) Foucauldian analysis of an earlier collection of anti-circumcision publications (i.e., Hosken, 1979, 1980; McLean, 1980; El Dareer, 1983; Abdalla, 1982).

Kirby has noted that the books she reviewed were "disturbingly consistent in their representation of a mutilated, abject body" (1987: 37), and that this voyeurism was sanitized through medical discourse. Like the authors Kirby discusses, Efua Dorkenoo, Nahid Toubia and Olayinka Koso-Thomas are all health professionals, and two of them present us with photographs of the infibulated genitalia of an anonymous and faceless girl (Toubia, 1995: 11) and woman (Dorkenoo, 1994: 11), respectively. Ahmadu (1995: 16) has expressed forcefully how offensive such photographs can be for African women in the diaspora:

> Can it possibly be a good thing for thousands of African immigrants who must soak in images of their nether regions literally spread open in "education" pamphlets, women's magazines and so-called documentaries for the "modern" world to ponder? . . . What of the humiliation and shame they are made to feel upon seeing their most private values belittled in the Western media?

Equally disturbing is the way that the particular meanings, beliefs and values associated with the varied genital operations are dismissed as "tradition," as Kirby also noted (1987: 37). For most anti-circumcision activists, "tradition" becomes equated with "superstition" and "ignorance"—and, one is tempted to read, backwardness. This shows at best a very naïve understanding of culture. As Anne Biquard (1991: 163, n. 37) explains, not only do activists fail to understand the word "tradition," but they fail to acknowledge that excision is part of a secret initiation ritual in many parts of West Africa, and that initiates have pledged silence. In most cultures in the Sahel, it is socially expected that one must go through a long learning process to achieve understanding. Therefore when West African women answer in sociological surveys that they allow excision to be performed on their daughters because "it is our tradition" (ibid., my translation)—or, as I was often told in Mali, because "we were born and found this"—the unspoken meanings of this "tradition" need to be unpacked through a lengthy investigation. Boddy makes a similar point about an answer commonly given to such questions by Sudanese women, "it is our religion," which is usually promptly dismissed by activists as ignorance of "true" Islam. She writes (1991: 15) "[f]or the Sudanese women of my acquaintance religion is nothing less than their entire way of life."

Typical of the anti-circumcision literature is the strategy of first establishing the medical "facts" about the practice, and then devoting a section to the "reasons given for the practice." For instance, Dorkenoo (1994: 34) introduces her section entitled "Motives for and Functions of FGM" with the following remark: "The justifications for female genital mutilations are at first glance bewildering, often conflicting, and always at odds with biological fact." Then, in total disrespect for the diversity of cultural, political and historical contexts for the various practices arbitrarily grouped as female genital mutilation, she offers a mishmash of "beliefs" and "myths" from widely disparate ethnic groups (1994: 34-41). Similarly, Koso-Thomas offers a list of 10 "arguments" given in "defence of the practice" by various ethnic groups at various points in history, and then proceeds

to ridicule and invalidate them one by one through a medical analysis (1987: 10-12). Even Nahid Toubia, one of the most sensitive and theoretically sophisticated of the published international campaigners against female circumcision, after acknowledging that "FGM will not be eradicated unless those who are fighting for change understand the deeply felt beliefs of the people who practice it," proceeds to offer the same type of decontextualized list of "the reasons given for FGM" (1995: 35, 37).

This type of decontextualized and ahistorical presentation of, in this case, the "sexually mutilated African woman" is the same type of feminist writing that Chandra Talpade Mohanty decries for its "discursive colonialism" (1991 [1984]). As with the case of much anti-circumcision writing, Mohanty's "Western Eyes" could also belong to Third World feminists when they adopt the same "Western" discursive and analytical strategy which results in "the construction of 'Third World Women' as a homogeneous 'powerless' group often located as implicit victims of particular socio-economic systems" and "limits the definition of the female subject to gender identity, completely bypassing social, class and ethnic identities" (1991: 57, 64). When abstracted from their particular historical and sociological contexts, explanations of female circumcision result in "a typical orientalist essentialism" (Morsy, 1991: 21).

It is significant that Mohanty (1991: 57-58) used one of Hosken's early publications (1981) as a prime example of one of the ways "colonialist" Western feminist writing objectifies and homogenizes women in the so-called Third World, in this case by portraying them as universal victims of male violence—a violence to be universally understood as a product of "global" patriarchy. Hosken, along with Morgan and Steinem (1979) and Daly (1978), was one of the first writers to group together conceptually all the different surgeries performed on female genitals across time and space and therefore to *create* "female genital mutilation" *as a global, unified issue*. Further, and to this Mohanty is vehemently opposed (1991: 66-67), Hosken, as have most feminist writers and activists since, equates female genital mutilation with rape, forced prostitution, polygyny, pornography, domestic violence and purdah, as all being violations of basic human rights. The danger in this, as Mohanty points out (ibid.), is that by equating these practices, feminists jump to the conclusion that the primary function and meaning of all of them is the "sexual control of women." In this way, institutions such as purdah or female circumcision are "denied any cultural and historical specificity, and contradictions and potentially subversive aspects [i.e., 'resistance'] are totally ruled out." The image which obtains is that of an "average Third World woman" whose life is constrained both by her gender and by "being Third World," i.e., "ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc.," in contrast to the implicit self-representation of the Western or Western-educated authors of such texts as "educated, as modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the freedom to make their own decisions" (ibid.: 56).

However one caveat is in order: while it is crucial to analyze female circumcision as a local phenomenon with specific cultural meanings, history and socio-economic and political underpinnings, it is important to remember that the conceptualization of the practice as another example of violence against women has developed as a counter to racist exoticizing. Toubia (1995: 37) explains that to "conquer" the defensive stance of Africans who are often offended and humiliated by the activist discourse on female circumcision, "FGM must be recognized as one form, extreme though it may be, among many forms of social injustice to women." Anthropologists such as Hale (1994: 30) and Boddy (1991: 16-17) have felt the need to remind Western readers about practices which harm women's bodies but are condoned in Western societies.

Another way in which the anti-circumcision discourse continues to sensationalize the issue is in its tendency to focus on infibulation, the most extensive surgery but also by far the least common: an estimated 15% of all cases according to Toubia (1995: 10). Michel Erlich (1991: 132) points out that in much of the literature, the technical details of infibulation are suggestively presented to highlight their odious character: the operators are portrayed as dirty and evil, and always use old and broken instruments. The female relatives of the girl are usually depicted as cruel and oblivious to the child's pain. As if to prove this point, Efua Dorkenoo (1994: 1-2) opens her book with a lengthy and graphic description of an infibulation. Erlich (1991: 132, my translation) points out that the colonialist literature, to which activists often turn for the most ghastly descriptions of genital surgeries, "too often privileged the most shocking and spectacular aspects of the exotic woman, who is represented in the most humiliating traits for Arab and African cultures." Exacerbating the rage of many commentators at the "colonialist" discourse of many anti-circumcision activists is the actual history of colonial efforts to eradicate the practice (Morsy, 1991). Micaela di Leonardo (1991: 11) reminds us that "one major legitimization of Western imperialism, after all, had been that 'they are brutish to

their women,'" and with regards to British colonialism in East Africa, Dallas L. Browne (1991: 251) specifies that "[b]ridewealth, polygyny, and clitoridectomy were especially repugnant to agents of British culture."

Some African activists have argued against the internationalization of the campaign against female circumcision. The 1984 Dakar conference organized by the NGO Working Group on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children adopted some resolutions which proposed "that female circumcision be discussed by African women and only within the context of other problems" (Boulware-Miller, 1985: 176). Interestingly, Efua Dorkenoo (1994: 72-73), who describes that Conference, makes no mention of those resolutions. Some anthropologists, too, have urged their colleagues to stay away from this issue. Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1991: 26) once advised her fellow "concerned women anthropologists": "Hands off! Enough is enough! . . . Let Egyptian and Sudanese women argue this one out for themselves."

But *which* Egyptian, Sudanese or Malian women actually participate in this debate? Vicki Kirby's 1987 (38) observation, that those African women activists who write about the issue are professionals who hold privileged positions in their societies, and that seldom in the literature does "the voice from the countryside . . . emerge with any clarity" still holds true today. To fully recognize the particular histories and social contexts within which women who practise female circumcision live their lives implies recognizing that different groups of African women are deeply divided on this issue, along class, religious, ethnic and other lines. This division is illustrated by Browne (1991: 246) for Kenya where he reports that Kikuyu women with little Western education see the attack on clitoridectomy as an attempt to destroy their culture, whereas Western-educated Kikuyu women and African women from ethnic groups that never circumcised women are vehemently against the practice. It is important for scholars and feminist activists to document and acknowledge the leadership of African women's groups against circumcision, but also to give voice to the women and men who advocate the practice, and to all positions in-between.

The Politics of Excision in Mali

The above political and theoretical considerations led me to choose to carry out research on excision focussing on the internal debates within Mali, West Africa. Methodologically I chose to engage in "action research" (see Reinharz, 1992: 175-196; Wolf, 1996: 26-31) with a women's group working towards the eradication of excision in Mali. Many considerations led to this choice. As someone with a background in international development, I am interested in processes of directed social change and in the actors who spearhead local debates around culture, particularly with regards to gender issues. I am convinced that working in collaboration with an organization that aims at social and/or cultural change, while it may close some doors, does not prevent good ethnographic work. Feminist theory, even before the "postmodernist turn" in anthropology, has taught us that there is no possible "objective" location from which to carry out ethnography (Mascia-Lees et al., 1989)—an argument similar to that made within the discussion on relativism above. Further, as Gail Omvedt (1979) argued long ago with regards to her work with a feminist organization in India, much can be learned about a cultural practice from the reactions of people towards efforts at modifying or stopping it.

Second, my own socialization caused me to fear that I could not study excision fairly *as a ritual*. The idea of witnessing the surgical event made me feel very uncomfortable, as I feared that I would not be able to hide my disapproval or my revulsion. It was by accident that I first stumbled upon the issue of female genital surgeries while doing research in 1993 with Somali immigrants in Toronto (Gosselin, 1993). In 1994, preparation of a brief on female circumcision for internal use at the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) convinced me that there was renewed interest on "female genital mutilation" in development agencies and that there was a great need for cultural and historical contextualization of the operations. At that time I met a feminist activist from Mali, who was speaking in Ottawa on women's rights as part of a Canadian tour, and this seemed like a fortuitous opportunity. We talked and she accepted my offer to work in collaboration with her organization. I designed a research project that I thought could counter the impression that African women were passive victims of "tradition." At the same time, I hoped that my work could help improve the design of local programs against excision.

My main field site was the office of this Malian women's association in Bamako, the capital of Mali. Bamako is a growing city of 1 016 167 people (Direction nationale de la statistique et de l'informatique, 1998: 59)—roughly 10% of the population of the country. All of the country's ethnic groups are represented in Bamako, and interethnic marriages seem increasingly common. Bamanakan, a Mande language, has become dominant in the capital and in most of the country, even though French is the official language. People from Mande cultural groups

form approximately half of the country's population: among them are the Bamanan, Malinke, Soninke and Khasonke, most of whom are farmers, and the Bozo and Somono fisherfolks. Rural Mande people live primarily in the central and western parts of the country. The southeast, close to the border with Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso, is mostly home to the Senufo and Minianka people, two closely related groups of farmers. The less densely populated north and northeast, where the Sahel becomes desert, is home to the historically nomadic Tamashek (or Tuareg) people and, further to the east along the Niger river, to the Songhay, who are generally farmers. The Dogon are a small group of subsistence farmers who are concentrated in the Bandiagara cliffs near the city of Mopti between the Bamanan city of Segu and the Songhay city of Gao. The Fulani, historically known mostly for cattle herding and trading, are present throughout the country. The Malian population includes numerous other smaller groups. Over 80% of the active population of the country works in agriculture, animal husbandry and fishing (Coulibaly et al., 1996: 2). The great majority of Malians practice Islam: 91% of the respondents in a recent national health survey professed their belonging to this faith (ibid.: 27).

I present here an outline of the current state of the debates on excision in Mali, based on preliminary analysis of field data, including a survey with 400 respondents, selected open-ended interviews, participant-observation and attendance at two national seminars on excision held in Bamako in June 1997. I also draw on local newspaper articles. Working in a multi-ethnic urban setting, I could not limit my research to one particular ethnic group, but learning Bamanakan led me to focus more on Mande culture(s). Participant observation in the women's association office, in my residential neighbourhood in Bamako, and during various stays with families in Bamako, Kayes and Sikasso provided me with background information to contextualize the data I gathered in directed interviews on excision. Having chosen action-research purposely as a feminist and ethical approach to data collection, it was important for me to design a research project that would bring tangible benefits to my host association. It was therefore in consultation with the association's leadership that I developed a study to evaluate the impact of their anti-excision campaigns in four regional capitals, Kayes, Mopti, Segu and Sikasso.

In each city, 100 survey respondents were chosen at random. Sampling was done by creating population clusters using a city map, numbering these clusters and randomly selecting 10 of them (see Bernard, 1995: 99-100). I originally intended to map the households in each cluster and then randomly select five of them. I then planned to interview two people in each of the five households, one man and one woman. However, this method proved socially unacceptable, as people were suspicious of our motives for mapping their neighbourhood. Instead, my assistant, Mariam Diakité and I entered each of the 10 clusters from wherever the taxi would drop us off (not all streets were passable), and interviewed the first 10 willing people. We did not interview more than two people per household, but we often had to interview two of the same sex. In many households only one person would volunteer. Generally our sample contains more women than men, and youth and people educated in French are also overrepresented. In addition to these interviews, in each of the four cities we spoke with 10 community leaders (administrators, health personnel, religious leaders, NGO leaders and *dugutigiw*—in this case neighbourhood "chiefs"), with up to 15 members of the women's association, and with as many circumcisors as were willing to talk to us (a total of nine for all four cities). The interviews were done in Bamanakan or in French.

Excision in Mali is currently practised by all ethnic groups except for some Tamashek, Songhay and Dogon communities. An overwhelming majority of adult women in Mali have been excised. In 1997-98 Mariam Diakité and I interviewed a total of 223 women 15 years and older: of these, 214, or nearly 96%, said they were circumcised. In fact, for most of them this was such an obvious fact that they were surprised at the question. For instance, we interviewed a 28-year-old Soninke woman in Segu, married with five children, who attended Koranic school as a girl. When asked what her occupation was, she said *"Ne te baara"*—I don't work—a common way for women to say that they work at home. When asked "Are you excised?" she answered "Yes!! It's only now that people are saying that we should stop excision!" This woman was experiencing this societal change at a very personal level. When we asked her "What are the consequences of excision?" she did not answer directly but instead shared this: "My twins were excised a long time ago—they are 12 now—but the youngest one has not been excised yet. Her father says that it is not good to excise but our female elders (*an mùsòkòròbaw*) say we must have her excised otherwise she will become a prostitute."[7]

Our results for Kayes, Segu, Sikasso and Mopti are consistent with the results of the national Demographic and Health Survey (hereafter DHS) published in Mali in 1996. Having surveyed 9 704 women between 15 and 49 years of age across the country, these researchers found that 94% of women reported having been circumcised:

52% of those said they had undergone clitoridectomy, 47% excision and less than 1% declared having been infibulated (Coulibaly et al., 1996: 185). There was no marked difference in rates between younger and older women. Statisticians who analyzed the DHS results concluded that the only significant variable affecting prevalence was ethnicity, with only 17% of Tamashek and 48% of Songhay women reporting having been circumcised (ibid.: 186).

The DHS concluded that "the great majority of women" in Mali are in favour of the continuation of the practice: 75% of those they interviewed (ibid.: 196). However, education was an important variable: of the women who had a secondary education level or higher, only a minority (48%) advocated maintaining the practice (ibid.: 196, 197). There was also a rural/urban divide: while 80% of rural women wanted the practice to continue, 65% of urban women did. The DHS survey, however, asked women to select only one of two options: should excision be continued, or stopped. In contrast, our open-ended questions allow us to distinguish between a minority of women who *actively* support the practice, and the majority who are indifferent, have never thought that it could be an option not to excise, or do not dare question elders' authority. For the majority of Malians who live in multigenerational, patriarchal family compounds, to critique or even question a practice which has become reified as "tradition" is not to question an abstract notion, but to challenge the authority and will of an elder (male or female) who is owed respect and obedience and with whom one is in daily contact. This challenge could result in one being expelled from the compound and socially isolated—a situation which in Mali, and especially for women, could threaten one's very subsistence.

Adopting a critical stance in such conditions requires extraordinary courage, as the following exchange demonstrates. The respondent is a 31-year-old married Fulani woman living in Segu, who has attended Koranic school, works at home and has three living children, two boys and one girl.

According to you, why is excision practised?
We were born and found that it is done here. Some say it is good, others say it is not good. All Malians are not in agreement over this issue.

What are the consequences of excision?
For me excision is good but also it is not good. It is you yourselves [i.e., white people] who talk about the problems.

What will happen to a girl if she is not excised?
To say that if a girl is not excised, she will get one disease or another, myself I don't know.

Who practices excision in your neighbourhood?
What I know is that *numuw*[8] do it—a noble does not do it. [Here she gathers her strength, and adds:] For me excision is not good because my second daughter when she was excised she lasted 2 months without healing and she did not survive. [Pause] When you find something it is what you do.[9]

Unlike the DHS researchers, I also polled men on their opinions of the practice. Of the 168 men aged 15 and over randomly selected in the four cities, 35.7% said that female circumcision was a "bad thing" (*"mùsòmannin ka bolokoli a man nyi"*), as opposed to 22.9% of the women. Generally (but by no means in all cases), educated men in positions of power were the most vocal against the practice. Indeed, male novelists and filmmakers were among the first to bring excision into public debate in West Africa, notably Yambo Ouologuem (1968), Ahmadou Kourouma (1970) and Cheick Oumar Sissoko (1990). Often, opposition to excision by *"les intellectuels"* (as the small educated elite in Mali call themselves) is linked to their embracing modernity—excision is seen as an embarrassing, outdated practice, advocated by *"les traditionalistes."* Yet even such members of the elite can not always afford, socially or politically, to campaign against excision. Here are some excerpts from a conversation I had, in French, with the *Gouverneur* of one of the eight administrative regions of Mali, a man in his late 40s who travels to Europe regularly:

Personally, are you for or against excision, and why?
Against. With my friends and relatives we have discussed this a lot. But people always try to convince me that this practice protects women and the family. Yet no one has an explanation for it: young girls don't even know why it is done nor what the dangers are.

What do you think about the campaigns against excision by the government and other groups?
Up until now they have been rather timid, because the fight against excision is a very delicate matter. The government has had information campaigns but has chosen not to legislate. The government is afraid: it uses women's associations to educate the public. Eventually the government will need to take responsibility.

Considering the influential role you play in the community, would you be willing to publicly speak up against excision?
Yes, just as I speak up in front of my parents [i.e., all his relatives from age-groups older than his own], even though they don't give me the right of speech. But I do not mean by that that I could forbid it [excision]. Our society is so tricky that my opinion may not have an impact . . .[10]

Living and working in Mali for one year, I became convinced that female circumcision is not a priority for the majority of women: poverty is. According to data published by the Malian government in 1996, 71.6% of the country's population lives below the poverty level (ODHD, 1998: 1). Many are hungry. Through participant observation in the women's association's office I encountered many women who came for help. Although I was not always privy to their stories, a series of recurrent types of problems became obvious over time. Most common were economic difficulties (lack of money to purchase food, medication or other necessities), and second, marital disputes: unwanted marriages and divorces, conflicts related to polygyny, husbands not contributing their share of the household budget and domestic violence. Other common problems concerned inheritance and workers' rights. Even though it was clear to all the staff that I had come to study excision, and even though the association has been very public in its opposition to the practice, in a one-year period I was only made aware of a few cases directly concerning this issue. One was a letter from a French lawyer concerned that a Malian girl born in France had been sent to Mali to be excised. The other cases concerned traditional circumcisors who had contacted the association in the hope of participating in its income-generating programs for those willing to publicly abandon the practice (see Gosselin, in press).

Programs with traditional circumcisors (*numu* women) represent one strategy in the campaign against female circumcision in Mali. This campaign[11] has been led mostly by NGOs, although the women's branch of the political party under Moussa Traoré's regime, the Union Nationale des Femmes du Mali (UNFM), did organize some activities in the 1980s. The Centre Djoliba in Bamako, a Catholic development organization, was the first NGO to start an anti-circumcision program in 1981, followed by COMAPRAT, the local chapter of the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children in 1984. After the 1991 overthrow of Traoré's regime, the UNFM was dissolved and so was COMAPRAT, whose activities were continued by a newly created organization, the Association Malienne pour le Suivi et l'Orientation des Pratiques Traditionnelles (AMSOPT). Following the 1991 lifting of restrictions on political rights which had outlawed most civil society organizations, a host of NGOs and women's associations have been created, some of which have worked on excision, often with the support of multilateral, bilateral or non-governmental aid donors. In 1997 the Commissariat à la Promotion des Femmes created a national committee on traditional practices detrimental to the health of women and children. This committee has made excision its priority.

To date those campaigning against excision in Mali have largely based their argument on the health hazards of the practice. In contrast, few have tried to redefine excision as a violation of the rights of girls. This line of argument goes counter to local concepts of childhood and "rights-in-persons" (after Kopytoff and Miers, 1977). Mande societies are very hierarchical to this day, with social superiors having rights in social inferiors: parents have rights in children, husbands in wives, older siblings in younger siblings, etc. These rights are lifelong and hardly compatible with the egalitarian ethos of *individual* human rights. Most activists in Mali also fear that the "right to bodily integrity" and the "right to sexuality" arguments would be attacked by many as originating in Western—read colonial—discourse. Some who are against the campaign have portrayed it as a Western/French/Christian propaganda war, tapping into a common humiliation at the memory of colonialism (Mali won its independence from France only in 1960) and a generalized discontent with the failure of economic "development."

Those leading this anti-Western movement generally advocate a "purified" Islam as an alternative model of society to the "modernized" future envisioned by Western-educated elites. In this conflict over incompatible visions of society, girls' bodies have become a battleground, since excision acts as a symbol of different allegiances. An illustration of this was provided when, during the government-sponsored national seminar on excision in Bamako (June 1997), a local Islamist newspaper was distributed in which the following passage appeared: "Westerners want to deceive and poison the thinking of African women so that they will abandon African customs" (Anonymous, 1997, my translation). Two months later a longer article appeared in a Bamako Islamist bimonthly, entitled "But why does the Christian West fight against excision practices?" The author of this piece asserted that the "Catholic" West (i.e., France) did not truly care about the health of African women, but that rather, the anti-excision campaign was "first and foremost a logical continuation of the domination by a race said to be civilised" (Diarra, 1997, my translation). The well-publicized trials of Malian circumcisors and parents in France (see Lefeuvre-Déotte, 1997) have fuelled this line of argument.

The Islamist pro-excision discourse in Mali presents a view of female sexuality as insatiable and in need of control. Widely reported in the literature on women in Muslim societies, this view seems to be gaining currency in Mali, where it has been championed by the reformist

Wahhabiya movement (see Turrittin, 1987: 100-101). The control of women's sexuality (through excision and other means) is deliberately articulated by some leaders as the only way to avoid the "debauchery" (*la débauche*) that they see in Western societies. A 25-year-old mother of three we interviewed in Kayes espoused that view. Asked why excision is practised, she colourfully exclaimed: "Because when a girl is not excised, *a te fa ce ko la*!" (she does not get her fill of men). When asked what she thought of uncircumcised women, she was categorical: "They are lost. They run after men, they go into bars, they do anything."[12] A 59-year-old school principal in the same city, father of 12 girls and two boys, explained: "Excision attenuates a girl's arousal, therefore it reduces debauchery. Your daughter will not start to have sexual relations early, since she won't feel like it, therefore she will be able to keep her virginity for a long time."[13]

The menace of female sexuality is also apparent in Mande beliefs concerning dangerous powers residing in the clitoris. While Dieterlen (1951) reported the term *wanzo*, McNaughton (1988), Brett-Smith (1982) and myself (Gosselin, in press) heard that excessive concentrations of *nyama*, the world's fundamental and awesome energy, are found in the clitoris. This explains why some informants believe that if not removed, the clitoris could harm men during intercourse and babies during delivery. It also begins to explain why previously only *numuw*, people of the blacksmiths/potters caste with specialized ritual knowledge, were allowed to perform the dangerous operations of male and female circumcision (Gosselin, in press; Kanté, 1993: 177-199; McNaughton, 1988: 66-71).

One of the Mande words used to talk about male and female circumcision, *seliji*, indicates how the practice of excision, which predated the arrival of Islam in the region, has been inscribed with Muslim meanings. *Seliji* is a compound word formed by the words for praying, *seli*, and for water, *ji*. It literally refers to the ritual ablutions that Muslims must perform before praying, and points to a local belief held by some pious Malians who are convinced that, just as uncircumcised men can never be ritually clean and therefore able to pray, neither can unexcised women. A 50-year-old Fulani woman interviewed in Kayes stated: "In our religion [Islam] it is said that we have to circumcise girls so that they are really clean, so they will pray and fast [during Ramadan]."[14]

Imams interviewed in Mali, however, insisted that according to the sacred texts of Islam, female circumcision is not mandatory, only recommended. Those religious leaders advocating the practice from a militant Islamist perspective are trying to dissociate it from its earlier meanings linked to the practice of traditional Mande or other local religions. This they do indirectly by lobbying for the medicalization of excision, which they argue would standardize it and make it safer. What they do not say is that medicalizing the practice takes the monopoly of circumcision and excision away from *numuw*, who are custodians of non-Muslim religious, magical and medicinal knowledge. This conflict might reflect the long-standing rivalry between the local Muslim teachers and healers, called *marabouts*, and *numuw* (see McNaughton, 1988). My data indicates that, at least in urban centres, the practice of male circumcision has already become the prerogative of medical personnel, and that there is also a growing tendency for girls to be excised by male and female health workers, including midwives (Gosselin, in press). This medicalization and the possible cessation of the practice threaten to cause a loss of income for traditional circumcisors.

The question as to whom excision benefits today in Mali is not easy to answer. The women (and few men) who operate on girls, whether *numuw* or medical personnel, supplement their income with this practice. In the case of *numu* women, excision is central to their identity and status, as circumcising has historically been one of their most important ritual roles (ibid.). Where excision still takes place within puberty initiation rituals, the instruction that girls receive clearly works to support local patriarchal and gerontocratic structures, as it teaches them to obey husbands and elders (Diarra, 1992; Rondeau, 1994). The surgery may function to inscribe this lesson in the body. If excision works to reduce female desire and thereby limits premarital sexual activities, it benefits the girl's patrilineage since virginity in brides is valued. However there is little in the data showing that excision in practice produces this result; in fact when pressed, most informants admit that there is no difference in behaviour between excised girls and those from non-excising communities such as some Songhay groups. Other women stand to gain from advocating the practice, such as the female political and religious leaders who decry the anti-excision stance of the current government, and older women whose interests have merged with that of the patrilineage. In fact it is often paternal aunts, acting on behalf of the patrilineage, who arrange for excisions. It also seems that older, generally postmenopausal women (*mùsòkòròbaw*) want to keep control over this gendered sphere of power: they are responsible for affairs regarding women's sexuality, and generally resent the intrusion of those men who speak against excision, one of the few cultural areas in which they have control.

The female genital operation practised today in urban Mali is different from that which most people in the country have historically known. For Mande groups, boys' circumcision and girls' excision have functioned as puberty rituals, marking the passage to, or one step towards, adulthood (Diarra, 1992; Grosz-Ngaté, 1989; McNaughton, 1988; Zahan, 1960). The rite socializes youth and their sexuality, putting an emphasis on fertility (Diarra, 1992; Rondeau, 1992; 1994). During the healing period, male and female initiates are taken (separately) to a liminal site and instructed on topics ranging from sexuality to childcare and proper etiquette. Two Bozo women in Mopti provided us with a glimpse of past excisions as rites of passage:

> *Can you describe your excision for us?*
> A 45-year-old woman: "It has been a long time! I was 11 or 12. It was at that age that it was done. And for the boy, he was circumcised, and sometime later, he was given a wife." (Interview Mf31, 05/03/98)
>
> A 37-year-old woman: "Everybody else healed before I did. We had to jump a wall, and when I jumped I got hurt. There were two or three hundred girls. They bring you to the river. All Bozo went there at that time." (Mf49, 07/03/98)

During the rite, bravely overcoming fear and pain was extremely important, and considered to prepare the child for the demands of adulthood. A 55-year-old Malinke woman in Sikasso shared this with us: "Times have changed. Now it is done on young girls and they cry. Before it was done to big girls, they knew that they were *horon* ["noble"] and that they could not open their mouths to cry. They did not cry" (Sf29, 17/10/97).

This woman's impression is corroborated in the DHS results: the median age at excision was found by Coulibaly and his colleagues (1996: 189) to be 6.3 years, and in steady decline. For women 45-49 years old, the average age at excision was 8.8 years, for those 30-34, 6.7 years and for the youngest bracket in the DHS, women between 15 and 19 years of age, it was 4.3 years (ibid.). All of my informants reported that excision in urban settings is increasingly practised on infants. While operating on infants seems to have been the norm for the Soninke (N'Diaye, 1970; Pollet and Winter, 1971), for other Malian Mande groups this represents a change and has been accompanied by a loss of the rites previously surrounding the practice: only the physical operation remains.

Anti-excision activists and policy-makers in Mali currently find themselves in a difficult position. The focus on health concerns has somewhat backfired, giving support to those who advocate medicalization of the practice. On the other hand, advocacy of the right to the enjoyment of sexuality, while it appeals to those (mostly young men) who aspire to individualism and "modernity," would discredit the campaign in the eyes of the majority of the population. This conundrum has led some activists to press for legislation, but legislators, already under a crisis of legitimacy, are not in favour of having to enforce what would almost certainly be a highly unpopular law. The official position of the government so far has been against legislation, and we can assume that politicians would not legislate against excision unless they felt that a majority supported ending the practice—which is clearly not the case at the present time in Mali. Ironically, most of those who have analyzed the campaign in Mali agree that the only way that excision could be stopped quickly would be by going through existing patriarchal authority figures, such as *dugutigiw* (village or neighbourhood "chiefs," always male). They have the authority and legitimacy that the Malian state is still struggling to establish (cf. Fay, 1995; Schulz, 1997).

Excision continues to be practised by the majority in Mali today, I would argue, mostly because the superstructures for ensuring hegemonic conformism are still in place (a view also held by Diallo, 1997; cf. Mackie, 1996). Even those who might be convinced by health arguments might not want to risk their daughter's future humiliation. While a non-circumcised woman will probably find a husband (and some men—but by no means all—told me that they preferred uncircumcised women as sexual partners), she might always be stigmatized as *bilakoro*. This word literally means "uncircumcised," and it is used as a very serious insult for both men and women. It always carries the connotations of immature, irresponsible, weak, generally unworthy, and sometimes also of dirty and oversexed. While it is true to say that acceptance by the group is crucial everywhere for psychological well-being, it is particularly so in a society like Mali where production and redistribution of food and wealth are largely organized through family groupings.

Further, the campaign against excision has appealed mostly to the educated elite, and to youth of both sexes. While the former are often weary of being rejected as having become too Westernized (*a kera tùbàbu*—s/he has become "Tubab" [white] is a common insult in Bamako), younger parents often do not have the authority to prevent their daughters' excision. In cases of intergenerational conflict, debates around excision become vested with political meanings, as elders struggle to maintain their legitimacy. In urban contexts where youth increasingly challenge older institutions and the elders

who are seen to embody them, challenging *any* practice which has come to be defined as "traditional" is seen as part of a youth rebellion (cf. Rondeau, 1992; 1994).

Conclusion

As I have outlined in the first part of this article, the debate over female circumcision in global forums has become extremely polarized (cf. Walley, 1997). One division is within the international women's movement between those who advocate a complete eradication of the practice, seen as a form of violence against women, and those who see this campaign as misdirected and urge feminists to focus on more pressing economic issues. This echoes the wider challenge to the "global sisterhood" movement that has been voiced since the 1980s by women of colour and others who feel that feminism has become a white, middle-class discourse. Critics have argued that the privileged position of white, middle-class Western women has allowed them to define the feminist agenda in ways that reflect their own interests, notably by focussing on issues of sexuality while downplaying the economic issues African and other historically disadvantaged groups face. These groups have demanded participation in the forums in which the cultural meanings of "feminism" are determined.

Another line of division has resulted from the debate over cultural relativism, accentuated in the growing international focus on human rights (particularly after the 1993 UN Vienna Conference) and on women's human rights (especially since the 1995 UN World Conference on Women at Beijing). This strategy has been used by activists to demand protection of minorities' rights, political freedoms, and increasingly, a redress of the injustice of the global economic order through the push to include economic rights in human rights (see Messer, 1993). Despite the empowering potential of this approach in general, I have questioned whether to define female circumcision as a human rights abuse is the best strategy. Certainly in Mali most activists do not see it as an argument that could win support for their campaign. Anthropologists have found themselves in an awkward position for, while cultural relativism initially evolved as a means of countering Western ethnocentrism, it has also been used by some political leaders to justify oppression or inaction in the face of human rights abuses. This awkward position is reflected in the American Anthropological Association's recently proposed Declaration on Anthropology and Human Rights (AAA, 1998), which continues to reflect the tension between individual rights and the collective right to cultural difference.

As Preis (1996) and Walley (1997) have recently discussed, the polarization between, on the one hand, "cultural relativists" who think that Westerners should stay away from female circumcision altogether and, on the other hand, those who advocate a global campaign to eradicate it, is based on a functionalist view of culture which does not reflect current realities. Global currents of ideas, such as human rights, Islamic revivalism, and feminism, have been added to historical internal dynamics to create ongoing debates over the cultural meaning of the practice. It is faulty to continue to pit "African women" against "Western feminists" in this controversy, since both these groups are internally heterogeneous.

The debates over excision in Mali reflect this complexity. They demonstrate that the practice is not simply a case of patriarchal oppression of women by men. Some women stand to gain from the practice, particularly circumcisors, some female political and religious leaders, and older women whose interests have merged with that of the patrilineage. These debates are also enmeshed within a wider challenge to gerontocracy by youth, and changes to the way excision is practised reflect the decline of the caste system and of traditional, non-Muslim religions. Finally, debates over excision in Mali reflect conflicting visions for society: alignment with the West *versus* the Islamist world, and this in the context of the failure of the Western development path.

While using a poststructuralist understanding of culture to analyse debates around excision allows a more sophisticated analysis of the various dynamics at play, it does not, as Preis (1996) hoped, enable us to avoid the relativist/universalist ethical debate. For instance, based on the recognition that there are internal divisions on the issue, commentators often advocate that anthropologists and feminists support (if invited) local women's groups working on the issue: yet these groups do not function independently of the social systems in which they exist. One must ask, who are these local women's groups? Whom do they represent and what are the interests of their leadership and of their membership? There are local dynamics of supply-side development, patronage systems and even electoral politics that influence the work and discourses of these groups. Ultimately a focus on the politics of culture allows for a better understanding and contributes to a "de-colonizing" of the discourse on "female genital mutilation," but it does not altogether resolve ethical dilemmas presented to anthropologists. In the end, it remains for every individual to make personal choices as to the role one wants to play in these debates and in the global community.

Notes

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2 I avoid using the phrase "female genital mutilation" because in my opinion it contributes to sensationalizing the issue for Western audiences, and is insulting to those from groups where such operations take place. When talking about the practice in Mali I use the term "excision" because that is what is used by French-speaking Malians.

3 Gruenbaum (1996: 472-473, n.4) gives a succinct description of infibulation: "It consists of removal of the clitoris, prepuce, inner labia, and part of the outer labia, followed by the closure of the tissues over the vaginal opening. The resulting scar tissue occludes the urethral and vaginal openings, with only a single tiny opening preserved for the passage of urine and menses."

4 Clitoridectomy refers to the removal of part or all of the clitoris; excision refers to the removal of the inner labia as well as the clitoris.

5 It is estimated that between 10% and 98% of women (depending on the country) have undergone some form of female circumcision in 26 African countries (Toubia, 1995: 25). Small immigrant populations from these regions sometimes continue the practice in their host countries. Activists usually mention instances of female circumcision among some ethnic groups in Asia and Latin America. When those reports are substantiated they generally concern small minorities or groups that have now abandoned the practice. There is also a tendency to overstress the number of European and American women on whom clitoridectomy was performed at the beginning of this century.

6 See James, 1998 for a recent critique of this controversial film.

7 Interview Gf29, 02/12/97.

8 *Numu* (pl. *numuw*) is usually translated as "blacksmith." However, I prefer to use the Mande term, because *numu* women do not practise smithing, but pottery, and because *numu* men are (or have been) responsible for many other crafts, such as wood carving and divination. *Numuw* of both sexes can practice healing (using herbs and rituals), and a few train to become circumcisors (men circumcise boys and women operate on girls). *Numuw* are one of the Mande endogamous socio-professional groups that have been described as "casted" in the literature (see N'Diaye, 1995 [1970]). The classic account on Mande *numuw* is McNaughton's (1988).

9 Interview Gf54, 07/12/97.

10 Interview KD6, 05/09/97.

11 The history of the campaign remains unwritten. My account is based mostly on the presentation of Assitan Diallo, a Malian researcher who has been working on this issue for 20 years, at the National Seminar on Excision held in Bamako in June 1997, and on interviews at the Commissariat à la Promotion des Femmes in May 1997 and April 1998. I apologize for any omissions.

12 Interview Kff21, 18/09/97.

13 Interview Kh25, 18/09/97.

14 Interview Kf5, 12/09/97.

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Living Hierarchy in Yemen

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Abstract: This article investigates how unequal material relationships permeate the "lived identities" (Williams, 1977) of subordination and domination in the forms of concepts about and enactments of personhood, emotions, piety and propriety among Muslim women of Zabid, Republic of Yemen. I discuss how the gender hierarchy is entwined with wider forms of hierarchy between the elite and a servant class of people, known as the *akhdam*. Dominant ideas about "appropriately behaved," moral, pious women can serve to make "commonsense" the domination of others who do not constitute themselves in such ways. In short, "moral selves" are created at the same time as "legitimate hierarchies." Styles of female deference to men (control of body and emotion, veiling and avoidance behaviour, which are thought to demonstrate Muslim piety) ensure the subordination of women to men at the same time they legitimize the superiority of elite women over their servants, who do not comport themselves in such ways. Consumption practices are significant as well for the elite as it consumes its wealth in ways that "signify" for reputations: it is channeled into the elements of gracious hospitality or consumed rather than hoarded.

Résumé: Cet article fait ressortir les manières dont la distribution inégale des richesses envahit les «identités vécues» (Williams, 1977) de subordination et de domination sous formes de perception et d'affirmation de la personnalité, des émotions, de la piété et des convenances chez les femmes musulmanes de Zabid, en République du Yemen. J'essaie d'établir comment la hiérarchie sexuelle est enlacée dans des formes plus globales de hiérarchie établies entre l'élite et une classe de serviteurs connue sous le nom de *ahkdam*. Les idées reçues sur les femmes au comportement approprié, morales et pieuses peuvent aussi servir à constituer en «sens commun» la domination sur les autres qui ne se constituent pas de cette façon. Bref, le «soi moral» est créé en même temps que les «hiérarchies légitimes». Les modes de déférence féminine envers les hommes (contrôle du corps et des émotions, port du voile et retrait, qui sont censés démontrer la piété musulmane) assurent la subordination des femmes aux hommes en même temps qu'elles légitimisent la supériorité des femmes de l'élite sur les serviteurs, qui ont d'autres modes de comportement. Les pratiques de consommation sont aussi significatives, car les élites consomment leurs richesses de façon à «signifier» leur réputation: la richesse est utilisée pour donner des réceptions, elle est consommée plutôt que thésaurisée.

Introduction

A prominent (and worthy) goal of much Middle Eastern anthropology is to challenge popular Western conceptions of the "passive, veiled Muslim woman," to acknowledge their agency while also noting the constraints placed upon them by the system they help to reproduce. Yet the danger of this otherwise laudable goal, as Lila Abu-Lughod notes, is that the time spent arguing against these "shadow stereotypes" often prevents the production of sophisticated feminist critiques, stopping instead at a mere documentation of the "rich variability" of Muslim women's lives (Abu-Lughod, 1988: 104-105). Deniz Kandiyoti cautions us of the dangers of being caught in an Orientalist discourse, of keeping "our gaze fixed upon the discursive hegemony of the West" (1996: 16). We must, these scholars argue, focus not only on the various misunderstandings and misrepresentations of the East-West encounter, but go beyond them to investigate how local gender hierarchies are reproduced in various institutions within complex, heterogeneous Middle Eastern states, states which are themselves situated in wider political and economic relationships in the global system.

Considering the complexity of social hierarchies—that is, gender hierarchies between men and women *and* those amongst women—is a goal espoused by Micaela di Leonardo in her article "Women's Culture and Its Discontents" (1991). Here she argues for both a greater appreciation of women's agency as well as recognition that within any one culture women are not necessarily homogeneous in terms of their social identity (age-group affiliation, class, ethnicity, race). Given this heterogeneity, we must recognize, she argues, that political and social interests among them may conflict as well (1991: 231). Taking these issues into account, I examine in this article how gender hierarchy in Zabid, a small town on the coast of the Republic of Yemen, is entwined with wider forms of hierarchical relationships and suggest ways that

women might be particularly central in reproducing these.

I am concerned here with how social hierarchy in Zabid is embedded in quotidian, "commonsensical" (Williams, 1977) bodily practices which form the basis for moral personhood. Working primarily with elite Yemeni women, I explore how women's practices—such as those related to proper comportment (including veiling), the enactment of emotions, consumption and exchange, and sociability or visiting practices—are especially salient for maintaining local hierarchical relationships among women. Elite women are involved in complex relationships of power: they are subordinate to their husbands and male kin, yet advantaged with respect to the poor, especially the *akhdam* or servant class. Practices of these elite women with regard to moral comportment are central to reproducing relationships of domination between women in Zabid. Yet acknowledgement of women's engagement in oppressive relationships should not obfuscate how they themselves are constrained by them.

Marcel Mauss' generative essay on "techniques of the body" (1973) provides an inspiration for my thinking here, as does Talal Asad's more recent reading of Mauss in *Genealogies of Religion* (1993). Pierre Bourdieu's elaboration upon Mauss' notion of habitus, a set of implicit practices which form the basis of commonsense understandings and shape the possibilities for action (Bourdieu, 1977), and his application of these practices in terms of domination and hierarchy, make his work an enduring touchstone for considerations of bodily practices and the formation of hierarchies in Middle Eastern anthropology.

A central goal of this paper is to unpack the hegemony of the habitus. Raymond Williams' discussion of hegemony suggests how hierarchies are made to seem "commonsensical" by their situation in all manner of everyday practices:

> It [hegemony] is a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meanings and values—constitutive and constituting—which as they are experienced as practices appear reciprocally confirming. (1977: 110)

Bourdieu's formulation (1977) of the habitus as providing a small range of implicit "moves" or "strategies" does not allow much place for a sense of moral personhood, which is both constituted by appropriate practice, and provides an impetus for it. Asad's reading of Mauss, which suggests that the training of bodies develops capacities for particular forms of virtues which underpin moral personhood (1993: 72-79), is drawn upon in my interpretation of the propriety of Zabidi bodily practices. In this analysis, I explore the *practical knowledge* of hierarchy, whereby through "techniques of the body" (Mauss, 1973) aptitudes for "modes of emotional being" and "kinds of spiritual experience" are developed (Asad, 1993: 76). Taking inspiration from Asad's reading of how moral states are inculcated in social persons in situations of power, I argue that definitions and practices of "morality" come to naturalize, as well as reproduce social hierarchies at the same time as "moral selves" are constituted (see also Yanagisako and Delaney [1995] on gender and the "naturalization" of power).

Social Hierarchy in Zabid

In 1989-90 and again briefly in 1999, I conducted participant-observation research in Zabid, a small, but highly stratified predominantly Shafa'i Muslim town in the Republic of Yemen. I worked mainly with elite women, adopting a veil, observing gender segregation and participating in everyday activities, which among the elite Zabidi women consisted of cycles of daily hosting and visiting, governed by an elaborate etiquette. Zabid is an ancient town in the former North Yemen, which unified with the former socialist South Yemen in 1990. It is located on the Tihamah, the sweltering coastal plain that borders the Red Sea, a region that is agriculturally rich in the river valleys where water is available. The Tihamah region as a whole is distinct from (and subordinate to) the highland region, where the capital, San'a' is the locus of power in contemporary Yemen. The social hierarchy in Yemen, as explained below, has notable regional variations, but has long been evident throughout Yemen.

Historically, Yemen has been a highly stratified society. At the top were the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad (*sadah*), who had formed the ruling dynasty in the highlands in earlier centuries, the tribesmen (*qaba'il*), the butchers, barbers and circumcisors (*mazayanah*), the former slaves (*'abid*) and at the very bottom, below even the slaves, the servant class, the *akhdam* (masc., sing., *khadim*, fem., sing., *khadima*). These categories were marked by occupation, and solidified by intra-category endogamy. Some anthropologists, notably Gerholm (1977) and Bujra (1971), have drawn analogies to the caste system of Hindu India, yet as Messick suggests, hierarchical as well as egalitarian principles are embedded within the historical and contemporary practices of Yemeni Islam (1993: 159-166).[1] These ancient status categories and their associated sartorial markers were officially banned after the Republican Revolution

(*al-thawra*) in 1962, as the government tried to implement a "nation" (*watan*) based on equality between citizens. In North Yemen, as in other Middle Eastern states, attempts were made to alter long-standing forms of social identities in hopes of instilling a sense of a citizenly affiliation with the nation-state.[2] Yet inequalities between these status categories, although technically illegal under the laws of the Yemeni nation state, continue to pervade everyday life in Yemen.

During my research, this was made clear to me before I had even left Yemen's capital city, San'a'. One day, a British-educated professor in Sociology at the University drove my husband and myself to the passport office, so we could arrange our residence visas. As we were deep in conversation, he rear-ended a butcher's truck full of sheep. The butcher was understandably agitated, as were the sheep; his invective was audible even above their bleating. The police officer at the intersection rushed to the scene, although fortunately, neither person nor sheep had been injured. The professor, calm and self-possessed, urged us to go about our business, while he dealt with the repercussions. We went, wondering guiltily if we had been distracting him with our talk, enough, perhaps, to make him commit that inexcusable crime of rear-ending someone. It was with some trepidation that we met up again with our professor, who announced that the trouble had been sorted out. We asked how he had been penalized, and cheerfully, he pointed to a fat pocketful of cash. He said the man he had hit had paid him rather well for his broken headlight. Captives of our own traffic regulations, we exclaimed "But you rear-ended him!" He said, with only a hint of irony, "But I am a university professor and he is a butcher."

This early glimpse of how hierarchy permeates everyday behaviour in Yemen's capital sheds light on the distinctive evaluations of persons that I encountered in Zabid. Elite and "respectable" Zabidis are referred to as "*al-nas,*" literally, "the people," but from the perspective of the elite, the meaning is "the socially significant people," a category from which the butchers and the *akhdam*, or servants, are excluded. Within those considered of "the people," the salient identity in everyday life is the family (*bayt*) to which one belongs. A wealthy, influential family is referred to as a "great family" (*bayt kabir*). Collectively, the great families of Zabid are known as "the great" (*al-kibar*); they are the most prosperous and respected families in Zabid. They own large estates in Wadi Zabid, the river valley surrounding the town, or in one of the other river valleys. Tobacco, limes, bananas, mangos, melons and dates are among the cash crops grown on the estates, while on drier land, sorghum, a staple grain, is often grown. Members of the elite do not work the land they own; the rural people (*riffiyyin*) sharecrop the land, giving the landowner 2/3 to 3/4 of the produce. The profits from this unequal relationship are often channeled by the elite into practices like adornment, and exchanges of hospitality, gifts and *qat*, a leaf containing a mild amphetamine-like substance that is chewed daily by Zabidis in sociable contexts.[3]

My primary concern in this article is to trace how social hierarchy is embedded in several of these practices, especially those related to proper comportment, emotions and consumption and visiting practices. Through examining these quotidian practices, I illustrate how inequality comes to seem ordinary through the permeation of everyday "lived identities" (Williams, 1977).

The great families dominate Zabid not only politically and economically, but also morally. Zabid's is a face-to-face elite; its members are not separated socially or physically from the rest of the community, but rather encounter those lower than themselves in the social hierarchy on a daily basis. Local conceptions of moral virtue—shared, at least partially, by all members of society—are involved in the constitution of hierarchical relationships. The central values by which morality is constituted are generosity, propriety, and Islamic piety.[4] Yet "goodness" is defined in such a way that it is much more accessible to the rich than the poor, as it is they who have the resources to offer generous hospitality and charity; to uphold the standards of gender segregation by which propriety is partially constituted; and to gain access to education and training in Islamic comportment.[5] My data from Zabid suggests that "appropriately trained bodies" (Asad, 1993: 72-79) constituted and presented to others through quotidian practices which signify moral personhood, serve to normalize and justify the domination of others who do not live up to hegemonic standards of comportment.

My vantage point for the study of these relationships is elite women, with whom I did the majority of my research. I had originally intended to work equally with members of all status categories, yet, like many anthropologists, I found myself with less control over whom I could talk to than I would have wished. It was difficult for me as a fieldworker to get the same kind of information for the *akhdam* as I did for the elite, because I was associated, albeit ambiguously, with them, and because my elite informants often tried to direct my social contact toward those that they considered appropriate interlocutors, namely, their peers.

I offer as an example of these constraints one of my own engagements in the exchanges by which social posi-

tion is enacted. Before a trip to the capital, when making the expected farewell visit to the neighbours, although we were only leaving for a few days, I asked if I could bring anything back for them. Usually they insisted, in the polite formulaic, "I only want your safety!" (*ashti salamatik bas!*), but this time they requested some special incense for scenting water which could not be purchased in Zabid. As I was leaving, their elderly servant, who lived with them in their house, followed me home and asked for some incense too. This servant rushed to my door when I returned from the capital; I gave her the incense. Hiding it in her dress, she kissed my knees and begged in a whisper for me not to tell the family or my landlady about my gift to her. When I visited the neighbouring family in the evening, they responded to my gift as elite women often do, by sharply asking why I had troubled myself (*laysh ta'atibi nuffsik kitha?*). We received gifts of lime and bananas from their farms for days afterwards, and the women insisted on scenting our water with the incense we had brought for them. Their servant did not even attempt a return gift to us. She clearly did not see me entirely as one of the elite, or she would not have asked me to bring her the incense or assume that I would keep her secret, which I did. Yet she also kissed my knees, a gesture of deference which made me uncomfortable and hardly seemed an appropriate prelude to an anthropological chat, especially since the woman seemed terrified to be discovered in my house clutching the gift I had given her. I suspect that my neighbours discouraged this servant and other lower-status women from visiting my home. My landlady (whose own high social position had become increasingly tenuous as her son rashly sold off all their landholdings) seemed particularly concerned that I make social connections which enhanced her own reputation. When I met the *akhdam* in elite homes, I was not in a position to elicit *akhdam* perceptions about the social hierarchy, and the ways in which they may contest or subvert the meanings of the elite.[6] As Williams (1977) notes, hegemonic meanings are not all determining, and there is no good reason to suppose that those in an inferior position necessarily *agree* with the negative stereotypes of the dominant.[7] Therefore, the silences on *akhdam* perceptions in this paper should not be read as an implication that there are not any differing perceptions, but rather that I was not able to investigate this important issue as much as I would have liked.

Talking about Hierarchy

The *akhdam* live on the outskirts of Zabid, in small concrete houses or in huts with thatched or corrugated iron roofs. They are not as isolated from the other members of the community as are the *akhdam* community in San'a'. Other Zabidi *akhdam* live in the elite households where they work; these are usually older men or women who do not have children or who have been separated from them when they have gone elsewhere to seek better employment.[8]

Elite Zabidis were often vague and contradictory in their statements about the position of the *akhdam* or servant class. Some Zabidis merely say that the *akhdam* are "black" (*aswad*), although it was virtually impossible to determine someone's social position by skin pigment. There is a wide range of skin pigment even among the elite families, as Zabidi women are well aware.[9] Similarly, non-prestigious origin (as an African origin is locally said to be) was occasionally cited unreflectively as the reason for the inferior position of the *akhdam*, who were said to be from Ethiopia, although they claimed to be as Zabidi as anyone else there. Some elite women merely declared that the place of the *akhdam* was "from God" (*min Allah*), implying it was therefore immutable because it was God's will. What was not mentioned as an explanation was the role of relative wealth, and the patently unequal access to resources between the two: the elite deriving their income from landed estates, and the *akhdam* surviving on their meager wages, a slight fraction of an elite family's daily income. The most common explanation that elite women gave for the inferior position of the *akhdam* was their lack of conformity to elite standards of bodily comportment. And it is the comportment of *women's bodies* that is salient in the differentiation of the elite from the *akhdam*.

The Moral Body: Cutting, Covering and Separating

The processes of gender segregation are so deeply embedded in Zabidi social life so as to appear a "natural" aspect of the habitus to the participants, yet they require constant enactment in everyday life. Gender segregation in Zabid depends on a range of modesty practices that include female circumcision, veiling and the avoidance of non-related men.

Female circumcision as practised in Zabid comprises the removal of a baby girl's clitoris when she is a few weeks old; no ceremony or celebration accompanies it. This practice is part of the many ways in which women's sexuality is controlled and through which the gender hierarchy is enacted in Zabid, but in this context I highlight how women view this practice in light of wider social hierarchies.[10] Female circumcision does not guar-

antee women's chastity or modesty, rather it provides a precondition for it, at least according to some Zabidis.[11] Significantly, female circumcision is *not* a practice that signifies for hierarchical relationships between the elite and the *akhdam* as it is practised by all classes of Zabid. The operation of female circumcision is thought to facilitate an aptitude for modest comportment, but the enactment of modest comportment as a young woman is conceived of as an expression of virtue which she produces *of her own will*. As Abu Lughod (1986) has so convincingly argued for the Awlad 'Ali Bedouin of Egypt, it is the expression of women's agency through the *voluntary* production of a modest demeanour which creates their honour. In Yemen, a similar understanding of the connection between women's agency as exemplified in modest behaviour and their honourable identity was also evident. As the *akhdam* have the same precondition for honourable behaviour as do the elite—provided through infant circumcision—the fact that they do not behave modestly is perceived as a lack of "will" or "social sense" (*'aql*). The display of *'aql* is central to adult personhood; its absence is associated with children and the insane.

In Abu-Lughod's important reformulation of the issue of veiling, so long simplistically understood as iconic of the oppression of Muslim women, she argues that voluntary modest comportment is how women gain honour in a situation of inferiority (Abu-Lughod, 1986). Modesty (*istihya'*) is considered a positive quality which is perceived as a personal virtue, achieved through an act of will. It is the voluntary aspect of veiling which indicates how Zabidi women perceive themselves to be active, responsible, honourable and sane members of society. Women, like men, ought to be capable of producing appropriate actions; the failure to do so connotes a moral flaw. Veiling on the streets in a black, enveloping *chador*, avoiding interactions with non-related adult men and avoiding male domains like the local market (*suq*), mosques and government buildings, are requirements of modest women.[12] The modest comportment of women is also intrinsic to a family's honourable reputation. A "good" woman respects herself and her family through modest behaviour, constituting in part the worth and honour of her family. In Zabid, women see their proper behaviour as something they produce proudly to uphold the social standing of their families.

In contrast, the *akhdam* seemingly flaunt the dominant conventions of gender segregation. *Akhdam* women do not wear the *chador*, for which they are stigmatized, wearing instead colourful gowns with wide sleeves. They enter male domains like the *suq* to make purchases or sell small items, like clay jugs. No respectable woman would breach the domain of the *suq*: nor have they need to. The shopowners are male, and Zabidi men are responsible for the shopping for food and *qat*.[13] *Akhdam* women sometimes work as servants in male gatherings or enter the moral spaces of others' houses to work when their male family members are present. The movement of these women into the domains of the opposite gender are perceived by the elite as a sign of moral inferiority. There is a silence about the fact that *akhdam* women must enter the homes of others and the *suq* in order to eke out a meager existence. Rather, they are said to be different from the elite because they do not know what is "shameful" (*'ayb*) or "respectful" (*ihtiram*). The dominant perceptions of modesty suggest that individuals enact it as a result of the personal qualities of self-respect, reason and self-control, stressing the voluntary aspects of proper comportment. The inferior position of the *akhdam* can thereby be perceived by the elite as due to the lack of moral qualities that mature adult Muslims are supposed to possess.

I was told that in the past, if a couple had been found to be engaging in adultery, which the system of gender segregation is designed to prevent, they would be drummed by the *akhdam* into Zabid's central square to receive—in full view—the prescribed lashings as punishment. The adulterers' fall from moral comportment is underscored by their public accompaniment by the lowest strata of society—those who are alleged not to know shame from honour—to face public humiliation.[14]

The concept and practices of modesty create a sense of superiority relative to those who do not "act properly." Children who have yet to be properly socialized, the insane, Westerners and the *akhdam* are categories of inferior beings who do not behave properly. Little girls are not bound by the conventions of gender segregation. They start wearing a headscarf around the age of four or five, although they are not criticized if the scarves slip off, as they will be as they get older. By the time they are eight or nine years old, however, they are encouraged to avoid the men's reception rooms, and sharply criticized or shamed for inappropriate behaviour.[15] An older girl whose head scarf has slipped off will be chastised by the rhetorical question "Why is your hair like that? Are you a crazy woman?" (*majuna*). The practices of modesty are made yet more binding and persuasive by their association with sanity. When telling stories about women who had lost their reason, the first signs of insanity were always that they went outside without their hair covered.

In Zabid I had not initially intended to wear a *chador*, although I wore clothes that covered me entirely, leaving only hands and feet exposed, covering my hair with a

scarf, but after a few weeks I caved under the insistent questioning as to why I was *not* wearing one. My own position as a non-Muslim Westerner was a matter of considerable concern, as Westerners are presumed to have promiscuous lives. The first three months in Zabid featured urges to convert as a characteristic of almost every conversation. My eventual adoption of a *chador*, and my adherence to the standards of gender segregation and comportment, on which I was constantly coached, did much toward convincing people that although not a Muslim, I was possessed of *'aql* and was a "good" person. In vouching for our decency to a Yemeni visitor to Zabid, one man explained that we were "good" (*tayyibin*) since the Zabidi men had not seen so much as my fingernail: my conformity to dominant standards, therefore, helped to establish our respectability.

The veiling of women creates the social status of men; not veiling from them marks them as immature (boys), irrelevant (foreigners) or inferior (the *akhdam*). As noted above, my adoption of a *chador* did much to establish my husband's respectability in the community. The only adult men who are allowed into women's gatherings, from whom adult women do not veil, are *akhdam* men who also work as servants in elite households. Their low social position is continually re-enacted by this withholding of recognition of adult male status; they are not considered manly enough to besmirch the reputations of higher-status women. Non-*akhdam* teenaged boys who are struggling to assert an adult identity will be most careful about not transgressing female gatherings, in an attempt to claim that they are now adult enough to be veiled from. One young neighbour of ours demanded from age 10 (usually puberty is the time when compliance to gender segregation is absolutely required) that women treat him like a man and veil from him, to the vast amusement of his mother, aunts and the neighbourhood women who had known him since birth. Yet despite their amusement, they respected his claim, and seemed almost proud of his precociousness. A contrast can be seen with how the same family and set of neighbours treated their male servant, who lived in their house and did odd jobs for a tiny salary. This man occasionally walked through women's gatherings clad only in a loincloth. The other neighbourhood women and I would routinely exchange greetings with him, whereas we would not even glance at our host's husband or adult sons, nor they at us.

There is nothing inherently oppressive or emancipatory about the fact of gender segregation itself, as Kandiyoti notes (1996); the meanings and ramifications of this practice can only be understood by contextualizing how it is supported, in each ethnographic case, by other institutions and practices. Gender segregation in Zabid articulates with the institution of the *bayt* (the term refers both to the family and house they inhabit) in several ways. Among the elite and the ordinary people, the *bayt* as a physical space houses the multigeneration family, usually, but not exclusively, constituted by patrilineality. It is understood as a moral space, the locus of familial identity. In Zabid, the salient group is the family; both male and female members co-operate in actively maintaining the reputation of their family through appropriate public comportment. An important dimension of a family's "goodness" is whether or not they live up to the standards of gender segregation. Wealthy families have the space and financial resources to have at least two reception rooms to host male and female visitors, facilitating the simultaneous hosting of male and female guests while maintaining the separation of unrelated men and women. Male members must respect women's spaces within the household, never entering the female spaces of the house during the regular formal visiting hours, from around 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.[16] Men in poorer families, without separate reception rooms, will arrange to be out of the house during the women's reception hours. Ethnographic accounts of honour and highland tribal Yemeni men describe how women must be "controlled" lest their improper sexual comportment bring shame onto their male relatives (for instance, Dresch, 1989: 44). The understandings are different in Zabid. Zabidi women do not regard their behaviour as arising from male "control" but rather from their own self-control. Although women bear the greater burden for establishing the respectability of the family through modest behaviour, men also co-operate in gender segregation by lowering their eyes from women, avoiding their spaces and avoiding conversations with non-related women, especially young women. In Zabid, both male and female proper comportment is necessary for establishing one's family as an honourable one, and one's house as a respectable space.

Hierarchy, Personhood and Social Exchange

The style of life of the elite is made possible by the domination of other people's labour, and their monopoly over productive resources and prestigious occupations. Most of the fertile land in the surrounding river valley, Wadi Zabid, is owned by elite Zabidis; as noted above, the landowners receive between 2/3 and 3/4 of the produce. These sharecroppers may or may not be *akhdam*, al-

though the *akhdam* have a lower status even if they are not poorer than other sharecroppers. As Raymond Williams has noted, processes of hegemony include forms of leisure. Wealth in Zabid, to "signify" for honourable reputations, must be deployed in a certain style as the mere possession of wealth is not enough to guarantee social position. The elite, as noted above, are not aloof from the rest of the community, but rather encounter others in the course of everyday interactions. To maintain their position, they must display, consume and distribute their wealth in a way that indicates willingness to engage with others in the community, through acts of generosity and hospitality. To paraphrase Williams, "good income must be transformed into good conduct" (1973). Generosity, hospitality and charity are values shared by all, part of the Islamic notion of "correct comportment" (*adab*) as it is understood in Zabid. Wealth without generosity is condemned; charity is stipulated as one of the five mandatory obligations ("pillars") of Islam.[17] Being a good Muslim is a central tenant of social personhood, and generosity and hospitality are religious obligations that will be rewarded both in the afterlife and in the contemporary social world. Yet this particular structuring of value means that moral comportment is much more accessible to the rich than the poor.

The consumption practices by which social and moral value is endowed include an elaborate series of competitive hosting and guesting, which take place on a daily basis. Elite income must be turned into the visible accoutrements of their moral superiority: into grand houses where guests are entertained in separate male and female reception rooms, and clean, well-adorned, but modestly dressed family members who represent their families in their respective publics. Proper adornment is important: a wealthy man whose family members are poorly adorned will be criticized as a "miser" (*bakhil*). Hosts honour their guests by providing clean and comfortable spaces for their entertainment; guests honour their hostesses by appearing clean and properly dressed.[18]

As noted above, gender segregation means that women and men have separate public spheres. The male public sphere includes the local market, the mosques and the government buildings; they also meet daily in the afternoons and early evenings to chew *qat*, in the male reception rooms adjoining wealthy houses. Women too have a public sphere, despite the fact that it is enacted in private homes: a circuit of visiting and hosting which takes place daily during the formal visiting hours. In this sphere, women act politically on behalf of their families, the chief political unit in Zabid. Women's generous comportment in their public sphere creates the reputation of the family for wealth appropriately consumed through generosity.

Visiting is one of the types of exchanges by which social position is constituted. As Mauss recognized long ago, exchange can create moral personhood and the moral identity of the groups persons represent (1970). The familial identity is recognized as honourable by guests who pay visits and attend the familial social functions. The morality of a family is implicitly recognized by women's visiting. If a family has a reputation for being morally sound, other women can enter their home without fear of taint to their reputations.

Although elite and non-elite women may work outside of their homes, the primary occupational option being schoolteaching in one of Zabid's gender segregated elementary or high schools, I have argued elsewhere that their "hospitality work" must be considered as labour on behalf of their families.[19] The political competition between elite families takes place to a great extent in both the male and female sociable spheres.[20] A family's network of social ties is part of their patrimony. The honourable identities of families are created in the process of the competitive exchange of visits. The exchange of hosting and guesting is very much involved in defining distinctive identities; who one *is* depends very much on who one *knows*. To be socially significant in Zabid one must be recognized by others. As I argue at length elsewhere (Meneley, 1996), this form of women's labour is often overlooked in accounts of politics in gender-segregated societies.

Giving, from the perspective of the Zabidi elite, is always the preferable action. As Mauss notes, exchange can be used to assert superiority. In much of Zabidi sociality, elite women prefer to be the hosts, the generous givers, rather than the recipients, of hospitality. However, elite women insist on reciprocity in visiting. They have to visit their peers, or their peers will refuse to visit them. As Mauss says "To refuse to give, or to fail to invite, is—like refusing to accept—the equivalent of a declaration of war; it is a refusal of friendship and intercourse (1970: 11). Women's visiting has great significance for the family's reputation as a whole for two reasons. First, elite women visit much more frequently than men. Elite male landowners tend to host daily *qat* chews in their own reception rooms; women as representatives of their families, are primarily responsible for maintaining the social ties with other Zabidi families. Second, women's reputations, especially those of unmarried women, are the most strictly guarded because any hint of sexual misconduct can harm the reputation of the family as a whole. Therefore, women, especially unmarried women, should avoid spaces where their reputations

may be threatened. Women's visiting acknowledges the homes of others as moral spaces, inhabited by trustworthy, respectable people. Their presence in the home of another family acknowledges the host's worth and honourable status; it signifies that the woman's reputation will not come to any harm by entering one's home. One must offer hospitality to any guest in one's home, even if they are of poor repute; neglecting a guest in one's own home only hurts one's own reputation. Refusal to visit is taken very seriously; it is the source of daily negotiation, contestation, and competition. In this logic of sociability, honour accrues to those who are visited, who are thereby acknowledged as socially significant and morally sound, and those who are allowed to give (or give back) rather than receive.

The *akhdam* women are largely excluded from this daily cycle of recognition: they are not considered of the "socially significant people" who must be acknowledged through visiting. The honour and respectability of the host family are acknowledged through a return visit. Although they may be present in elite households occasionally as guests, the *akhdam* are never given a chance to reciprocate. Elite women are not obliged to return these calls.[21] They enter elite homes to work, and to pay respectful calls on the religious festivals, when they receive a few *riyals* of charity. At weddings, *akhdam* women beg, receiving a few *riyals* from the guests, in return for their labour at the wedding parties. Neighbours and kin also help with the considerable labour involved in throwing a wedding, but the difference is that they can expect to be helped in return with their own ceremonies, whereas labour is not returned to the *akhdam*.

The exchange of greetings is extremely important in Yemen. As a mimimal acknowledgment of the personhood of another, it is a right which is owed a fellow Muslim.[22] I was told that in the past, elite women would not have been obliged to shake hands with an *akhdam* woman, although now they do. Yet although an *akhdam* woman kisses the hand of an elite woman, the elite woman does not kiss her hand in return. And although a Yemeni proverb notes "A kiss on the hand means hatred of it" (Messick, 1993: 166), implying a knowledge and resentment of subordination, it is also true that politeness always contains political concessions, as Bourdieu notes (1977: 95). Sometimes *akhdam* women even kiss the knees of a higher-status person. Among the non-*akhdam*, I only saw such deferential greetings between young girls and their older female relatives of the grandparental generation. On formal religious days, younger family members may kiss the knees of the patriarch of the family. Subordination is constituted in the physical lowering of oneself in front of a dominant other, embodying the hierarchical relationship.

Gift-giving follows the same logic as visiting. In my vignette above, the elite family was reluctant to appear as a client asking for a gift from me; as a consequence, I am sure I received more in return than the incense was worth. Their servant, on the other hand, never made any attempt to return my gift except in the form of extremely respectful, self-effacing greetings. Non-reciprocal gifting was the norm between elite and the *akhdam*; I never saw a servant try to return a gift of *qat*, a common practice at women's parties, to a higher-status woman. Making a return gift is a quest for equal status, and it runs the risk of being brushed off as impertinence. Exchange is a process creative of value, as Simmel notes (1971: 42-69) and the value of persons is constituted in even such quotidian exchanges in Zabid.

The Politics of Emotions

It is often said that the taboo on marrying *akhdam* women is because of the reputation of their families—deserved or not—for being riven with violence between female family members. One *akhdam* woman, a servant in an elite family, reported daily on her physical altercations with her co-wife, which the elite family was both disdainful of and amused by. Rather than taking this statement as reflecting some kind of truth about all *akhdam* families, I suggest it is an index of the concern elite families have for presenting a unified face to the rest of the community, untarnished by discord. For instance, if women in elite families are quarrelling, they may be hushed with a hissed question "why are you behaving like the *akhdam*?" Modesty in Zabid underlies the enactment of other emotions: one ought to be embarrassed to express desire, anger or grief without restraint. As Abu-Lughod and Lutz note, "emotion discourses establish, assert, challenge, or reinforce power or status differences" (1990: 14). Displays of emotion are also said to be related to *'aql*, reason, which is linked to the formation of mature persons and to social status.

Metaphors of "hotness" and "coolness" are drawn upon in emotion discourses. Elite Zabidi women are ideally supposed to be "cool" (*barid*) in their display of emotions. The "hotness" of anger ought to be muted by the exercise of self-control, as must any intimation of sexual interest. Even the expression of grief at funerals is chastised. As a consequence of their lack of modesty, the *akhdam* are said to lack control over the strong negative emotions of anger and grief. Again, the question of self-control is central to social status. The women are said to be inclined to physical violence with peers on the

streets, which the elite would consider an action that would bring shame on an entire family. The *akhdam* are said to wail and beat the body of the deceased at death, an uncontrolled expression of grief which is considered not only immodest but also religiously "forbidden" (*haram*) by the Zabidi *nas*. This comportment is in contrast to the controlled mourning of the elite, where any ritual keening, even on the first day after a death, is considered a questioning of the will of God.

Muslim Piety

The practices of modesty in Zabid are continually negotiated with reference to local understandings of Muslim piety, in that modest comportment is thought to demonstrate piety. This is not to suggest that the position of women is completely determined by Islam, but rather that what is "proper" Islam is shaped in relations of power whereby certain practices and interpretations become authorized in particular Muslim communities (Asad, 1986). As modesty is thought to indicate piety in Zabid, modest women ensure the reputation of their families as devout Muslims. This fusion of propriety and piety lends persuasive force to the hierarchical relationships in the community. Individual elite women often claim a serious commitment to the principle that all Muslims are equal in the eyes of God, despite awareness of the social hierarchy in the Zabidi community.[23] However, the lack of modesty of the *akhdam* throws into question, from the perspective of the elite, whether or not they are truly Muslims, an important factor in this deeply religious community where Muslim piety is so inextricably linked to moral personhood.[24] Religious knowledge is linked to social hierarchies, and the ignorant are assigned a child-like status (Messick, 1993: 154-155). The *akhdam* have less access to religious education and state schooling; they are forbidden from neither in contemporary Yemen, but through poverty and prejudice tend not to be educated as are most Zabidis.[25] One time when visiting an elite family, I saw an older servant do her prayer postures. My elite host chided her on having not performed the required ablutions before prayer, a requirement, as Reinhardt persuasively argues, fundamentally about subordinating the body to the will (1990: 19-20). The servant was not able to produce a "prestigious imitation" (Mauss, 1973), as she had not been properly trained to do so. "The inability to enter into communion with God becomes a function of untaught bodies" (Asad, 1993: 77) and elite families consider it their responsibility to ensure that their children are taught to pray properly.[26]

Westerners, who the Zabidis see primarily when their tour groups stop for brief visits to Zabid, are thought to be morally inferior because of their immodest dress. Many tourists I encountered had strong negative reactions to the veiling of Yemeni women, yet the Zabidis have their own set of stereotypes about unveiled Western women, who are presumed to be decadent and morally unsound. Recent work on the practice of veiling in the Middle East, Ahmed (1992) and the essays in Kandiyoti's *Women, Islam, and the State* (1991) and Abu-Lughod's *Remaking Women* (1998), articulate the complex ways in which practices like veiling are shaped by relationships of power with Western nations and indigenous anti-colonial and nationalist projects. The government of North Yemen did not institute a period of mandatory unveiling of women, where unveiled women were to convey "modernity" as did the governments of Iran (Najmabadi, 1991) or Turkey (Kandiyoti, 1991). Yet contemporary veiling in Zabid is an assertion of Zabidi "goodness" with respect to the Western world. The most common way of expressing the moral superiority of Zabidi society over "Westerners" is to say that Western women do not behave modestly. The stated moral depravity of the West is given a physical encapsulation in *unveiled women*; the garb of male tourists is not remarked upon, although they may well be wearing clothing, like shorts or sleeveless t-shirts, which are also considered inappropriate. Zabidis after encountering Western tourists will note the supposed lack of intellectual capacities of unveiled women, as well as relationships between the West and Yemen. I was often told that the scantily clad Western tourists who periodically tour Zabid were said to frighten children who think, because of their immodesty, that they are insane. The hegemony of morally sound comportment in Zabid operates in opposition to the more powerful as well as the less. What is particularly important here is that it is the comportment of women that determines how claims to status, always argued in moral terms, are made.

Conclusion

I am suggesting that hierarchical relationships are lived through everyday practices. Dominant conceptions about what constitutes moral and mature persons serve also to create "legitimate hierarchies." The enactment of morality, through such ephemeral gestures as kissing a hand or refusing to, veiling a face or giving a gift or hospitality without allowing an opportunity to reciprocate, has to be seen as part of the relationships of domination and subordination. In Zabid, the practices of female modesty are a locus for both personhood and hierarchy, embodying personal virtue and piety, as well as the moral worth of families. The deference shown by Zabidi women to men

through veiling creates male honour. Systems of moral value are never neutral, of course, and the ways in which virtue is defined means that women bear more of the responsibility for determining a family's moral goodness, often in ways that constrain them.[27] The subordination of elite Zabidi women to their male kin is ensured by the same processes that constitute the elite as a dominant class.[28] The imputed failure of the *akhdam* to uphold the dominant standards of comportment connotes flaws in moral personhood, and lends persuasive force to these hierarchical relationships. However, the focus on virtue elides the material distinctions between the two. There is silence about the fact that the *akhdam* need the few *riyals* they receive daily for working in elite households, while the elite, living off their land which the sharecroppers work, channel their energy and resources into gracious hospitality and consumption by which they create their own social worth and justify their social position. What comes through quite forcefully in the Zabidi case is the role played by the *akhdam* in elite women's imaginings and enactments of themselves as moral persons: the power of people enacting certain definitions of "goodness" renders those unable to reach them "less good," that is, morally flawed.

My relationship to my elite informants was necessarily ambivalent. The days of uncritical cultural relativism are gone, yet one still owes those who have helped one a respectful attitude, yet one which does not condone the hierarchical relationships our informants help to reproduce. In any event, my elite informants are complexly situated: they are subordinate to their husbands and male kin, yet advantaged with respect to the *akhdam* and poorer Zabidis. And in wider spheres, my elite informants, read as "Muslims" or "oppressed Muslim women," may themselves be exposed to prejudice. How anthropologists write about Muslim women is shaped by an awareness of a North American context in which there is much hostility to Muslims (Kadi, 1994; Said, 1997). I have often been asked by students (and occasionally even colleagues) how I managed to live in a society so oppressive to women. Yet we must always contextualize our hopefully more sophisticated analyses within explanations of highly stigmatized and misunderstood practices, like veiling and gender segregation.

Thus, while striving to acknowledge Middle Eastern women's agency, the roles they play in reproducing the system that constrains them need also be noted.[29] But this means that we must also see women as integral in the process of reproducing the wider hierarchical relationships in their communities.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1 Messick's book (1993) is a complex analysis of the articulation of Islamic legal texts, their scholarly interpreters, and ordinary petitioners who appealed to the scholars for religious/legal advice on their everyday affairs. In this way, he avoids a vulgar position which would suggest that Islamic texts determine the reality of Muslims.

2 After the 1962 revolution that overthrew the Imamate, a civil war in Yemen ensued from 1962 to 1968. In 1967, a socialist regime was established in South Yemen. The transformations in practices and social thought in North Yemen are described insightfully in Messick (1993). The South Yemeni regime, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, made much more trenchant legal reforms concerning women and the family (see Molyneux, 1991) than did North Yemen. For fascinating discussions of nationalist projects and gender in the Middle East, see Kandiyoti (1991) and Abu-Lughod (1998). In 1990, the two Yemens agreed to reunify, and despite a bitter civil war in 1994, the unification is still holding.

3 The active agent in *qat* is catha edulis. *Qat* consumption is an intrinsic part of sociability in Zabid, as it is elsewhere in Yemen.

4 Neither generosity nor propriety is entirely divorced from a sense of Muslim piety in Zabid, nor is morality in general. For a more detailed discussion, see Meneley (1996).

5 I discuss the consequences, sometimes negative, of particular notions of "goodness" for elite women vis-à-vis the men in their families in Meneley (1999).

6 Sometimes *akhdam* women who approached me out of curiosity were shooed away and told to stop bothering me, as children often were; my protests had little effect.

7 James Scott's (1985) *Weapons of the Weak* inspired many to consider "resistance"; Abu-Lughod (1990) cautions us not to "romanticize" resistance; Ortner (1995) problematizes the concept of "resistance" cautioning us that it cannot replace detailed ethnographic description.

8 Some members of the Zabidi *akhdam* were recruited by the government to work as cleaners for the Sana'a Municipality

(al Ahmadi and Beatty, 1997: 33). Many *akhdam* working as migrant labourers in Saudi Arabia were forced to leave, as were many other Yemenis, after the Gulf Crisis and the political difficulties between Yemen and the Gulf States, over Yemen's neutral position on Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

9 Zabidis value lighter skin over darker skin, but there is no radical opposition between "White" and "Black" as there is in American racial ideology.

10 This issue has tested the boundaries of feminism and cultural relativism as Gosselin's paper (this volume) so aptly explains. I am attempting here to understand how this practice fits in with a range of other practices that are linked to female comportment; the politics of the topic are complex and would require further space. I did convey my distress over this practice to Zabidi women, who thought my opinions on practices of modesty were irrelevant, since I harkened from the disreputable Western world. Much more thought-provoking to them were the critiques of the highland women who do not practise circumcision. For further details, see Meneley (1996: 81-98).

11 Not all Zabidis practise it. Those who are not of the Shafa'i legal school, which is the only one of the four Muslim legal schools that condones the practice of female circumcision, do not practise it.

12 Women schoolteachers encounter male colleagues in the course of their work, but are fully veiled, including their faces, and modest women will avoid non-instrumental conversations with men.

13 The local markets are male domains in many Yemeni towns. There are a few shops in Zabid, like fabric, jewelry and clothing stores that women go to occasionally but these are located on the periphery of the *suq* or away from it entirely. Some women sell dress fabric from their homes or small items like soap, shampoo, matches and kerosene. These are frequented by neighbours who stop in to buy something and have an informal visit at the same time.

14 The *akhdam* also drum camels around town to announce that the butchers will be slaughtering them in the morning, alerting people of the opportunity to buy fresh camel meat.

15 Little children are often sent into men's gatherings to deliver messages to their fathers, but after the age of eight or so, girls are no longer assigned these tasks.

16 If there is some emergency, like an urgent telephone call, adult men will warn their wives or mothers, so that female guests will have time to throw *chadors* over their heads or leave the room. Similarly, if men need to do repair work on the roofs of houses, which would allow them a view into neighbouring courtyards where women go about unveiled, they must announce their presence by a loud cry. On my second stay in Zabid, I stayed with three families. All of them arranged to have the men in their families sleep in the male reception rooms or elsewhere for the duration of my stay, to protect my reputation.

17 The other four are: affirmation that there is one God, and Muhammad is his Prophet, five daily prayers, fasting during the month of Ramadan and a pilgrimage to Mecca, should health and finance permit.

18 The importance of issues of adornment is argued more extensively in Meneley (1996: 99-117).

19 This work in the sociable realm is similar to another kind of unacknowledged women's labour in North American society, what di Leonardo (1987) calls "kin work."

20 Weddings and funerals are particularly key social events for the constitution of familial position (Meneley, 1996: 118-140). Valuable agricultural lands and the water rights to them are also foci of intense political competition between elite families.

21 The only exception is that an older woman in an elite family may pay a brief call to a neighbouring *akhdam* family on the occasion of a death. The death of a *khadim* who lived for most of his life with an elite family was given a minimal mourning, in contrast to the elaborate and extensive mourning accorded to members of elite families. See Meneley (1996: 137-140) for further details.

22 The importance of greetings is discussed in Caton's analysis of a highland Yemeni community (1986).

23 The tension between equality and hierarchy is drawn throughout every dimension of social life in Zabid.

24 In 1999 in Zabid, I was visited by some dear friends whom I had been very close to on my first visit in 1989. I was leaving the next morning, and my eyes filled with tears when I said goodbye, not knowing when I would see them again. A woman whom I had not known during my first visit was surprised to see me displaying affection and distress at parting, saying that she had always assumed that non-Muslims are incapable of displaying *"rahma"* (human understanding, compassion, mercy); she decided that I must have Islam "in" (*fi*) me to behave in such a way.

25 State schools are free, but books and uniforms must be purchased, a considerable expense for the poor.

26 Once I heard an elite woman asked if it should be their responsibility to ensure that the *akhdam* living in their household also knew how to pray. The elite woman was uncertain how to respond.

27 When I returned to Zabid in 1999, the mother of a friend of mine begged me for pictures of her beloved daughter who had died in my absence. She showed me two very worn photos of her daughter, which were all she had left. I did not have any photos of my friend (which I too regretted) because Zabidi women refuse to let photographs circulate out of the family until they are past childbearing age. The mother knew, of course, that her daughter would have refused to be photographed because of the conventions of gender segregation in elite families, but these restrictions must have seemed so harsh to her after she lost her daughter at the age of 28 (see Meneley, 1998).

28 A similar point was made by Judith Okely (1978) in her examination of women's boarding schools in Britain.

29 Although working with an ethnographic example rather far afield from mine (the sterilization of Puerto Rican women in New York), Lopez (1997) importantly outlines the contours of constraints on women that affect their options, through a critical examination of what "choices" might mean in particular economic and political conditions.

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The "Deified" Heart: Huichol Indian Soul-Concepts and Shamanic Art

Hope MacLean

Abstract: This article asks what is the relationship between shamanic vision and the production of shamanic art? Based on interviews with Huichol Indian yarn painters in Mexico, the author shows that the artist's concept of the soul is important to understanding shamanic art. For the Huichol, the heart is the centre of shamanic inspiration and the vehicle for communication with the gods. This study builds on recent research into Mesoamerican concepts of the soul, and its relationship to the human body. It questions assumptions about contemporary "ethnic and tourist" arts which arise out of the shamanic complex,[1] and suggests that indigenous artists may be working from their own assumptions about process as well as product.

Résumé: Cet article demande comment la vision chamanique est reliée à la production de l'art chamanique. Utilisant des entrevues avec des artistes indigènes huicholes du Mexique, l'auteur démontre qu'on doit comprendre leur concept d'âme afin de comprendre leur art chamanique. Pour les indigènes huicholes, le coeur est le centre de l'inspiration chamanique et le moyen de communication avec les dieux. Cette étude utilise des recherches récentes sur les concepts mésoaméricains de l'âme et sur sa relation au corps humain. L'étude fait ressortir les postulats sur les arts «ethniques et touristiques» contemporains qui proviennent du complexe chamanique. Elle suggère que les artistes indigènes travaillent à partir leurs propres idées sur le processus et le produit.

> The true artist, capable, practicing, skilful,
> maintains dialogue with his heart, meets things with his mind.
> The true artist draws out all from his heart: makes things with calm, with sagacity; works like a true Toltec. — *Códice Matritense de la Real Academia* (cited in Anderson, 1990: 153)

When I first began to study Huichol (pronounced Wee-chol) Indian shamanism in Mexico, I was intrigued by statements that Huichol art was spiritually inspired. The dealers who sold brilliantly coloured yarn paintings in Puerto Vallarta insisted in their sales patter that all Huichol artists were shamans, and all their art the product of dreams and visions. Several articles in the literature support the idea of a visionary source for Huichol arts. Berrin (1978: 47) illustrates Huichol embroidery which was "inspired by the artist's dreams and hallucinations." Furst (1968-69: 23) describes several yarn paintings which are said to illustrate peyote-induced dreams. Schaefer (1990: 246-248) describes weavings based on dreams. Eger and Collings (1978: 39-41) discuss mandala-like drawings seen by a young shaman while eating peyote. However, Berrin, Eger and Collings and Schaefer all note that making designs based on dreams and visions represents an ideal that only some artists are able to achieve.

There is a growing literature which suggests that art of indigenous peoples is spiritually inspired, or is shamanic (Halifax, 1982; Lommel, 1967); but how much do we understand of what this generalization means? What is it that makes an art shamanic? How are shamans inspired, and how do they translate inspiration into art? Is it simply a matter of "seeing" a vision or dream, then replicating the image in art, or is some other process involved?

Some authors have suggested that one source of shamanic art may be the trance experience created by hallucinogenic plants, such as *yage* or *ayahuasca* (*Banisteriopsis spp.*) (Harner, 1973), or peyote (*Lophophora williamsii*)

(Cordy-Collins, 1989). This has led to observations that certain plants produce characteristic patterns and images, such as the writhing snakes of *ayahuasca*, or the geometric, lattice-like, transforming colour combinations of peyote. Other sources of visionary art may be physical stress, such as the fasting used by North American aboriginal people. Halifax (1982: 60-61) suggests that rock art found throughout North America may be records of spirits seen during visions.

Despite the widespread assumption that Huichol art is visionary, there is little documentation in the literature of the Huichol yarn painters' point of view. Therefore, I decided to ask the Huichol artists how they created their art, and whether it was shamanic or spiritually inspired. I also asked if artists use peyote as a source of their art and if yarn paintings are records of dreams and visions. As I will show, the artists' answers to these questions led me in unexpected directions. In particular, I found that the Huichol concept of the soul is central to understanding how spiritual inspiration occurs.

There are hints in the ethnographic literature on Mesoamerica that soul concepts may play a part in the production of art. Evon Vogt (1969: 371) writes of the Maya: "The ethnographer in Zinacantan soon learns that the most important interaction going on in the universe is not between persons nor between persons and material objects, but rather between souls inside these persons and material objects." This statement suggests that religious art, a material representation, might somehow be linked to concepts of the soul.

Another clue is provided by Richard Anderson (1990: 152-153), who writes that the Aztec model of aesthetics was based on a "deified heart," in which "true art comes from the gods, and is manifest in the artist's mystical revelation of sacred truth." The spiritual blessings of art come only to the enlightened few who have learned to converse with their hearts. Alfredo López Austin (1988: 231-232) proposes that the heart in Aztec thought was a component of what is often called the "soul" in English, and that the heart may play an important role in the production of art.

While Anderson regrets that the Aztec aesthetic tradition may not have survived the conquest, I began to wonder if the Huichol might still retain some of this tradition. The Huichol language is related to Aztec, and some terms appear similar, as I will show below. Could the soul somehow play a part in Huichol art? If so, how do the artists conceive of the soul, and what role do they think it plays in the making of art?

The Huichol and Their Art

The Huichol are a nation of about 20 000 people who live in the Sierra Madre Mountains of Northwest Mexico, north of the city of Guadalajara and east of Puerto Vallarta. They speak a Uto-Aztecan language, and are thought to be one-time hunter-gatherers and travelling traders, who may have only recently converted to life as Mesoamerican corn, bean and squash farmers (Furst, 1996: 42).

When the Spanish conquered most of south and central Mexico, the Huichol retreated to the mountains. Through a mixture of war and diplomacy, they managed to avoid being conquered for over 200 years (Franz, 1996). Even after the Spanish finally brought them under nominal control in 1722, periodic wars and rebellions over the next 200 years meant that travel was seldom safe and the Mexican government exercised little control over the Huichol, even as late as the 1950s. The Huichol only began to receive government services such as public schooling and health care in the 1960s and 1970s.

As a result of this history, the Huichol managed to avoid being Christianized. Although they do practise some Christian ceremonies in name, such as *Semana Santa* (Easter Week), they incorporate many indigenous elements in it, including animal sacrifices. They continue to practise a pre-Columbian form of shamanism. Their shamans are called *mara'a kame* (pl. *mara'a kate*), a term the Huichol often translate into Spanish as *cantador* or singer. This translation reflects the *mara'akame*'s central role of chanting in ceremonies, as well as healing groups and individuals.

Both men and women may be shamans. They call on male or female gods, who represent animal spirits, spirits of particular places such as mountains or bodies of water and natural phenomena such as the sun and moon. Particularly important is the Deer-god, who is a messenger and translator from gods to humans.

Making decorated objects, which Westerners might call art, is an integral part of Huichol ceremonial life. These objects are intended to convey prayers to the gods. For example, Huichol pilgrims make prayer arrows (Hui: *uru*), decorated sticks of cane, with small objects attached to represent the wishes of the maker. The arrows are carried to sacred sites and left there as offerings. Large stone disks with carved designs are kept in family god-houses or temples, and represent the spirit of the temple itself. The Huichol also wear their religion in the form of beautifully embroidered clothes and woven belts and bags, all decorated with designs of sacred animals, plants and symbols. The Huichol are sometimes

called a nation of shamans, but they could equally well be called a nation of artists.

Photo 1

Eagle and Sun/*Nierika* by unknown artist. Courtesy Instituto Nacional Indigenista. A traditional type of yarn painting of religious symbols, with little detail and simple colour use of red, black and white. This painting is similar to traditional offerings; its origins are unknown. Note depiction of heart area in eagle.

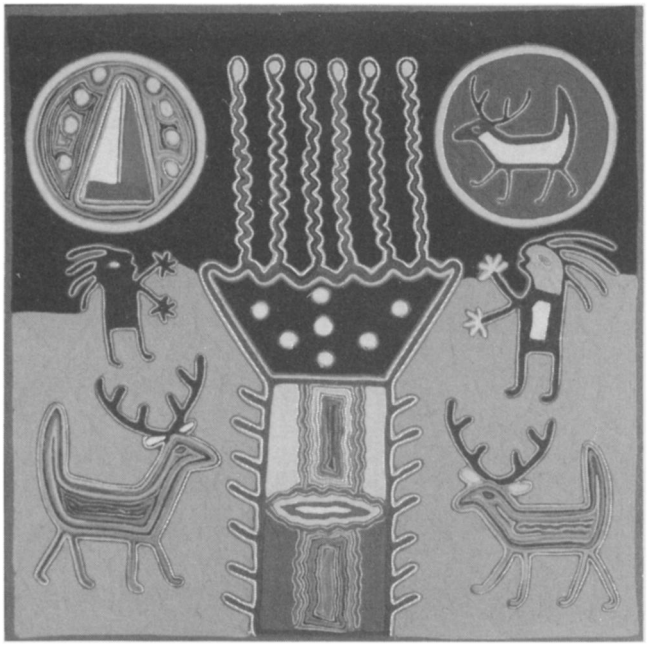
All the traditional arts were made in the service of religion. However in the 1950s and 1960s, the Huichol began to produce art for sale. The initial impetus came from a Mexican anthropologist, Alfonso Soto Soria, who organized an exhibition of traditional Huichol arts for the National Museum of Folk Arts (Museo Nacional de Artes e Industrias Populares) in Mexico City in 1954. Subsequently, the sale of Huichol arts was encouraged by the Governor of the state of Jalisco, and by a Franciscan priest, Father Ernesto Loera Ochoa, at the Basilica of Zapopan in Guadalajara (Alfonso Soto Soria, personal communication). In the 1960s and early 1970s, the National Indian Institute (INI) and FONART, the national government foundation for the support of the arts, attempted to foster Huichol commercial production of art through workshops and buying trips into the Sierra (Alfonso Manzanilla, personal communication). By the late 1970s, Huichol art had become commercially well established, and official Mexican government support seems to have become less important since then.

Photo 2

Mara'a kame (shaman) Communicating with Deer-god and Fire-God during the Fiesta of Esquite by M. Gonzalez. Courtesy Ruth Gruhn and Alan Bryan. This painting from the 1970s has somewhat more narrative content, but retains simple stylized stick-figures and use of religious symbols. The *mara'a kame* is communicating, or singing, to the Deer-god, seen on upper right. The Fire-god is seen as a face in the flames. Notice definition of heart area of shaman, and stylized shaman's plumes (*muwieri:* a wand with two feathers attached) on his head.

Yarn painting was one of the first Huichol commercial arts. Yarn paintings are made by spreading beeswax on a flat board, then pressing yarn into the wax, one strand at a time. The art grows out of traditional offerings of small yarn paintings (Hui: *nierika* or *itari*), which could be carried easily on pilgrimages; these were usually circular or ovoid objects with a design of beeswax, with yarn, beads or both pressed into it. The commercial works are flat, one-sided, intended to be hung on a wall, and are much larger. A standard size is a 60 cm × 60 cm; rectangular and circular shapes are also used.

Photo 3



The Birth of Peyote by Nicolas de la Rosa. Courtesy Ruth Gruhn and Alan Bryan. This painting from the 1970s shows the origin of the peyote cactus, a hallucinogenic plant which grows in the central Mexican desert. The peyote is shown in the centre, with its flowers as white dots in a cross-like formation, and its roots extending downwards. Lines of *kupuri* or life energy shoot upwards. The artist writes that this is how peyote is envisioned by those who eat it.

The early commercial paintings were quite simple, and depicted one or several symbols from the Huichol design repertoire. In the 1960s, the American anthropologist, Peter Furst, encouraged Ramón Medina Silva, one of the first yarn painters, to make narrative paintings of myths and legends (Furst, 1978: 26-27). Since then, the paintings have become increasingly complex and detailed. This seems to have occurred as a result of an interaction between Huichol artists and Western buyers. The buyers want paintings that include more detail. Western preferences for realism are also driving the artists to make somewhat realistic paintings which depict actual ceremonies taking place in Huichol communities. Left to themselves, the Huichol artists would probably continue to draw stick-figures and religious symbols. However, both buyers and artists have agreed on an art which only depicts Huichol religious subjects.

The price of yarn paintings has gone up considerably. Yarn paintings began as small, inexpensive tourist souvenirs selling for a few dollars U.S. Now the tourist souvenirs are still available, but the top artists produce elaborate paintings, sold in the international art market at retail prices ranging from hundreds to thousands of dollars U.S.

Most Huichol artists market their paintings directly to dealers in Mexico, or to buyers from other countries. Some artists have ongoing relationships with patrons; other artists peddle their work from dealer to dealer. A few artists sell directly to the public on the street or in markets. The artists seem to be resolutely individualistic traders. I have heard of a few attempts to form co-operatives, mostly at the behest of external authorities, but these efforts seem to dissolve amidst accusations such as misappropriation of funds.

Photo 4

Bull Sacrifice by Heucame (or Neucame). Courtesy Ruth Gruhn and Alan Bryan. This painting shows a more realistic depiction of Huichol ceremony. The people are shown as fuller, rounded or modelled figures, as is the bull. There is an attempt to use perspective. The woman is shown catching blood from the bull's neck in a cup, to put in her jar. The temple is in the background. However, the realistic depiction is combined with depictions of symbols, such as shaman's plumes, candles, corncob (in temple) and prayer arrow (*uru*: cane with notch at top). In this painting, images of this world are combined with images of the world of the gods, as though one were seeing both levels of reality at the same time.

The buyers of Huichol art include some Mexicans, who purchase indigenous art as a symbol of Mexican heritage. However, the principal buyers are non-Mexicans, such as tourists looking for souvenirs, or art patrons who come mainly from the United States, and to a lesser extent, Canada, Germany, France and Japan. Most Huichol

artists travel within Mexico to sell their art in cities such as Tepic, Guadalajara and Puerto Vallarta, the major venues for sales of Huichol art. A surprising number of artists have been taken on gallery tours to other countries.

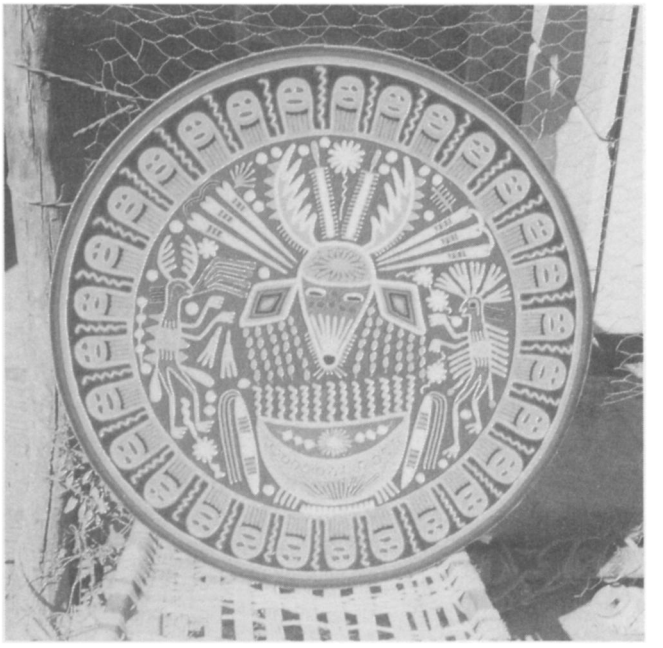
Photo 5

Goddess by unknown artist. Courtesy Isabel Jordan. This painting from the 1990s shows a Goddess, with snakes coming out of her head, probably representing *kupuri*. The goddess's *iyari* or heart area is emphasized, and may show *kupuri* radiating out of the heart and through the body. The painting seems to be a variation on the theme of the goddess of life giving birth amid the animals of the sea and sky. This theme was originated by artist Mariano Valadez in the 1980s and then copied by other artists.

The Huichol live by farming corn, beans and squash in the limited arable land left to them in the Sierra, but the land cannot support their growing population. They are increasingly being drawn into the cash economy, but they have few sources of income; most work as migrant labourers in fruit and tobacco plantations on the coast, where they may be poisoned by pesticides (Díaz Romo, 1993). In this economic context, making art becomes a desirable alternative; it is reasonably well paid, and as one artist told me, "Art is made seated in the shade." A number of artists expressed gratitude that Westerners buy their art, because it allows them to support their families and do work which allows them to think about their religion and their culture.

Most yarn painters are men, although some women do yarn paintings. This may reflect a tendency for men to do work which brings them into contact with the outside world, while women tend to focus on work which can be done at home. Women prefer to do weaving, beadwork and embroidery, which are skills highly valued by other Huichol. While there may be a link between gender and the production of yarn paintings, I have not collected evidence to prove that there is more than a pragmatic reason for the predominance of male artists. Women are also more likely to speak little or no Spanish, and to have little or no schooling. In contrast, most men seem to speak at least some Spanish, and many are quite fluent. Men are also more likely to have attended school (especially those under age 40, who were the first generation to have schooling widely available).

Photo 6



The *Mara'a kame* talks to the Deer-god at Night by Eligio Carrillo Vicente. Courtesy of the artist. This painting from the 1990s represents the artist's visionary perception of a Deer-spirit which appears during a ceremony. The night is black, but the shaman's power lights up the centre like a yellow searchlight. He is calling in the gods, who gather around and talk to the *mara'a kame*. All around are the green spirits of the peyote, who appear as little girls. The *mara'a kame* is communicating with the Deer-god, who appears hovering over the fire. The painting shows a particular point in a ceremony held before a pilgrimage. A bowl of copal incense is burning (lower centre), and candles are being blessed by smudging them with incense.

By the 1990s, yarn paintings were distributed internationally and were increasingly valuable. Yet comparatively little had been written about either the art or the

artists. Only three artists had been documented in any depth: the late Ramón Medina Silva, who was the consultant of anthropologists Peter Furst and Barbara Myerhoff; Jos, Benítez Sánchez, who exhibited internationally in co-operation with Mexican writer, Juan Negrín; and Mariano Valadez, an artist married to the American, Susana Eger Valadez, and perhaps best known in North America through reproductions of his work in calendars and greeting cards.

I first met Huichol artists in 1988 in Canada, in Wakefield, Quebec, where they were exhibiting their art as part of a cultural exchange, during which they were visiting aboriginal communities. I became friends with one of the women in the group, Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos (Lupe), the widow of Ramón Medina. Lupe invited me to visit her in Tepic, and I made several visits over the next three years. I learned Spanish and some Huichol, spent a number of months living with Lupe's family and participated in ceremonies including the pilgrimage to Wirikuta, the desert sacred to the Huichol.

In 1991, I decided to conduct doctoral research on Huichol yarn paintings and shamanism. I already had a network of contacts among the Huichol and some insight into shamanism before I started. With the help of dealers, Mexican government officials and anthropologists, the Huichol Center for Cultural Survival and Traditional Arts and my own contacts among the Huichol, I set out to locate Huichol yarn painters in 1993-94.

I wanted to interview a wide and representative sample of Huichol yarn painters, in order to go beyond the interpretations of just a few well-known artists, popularly regarded as the "best" artists. Instead, I travelled around the Sierra, locating artists from different regions and communities. These artists represented a range of experience along different dimensions, such as age, number of years spent doing yarn painting, whether they had attended school, whether they grew up in an urban, rural or indigenous community, whether and how they had learned about Huichol religion and shamanic practices and whether they themselves were shamans.

The following analysis is based on these interviews. I conducted all interviews myself, speaking in Spanish. Most artists speak a rather idiosyncratic version of Spanish, which includes a number of phrases and ideas based in Huichol concepts, or using Huichol grammar imposed onto Spanish. Their Spanish can be quite difficult to understand, even for Spanish speakers, unless one has a background knowledge of Huichol culture. Therefore I have translated the interviews from Spanish into colloquial English, and added clarifying notes, to make the interviews understandable.

Some artists allowed themselves to be tape recorded; these artists tended to be older, mature men who had travelled and were comfortable dealing with foreigners. Their accounts are verbatim transcripts of our interview. Some artists did not wish to be taped, and so I have paraphrased their answers, based on my field notes. All names are the artists' real names.[2]

One important question is whether the artists themselves are shamans. This can be determined with some confidence because Huichol culture has fairly specific criteria for becoming a shaman. An aspiring shaman makes a vow to certain beings, who are often spirits of particular places such as Tatei Haramara (the Pacific Ocean), or the gods of Wirikuta (the desert north of San Luis Potosí). He or she must complete a prescribed number of years of ceremony and fasting, although the exact number seems to vary, depending on which spirits are referred to and what level of attainment is desired. I have heard numbers as low as three years, and as long as 25 years. Huichol often refer to this process as making a contract (Sp: *hacer un compromiso*) and completing it (Sp: *cumplir*). A shaman is someone who has "completed," while a failed shaman has not been able to complete. It is the spirits who finally decide whether a person will be granted shamanic power. An aspiring shaman can carry out all the prescribed rituals, but still fail.

Most artists I talked to did not claim to be "completed" or practising shamans. A few had never tried to learn. Others were partway through the process, and had developed varying degrees of shamanic and visionary ability. One artist, Eligio Carrillo, did claim a fairly advanced level of shamanic ability. His statements were especially important in clarifying the relationship between the artist and the spiritual source of inspiration.

Dreams and Visions as a Source of Art

At first, I thought that dreams and visions might be the source of inspiration. I assumed that the process by which spirituality translated into art consisted of the artist "seeing" an image, through dream or vision, then transferring this image directly into a painting. By dream, I mean our common nighttime experience while asleep. By vision, I mean an experience while awake, or while in some form of trance. Visionary experience can include both auditory and visual experiences.[3] Artists quite often described "seeing" particular images, and also hearing sounds or holding a conversation with particular spirits.

The Huichol use peyote, a hallucinogenic cactus, during ceremonies. It is widely available and even given to young children. I asked the artists whether they had eaten peyote, and whether they found it a source of the

imagery in their paintings. I also asked them whether they used dreams or visions generally as a source of imagery.

All the artists had eaten peyote. Some said they did not use peyote as the source of their imagery. For example, artist Mariano Valadez told me that he is not a shaman, and does not rely on peyote to generate images. Moreover, he questioned whether this process was actually possible.

Hope: Have you seen things when you are eating peyote? Things that you put in your yarn paintings. Or do you not put these things in your yarn paintings?

Mariano[4]: No, because, the thing is, when you are eating peyote, it is as though time is passing. When the effect ends, I don't keep in my mind what I see, or what I imagine. I don't do that. Nor can I eat peyote in order to do my work.

Hope: You don't remember afterwards what you have seen?

Mariano: No, I don't remember. Because I cannot lie in my explanations, and say that I can take something in order to be able to paint better. No, because I cannot. . . . And regarding the peyote, I don't do it [use it as a source of inspiration]. Many of my colleagues say that they use peyote to do their work, but I don't believe it. I can't lie. I want to speak honestly.

Artist Modesto Rivera explained that peyote gives energy but is not itself a source of the images. He is referring here to a Huichol belief that peyote is a source of spiritual and physical energy or life force, called *kupuri* in Huichol. Modesto has begun the training required to become a shaman in Huichol culture, but as an apprentice shaman, he seems not to have acquired visionary ability yet. Modesto stated that while peyote gives the artist *kupuri* which he or she can then use to make paintings, peyote is not in itself a source of the images. I asked him whether he had seen visions. He told me that when a person takes peyote, he or she has the energy that comes from peyote. This energy stays with the artists, and gives them energy to invent images. He thinks that the things of the Huichol religion are not things a person can actually see. For example, one does not see things in the sacred water, but one has a mental idea or image of what they represent; and it is this idea which the artist presents in the painting. Sometimes he depicts the energy of some sacred places or of the sacred gods. For him, the source of images comes from his childhood. His father always did the ceremonies and fiestas, and so he knows what the Huichol traditions are.

The artist who was most explicit about using dreams and visions as a source of imagery was Eligio Carillo. However, even he stated that dreams were more important as a source than visions.

Hope: And do you get your designs from visions?

Eligio: Oh yes, that yes. From visions. Sometimes, from dreams. Which represent a lot through dreams.

Hope: And is there a difference between the designs that you get from dreams and designs that you get from your imagination?

Eligio: Yes, there is that also, from my imagination. There is also that. That is to say, it comes from many places. I have learned that it is thus, things which I learn well [i.e., through shamanism], many things result.

When I asked him if it was possible for a person looking at his paintings to tell the difference, his answer was that a person who was already a *mara'a kame* or visionary would know without being told. Otherwise it was up to the artist or *mara'a kame* to explain it. Without an explanation, an observer could not really understand.

Hope: And do the two types look different. . . . If I am looking at a yarn painting, can I know if it is from a vision or if it is a dream or something else?

Eligo: Yes.

Hope: How can I know this?

Eligo: Well, for me it is easy. But perhaps that person, there, who doesn't know anything [i.e., does not have shamanic ability], for him it is very difficult. That's how it is. Because I . . . when I see it . . . I have to say it, because I have the knowledge, right [i.e., a shaman should explain what he sees. I should say to the person] "Good then, that is an image, which is the representation of where they made the beginning of the ceremony." Perhaps I should say it. But if he doesn't say anything to me, I will only look at it to see what it contains, right. And that too. If another person makes it, I just [look at] what he made, right. Just look at it. I understand. That's what that means.

As Eligio explains, it is the learner's (or the purchaser's) obligation to ask what the painting means, or what sort of vision it may contain. Once asked, it is the artist's obligation to explain; for example, he may explain that this painting represents a vision of what occurred at the be-

ginning of a ceremony. If the learner does not ask, the artist will not explain but will only look at the painting himself, knowing its meaning. Similarly, if Eligio sees a painting by another artist, he can understand its meaning without asking.

I will note here that the artists seem quite willing to explain the meaning of their paintings to strangers, such as myself. The meaning is considered an important part of the painting, and a competent artist should know the story and be prepared to explain it. (In contrast, an artist who just copies other people's designs without understanding the meaning is not considered to be at a very high level.) I found that generally the artists are quite pleased and proud to explain their work. This openness was one reason why I chose to study yarn paintings; it may indeed be in contrast to some indigenous people, who feel that spiritual subjects should not be shared openly.

Among artists who did say that they had occasionally experienced dreams or visions, the evidence was equally mixed. Some artists could describe a vision that they had experienced, but said that they had never tried to depict it in a yarn painting. Others had experienced one or more visions, which they did put in a yarn painting; but they said that most of the paintings they made were not of this vision, but rather of culturally derived themes such as myths. An artist such as Ramón Medina may produce some paintings which express actual visions, but make other paintings which narrate myths. I found it was not uncommon to have painters point out to me which paintings were their own visions, and which were not; this ability to distinguish showed that they used both types of inspiration in their work.

Some artists used what might be called a second-hand version of dreams and visions as a source of inspiration. I have called this process "borrowed vision." During ceremonies, the *mara'a kate* may tell in their songs about what they may be envisioning at that moment; often the *mara'a kate* tell stories from the Huichol body of myths. The artists listen to what the *mara'a kate* say; then use their imaginations to paint what they hear. Mariano Valadez explained how he applies this idea.

> Hope: When you make your yarn paintings, do you paint things you have seen in ceremony, or from your imagination?
>
> Mariano: I make yarn paintings in my own style, according to my imagination. But also, many times, the shamans give me ideas, because whenever they talk about the religion of the Huichols, I am thinking how it is, with my imagination. When I hear the myths or the songs, or the prayers, or the stories, at the time I record in my memory, and afterwards I have it. That's how I am.

He emphasized his respect for the sacredness of the tradition, and for the work that the *mara'a kate* do to understand and teach it. It was this fidelity to the tradition which he attempted to portray in his art.

Most yarn paintings have more conventional origins. The symbols and designs, such as deer, eagle, peyote or sun, are widely known and used in other Huichol arts such as embroidery and weaving. Some images are traditional, such as designs used in traditional offerings and stone nierikas. Some images are more modern, such as the recent somewhat realistic paintings of myths, sacred stories, or actual ceremonies. All of these images can be learned or copied from other artists.

Clearly the evidence regarding the use of vision in yarn paintings is quite variable. Some artists are limited to their own imaginations or intellectual processes; some use dreams and visions of the supernatural plane as the source of inspiration. Moreover, some artists use their own personal dreams and visions, while others borrow the dreams and visions of *mara'a kate*.

As I talked to the artists I began to feel that I was missing the point of what they were telling me. I was concentrating on the *source* of the image, whether the source was dream, vision, peyote, personal experience or traditional or culturally derived themes. The artists did not seem too concerned about which of these sources they used. What was important was the *process* of envisioning, or *how* vision and artistic inspiration occur. This process is less variable, being inherent in the artist himself or herself. It is closely related to concepts which Westerners might call body, mind and soul.

Huichol Soul Concepts

The important question was whether the artist's soul or spirit was open to the gods or not. If the soul was open, then ideas, images and inspiration would flow in to the artist. The art could then be said to be shamanic or spiritually inspired, no matter what the artist painted. If the artist's soul was not open, then the art was not particularly spiritual, no matter how well executed it was in terms of technique or drawing.

Understanding what the artists mean by the term "soul" or "spirit" is central to understanding the role that the soul plays in Huichol art. Recent research by Mexican scholar, Alfredo López Austin (1988), has provided a dramatic impetus to the understanding of soul

concepts in Mesoamerica. In *The Human Body and Ideology,* he examines ancient Aztec concepts of the body. He relates the Aztecs' internal model of the human body to their concepts of the exterior world, the spiritual world and the cosmos.

López Austin (1988: 181-184) states that "the words *souls, spirits, animas* all lack precision." To refine these terms, he tries to locate them at points which he calls "animistic centres" in the body; these are the point of origin of the impulses for life, movement, psychic functions; they may or may not correspond to a particular organ. He draws an important distinction between animistic *centres* of the physical body, and animistic *entities* which might be called souls or spirits and which may live on after death.

According to López Austin (ibid.: 190-194), the heart was most important to the Aztecs. It is mentioned most frequently, and "it includes the attributes of vitality, knowledge, inclination, and feeling. References to memory, habit, affection, will, direction of action, and emotion belong exclusively to this organ." *Cua*, the top of the head, is the seat of the mind. It is the intellectual process, the seat of memory and knowledge. López Austin (ibid.: 199) proposes the following model:

> Consciousness and reason were located in the upper part of the head (*cuaitl*); all kinds of animistic processes were in the heart (*yollotl*); and in the liver (*elli*) the feelings and passions . . . a gradation that goes from the rational (above) to the passionate (below), with considerable emphasis on the centre . . . where the most valuable functions of human life were located. The most elevated thoughts and the passions most related to the conservation of the human life were carried out in the heart, and not in the liver or head.

In Aztec belief, the heart played a central role in artistic production. It was thought to receive some divine force. The person who was outstanding for brilliance in divination, art and imagination received divine fire in the heart, whereas a person who was a bad artist lacked it (ibid.: 231-232).

Since the Huichol language is related to Aztec, I hypothesized that the Huichols might share similar conceptual categories. Two of the three main Aztec animistic centres—the top of the head, called *cua* in Aztec, and the heart called *yol*—seemed very close to Huichol concepts called *kupuri* and *iyari*. However, as will be shown below in my interviews with Eligio Carrillo, the functions of *kupuri* seemed more like the Aztec word *tonal*, which López Austin defines as life force or irradiation contained in the body.

The most complete information on Huichol concepts of the soul in relation to the body comes from an article by Peter Furst (1967), which is based on interviews with Ramón Medina. Zingg (1938: 161-173) Lumholtz (1902: v. 2, 242-243) and Perrin (1996) discuss soul concepts, but they write mainly about the soul after death, rather than in relation to the body and its attributes. Here I will review the Huichol soul concepts as described by Ramón.

Ramón located the soul, or more accurately the essential life force, in the top of the head or fontanelle. He called both the soul and the fontanelle *kupuri* in Huichol and *alma* in Spanish. A Mother-goddess, *Tatei Niwetukame*, places *kupuri* in a baby's head just before birth. It is placed in the soft spot where the bones have not yet closed; this is its life or soul. *Kupuri* is attached to the head by a fine thread, like spider's silk (Furst, 1967: 52).

Myerhoff (1974: 154) adds a few more details about *kupuri*, also based on information from Ramón:

> A great many plants and animals and all people have this *kupuri* or soul-essence; it is ordinarily visible only to the *mara'akame*. Ramón has depicted it in his yarn paintings as multicoloured wavy lines connecting a person's head or the top of an object with a deity. Verbally he described *kupuri* as rays or fuzzy hairs.

When Ramón shot peyote with an arrow as part of the peyote hunt ceremony, he said that rays of colour spurted upward like a rainbow; these rays are the *kupuri* or lifeblood of the peyote and the deer.

Kupuri is needed to maintain life. When a person loses *kupuri* due to a blow, he or she feels ill and cannot think properly. The *mara'a kame* is called. Because the person is still alive, the *mara'a kame* knows "that the *kupuri* has not yet become permanently separated from its owner, that is, the metaphorical life between them has not yet been severed by a sorcerer or by an animal" (Furst, 1967: 53). The *mara'a kame* hunts for the soul, and finds it by its whimpering; seeing the soul in the form of a tiny insect, he or she catches it with the shaman's feathers, wraps it in a ball of cotton and puts it in a hollow reed. The *mara'a kame* brings the soul back and places it in the head. The cotton disappears into the head along with the soul. Then the person comes back to life (ibid.: 53-56).

Occasionally, Ramón used the term *kupuri-iyari* which Furst translated as "heart and soul." *Iyari* was also used in terms such as "he has a Huichol heart" or a "good heart." Furst does not talk in any detail about *iyari.* He notes only that during a funeral ceremony held five days after death, the soul is called back and captured

in the form of a luminous insect called *xaipi'iyari* (Hui: *xaipi* meaning "fly" and *iyari* meaning "heart" or "essence"). When the soul takes the form of rock crystals which incarnate the spirit of respected ancestors, the word *iyari* is also used; it is known as *tewari* (Hui: grandfather), *uquiyari* (Hui: guardian, protector or chief) or *uru iyari* from *uru* (Hui: arrow heart) (ibid.: 80).

Thus, where López Austin (1988) separates the Aztec ideas related to *kupuri* and *iyari*, Furst's analysis appears to combine them. For example, Furst describes *kupuri* as the soul which leaves the body, both during life and at death and which returns to the family one last time during the funeral ceremony. However, the Huichol have two separate words, which seem to correspond to the Aztec words in other ways.

It is possible that Ramón himself did not make a clear distinction, since Furst later says that he corrected himself on other points; or Furst did not identify a difference between the two words and their related concepts; for example, in describing the soul which comes back after burial as a luminous fly or as a rock crystal, it appears that Ramón actually used the word *iyari*, not *kupuri*. He called them *xaipi iyari* (Hui: fly-heart) and *uru iyari* (Hui: arrow heart). Furst (1967: 80) noticed the change of name and commented on it, but did not identify *iyari* as a different entity. Therefore, Furst's article describes the soul as seated in the top of the head; and Furst gives the head greater importance, in contrast to the Aztec emphasis on the heart. Perrin (1996: 407-410) identifies the confusion between *kupuri* and *iyari*, and tries to distinguish the capacities of the two. However, he does not make the link to animistic centres of the body, as I have done here.

The usual translation given for the Huichol word *iyari* is heart (Furst, 1967: 41), heart-memory (Schaefer, 1990: 412) or heart-soul-memory (Fikes, 1985: 339). I have also heard the Huichols translate *iyari* into Spanish as *corazón* (Sp: heart) or *pensamiento* (Sp: mind, personality), a Spanish word that they use broadly to refer to a person's character; for example, a person of *buen pensamiento* (Sp: good character, good intentions). Peyote is the *iyari* of the deer and also of the gods (Fikes, 1985: 187; Schaefer, 1990: 342).

There is little discussion of *iyari* in the literature. The fullest account is in Schaefer (1990: 244-246), whose Huichol weaving consultant, Utsima, explained that one's *iyari* grows throughout life like a plant. When a person is young, he or she has a small heart; when he or she grows, it becomes much larger. However, the *iyari* must be nourished to grow; eating peyote and following the religious path to completion allow one to develop this consciousness. At the highest level of mastery, the *iyari* is the source of designs used in weaving:

> the designs she creates are a direct manifestation from deep within, from her heart, her thoughts, and her entire being.... those inspired to weave *iyari* designs learn to view nature and the world about them in a different perspective, as living designs. When they tune into this mode of seeing their world, they tap into a wealth of design sources and consciously bring their imagination into visual form. (Ibid.: 245)

Weaving from the *iyari* is so difficult that many women never attempt it, preferring to copy designs all their life. Nonetheless, achieving this goal is the peak of Huichol artistic expression; and women who achieve it receive elevated status and are recognized for their designs (ibid.: 248).

The Soul of the Artist

On the basis of the importance of the *iyari* in weaving, it seemed to me that *iyari* might have considerable significance for the production of yarn paintings as well. Moreover, the general aesthetic significance which the heart had for the Aztecs suggested that its role in Huichol thought might have been neglected. Therefore, I asked the yarn painters what they understood *iyari* and *kupuri* to mean; and what role they thought these entities played in their art.

Young artists tended to give one-sentence answers to these questions, such as "*iyari* means life." Huichol artist Eligio Carrillo gave the fullest expression of the meaning of *iyari* and *kupuri*, and their significance in art. Because his answers were so complete and form a connected whole, I quote him at length; what he said was consistent with my discussions with other artists.

According to Eligio, *iyari* contains a number of ideas. *Iyari* is a form of power which comes from the gods. It is the breath of life, sent from the gods; and the person's own life and breath.

> Eligio: *Iyari*, that means the breath (Sp: *resuello)*, the breath of the gods ... That god sends the power, to continue living. To think. And it is what guides you. That is *iyari*. What makes you able to think. In every place you go, with that you walk around. It is what protects you. The *iyari*. It is the thought (Sp: *pensamiento)* which gives you ideas and everything.

The *iyari* includes the heart, but is more than the physical organ. I interpret what Eligio says here to mean that while *iyari* is seated in the heart, it has many meanings;

and pervades the person's life. It is also a person's being or identity, which we might call in English, the unique personality or the person who knows and sees.

Eligio: It is the heart, of the body. But it is the whole body, not just the heart, the *iyari*. It is as though it were a magical air. Magical air. That *iyari*. The *iyari* tries to translate from many directions (Sp: *traducir de muchas partes)*.
Hope: If a person is understanding things from many directions, it is by means of the *iyari*?
Eligio: Yes that power, that is *iyari*

"Translating from many directions" is a Huichol expression in Spanish, which means that a person with shamanic abilities is receiving messages from the gods. I clarified this point in my next question.

Hope: And when a person is receiving messages from the gods, it is by means of the *iyari*?
Eligio: Yes, exactly, But [only] if it [the *iyari*] is already in tune (Sp: *ya coordina*) with them. You make it in tune when you are studying [i.e., learning to become a *mara'a kame*], and you are in tune by means of this. An electricity.

Here he means that a person "tunes" the heart to the gods through the pilgrimages and other actions required to become a *mara'a kame*. Once in tune, it is as though there was an electrical current passing between the person and the gods, carrying messages.[5]

Even though a person develops the *iyari* so that it can receive messages from the gods, the capacities of the *iyari* alone are not enough to make yarn paintings. A person must also use mind, for which Eligio uses the Spanish word, *mentál*. Here is how Eligio distinguishes the two capacities. He talks about the mind and about the knowledge of shamanism, by which he means the knowledge perceived through the heart. Both are required to paint.

Eligio: Shamanism is one thing, and mental power is something else. Because, even if I know something about shamanism I need to have mental power to do my work. Mental is different, it is to translate and make things. And you need both powers, right, to do the work.
Hope: Shamanism is in order to see?
Eligio: Yes, it is to see.
Hope: And mental power is to translate and make the yarn painting?
Eligio: That's it.
Hope: You need the two, then?
Eligio: That shaman has to have the two powers to be able to make things, and if he doesn't have both, even if he is a good shaman, what will he gain? He won't be able to do anything. That's how it is.

He distinguishes between painters who have developed both capacities and those who have not. Some painters use only the mind; Eligio is careful to say that they too can paint well, since they too are focussing just as a person focusses through shamanic study.

Hope: And are there some people who do yarn paintings who are not shamans, and others who do them who are shamans?
Eligio: Well, those who do yarn paintings who are not shamans, they only base themselves in mental powers. Or it is mental power that they have opened. They just take note of something, and more or less have an idea, and they make it. But still, more or less, I don't think they are very deficient, they do well with their minds. They are also concentrating. They do that.

To clarify the difference between mind and *iyari* further, I groped for an analogy; and hit upon the perhaps awkward idea of a car and driver. The mind is like the steering wheel, but the *iyari* is like the motor; without a motor, the car goes nowhere; but without a steering wheel, the strongest motor spins its wheels.

Hope: And the mind is like the guide . . . as though I were driving a car, I hold the wheel?
Eligio: Exactly. That's how the mind is.
Hope: And *iyari* is like the motor of the car?
Eligio: It's the most important. It's what you need. That is *iyari*. In Spanish, they say heart; in Huichol, we say *iyari*. It is the power, that is the breath of the whole body.

I then asked him what was the link between *iyari* and becoming a shaman. He clarified that through the training and pilgrimages required to become a *mara'a kame*, the person is opening the heart so that it will be able to receive messages from the gods.

Hope: And if a person is becoming a shaman, do they strengthen the *iyari*, or do they open it?
Eligio: They open it. Now they begin to understand. After, it [the idea] comes out and then ready [to make art].
Hope: The ideas, the messages, come out?
Eligio: You think of them, then they come out.

A *mara'a kame* is a person with the heart open. During the training, another *mara'a kame* can help a person

to open the heart, if the *mara'a kame* has been given the power to do so by the gods.

Eligio: Oh yes, there is among shamans, if that one is not . . . if his *iyari* is covered, many healers know how to open it.
Hope: Does the shaman have his heart more open?
Eligio: Yes, because the shaman has it open, well, and those who don't know, well it is closed. For those who know. . . . For example, [pointing to a child] this one doesn't know, and if I were a shaman, very good, I could open his mind (Sp: *mente*) so that he would learn faster. That's how it is, but with the power from the deer, with the power from the gods. It is because they have given me power, that I can do this. And that's how they do this. The *iyari*.

I then shifted to the idea of *kupuri* and asked what its role was in relation to *iyari*.

Hope: And *kupuri*, I don't understand what is the difference between *kupuri* and *iyari*?
Eligio: Little difference. *Kupuri* means the same [as I have been saying]. And *kupuri* means a thing very blessed, which is the *iyari*. It can be blessed with the *iyari* of the gods, bless your body, it has been blessed. That is the word it means.

In Eligio's explanation, *kupuri* has the meaning of energy, while *iyari* or life is the product of the energy. The energy of *kupuri* blesses, or irradiates, the person's entire body including the *iyari*. The gods have *iyari* and so do people; *kupuri* is the energy that is transmitted between them.

Hope: And *kupuri* is like the electricity that comes?
Eligio: That comes to you from the gods who are blessing that person.
Hope: And they send from their *iyari* the electricity which is the *kupuri*?
Eligio: Yes.
Hope: And it arrives at my *iyari*?
Eligio: Yes.
Hope: Now I understand it. . . .
Eligio: *Iyari* is breath. *Kupuri* is the life, is the life of the gods, that the gods may give you life, they give you power (Sp: *poder*), that's what that is.
Hope: Is it like force (Sp: *fuerza*)?
Eligio: Force, yes, force. More force from the gods is *kupuri*.

Kupuri can be transmitted from gods to humans, with the help of the *mara'a kame*. In this way the person's life and energy are increased. Eligio uses the analogy of the *iyari* as a glass of water, which may be filled up to the top with *kupuri*. If some water is lacking, the *mara'a kame* can give more.

Eligio: It [*kupuri*] is a power. Here among ourselves, that's how we use it. Among shamans, they give it—*kupuri*—and it is a power, a bit more. For example, to say, well, suppose this glass of water is a life, yes, an *iyari*. It's lacking a little bit, or here like this. Good, I am going to give you a little bit more, I have to fill it up, it is one day more, a little bit more, then this glass will have this.
Hope: And are there people who lack *kupuri*?
Eligio: Yes, a lack of . . .
Hope: Force?
Eligio: Of force of the gods. That's *kupuri*.
Hope: And those people are very weak?
Eligio: Exactly, yes.

We continued on with the idea of how *kupuri* appears to the shaman or how it is seen.

Eligio: But that is the power, they are magic powers. No one can see them, only the shaman is watching what he is doing. That's how it is.

I then inquired where *kupuri* is located in the body. Eligio insisted that while *kupuri* enters through the head, it spreads throughout the body. While it is carried in blood, it is carried in other parts of the body as well.

Hope: Does a person have *kupuri* in their own blood?
Eligio: Well, what you receive, the power, if you have it in all your body, all your body has it.
Hope: Is it seated in the head?
Eligio: That is, it is seated in the whole body. It extends throughout the body. It does it, everywhere receives it.
Hope: Is it received via the head or via the heart?
Eligio: It arrives via the head, then spreads throughout the body.

Finally, I returned to the idea of how *iyari* is represented in yarn paintings. Eligio interpreted this question to mean, what is the process by which images or visions arrive, and then how does a person translate them into a painting? He explained that the messages from the gods which the person sees through the *iyari* appear as though tape recorded there. Then the artist can use his or her mind to comprehend the images or the sounds, and make a picture of it. In this way, a person learns many different designs.

Hope: And how do you represent *iyari* in the yarn paintings?

Eligio: *Iyari*? Well, you can present it in the form that you think it. That which comes from them, that which happened, that which the gods did, it is as though you saw it, saw it and it stayed seated in your body. That is what can take place in the yarn painting. To make designs. Because you carry it in your mind. That is what you will make. No, it's no more than that. From there, then it [the designs] comes out. Different ones. About many things it comes out. They [the gods] tell you a thing, here it comes out [in art]. From the mind. It opens then, to be able to do that.

Hope: Many different designs come forth?

Eligio: Now they come out of there.

Hope: From the heart, from the *iyari*?

Eligio: Yes, from the heart, That is, from the moment when a person learns about this.

A person learns these designs at night, during a ceremony, when a spirit arrives and teaches them. The expression "it comes walking" (Sp: *viene caminando*) is another Huichol expression in Spanish referring to the arrival of a spirit during the ceremony. All night the person may learn. The next morning, the artist will have many new designs.

Eligio: Because in one night, almost you will . . . let's suppose that [the ceremony begins] at six or seven o'clock, [and lasts] until midnight. From midnight until five in the morning. That makes about 11 hours, you can be learning about this. It comes walking [a spirit or god]. It comes walking and [what it teaches to you] it stays with you here, here it will stay. In the moment that you do this work [i.e., make yarn paintings], you can do it [i.e., you have the power and designs] and now it comes out of you. Like a recorded tape, then. . . .

Hope: And with that, a person can make many designs in one day? That many designs come forth quickly?

Eligio: Yes, because there you go . . . well, this is all [that you need].

Using the mind, and the ability of the *mara'a kame* to see, an artist can develop many paintings; and all will have the same quality and power as the first.

Eligio: Well then, since you have two, two powers—mental power and knowledge of that which is, that is to say, that which is of the shaman, and mental power is another thing. You can originate (Sp: *inventar*) more [designs]. But with the same power. And there are more. From one, you go on making. . . . From one, you go on to make four, five, but by shamanic power. And with just mental power, you can go on making another five more. From one [ceremony], that's all. That is mental, to make up more, and that they always come out with the same power.

To summarize, ideally artistic production comes from having the *iyari* open to the gods. Achieving a state of openness is something that a person develops through the training required to be a *mara'a kame*; another *mara'a kame* can facilitate this process. With the heart open, tuned to the gods, images and ideas will flow in. Such an artist can attend a ceremony when the door to the spirit world is open, and learn many new designs. By using the mind in conjunction with the heart, the images and ideas are converted to art. The artists emphasized that ideally both mind and *iyari* were required; *iyari* alone was not enough, although it is possible to do paintings solely with the mind.

The Huichol idea is not unlike the Western idea of heart and mind. A Western artist might say a painting has "heart" or "soul"; but in Western terms this attribute tends to mean feeling or emotion. It is not specifically a reference to the supernatural. However, the Huichols take this concept one step further, since the open heart is filled by or linked to the gods. The gods have *iyari* and so do people; ideally the two are linked, as though by a bridge. *Kupuri* is the energy which comes from the gods through this channel.

The Huichol aesthetic ideal is represented by an artist who has his or her *iyari* open to the gods. The artist's *iyari* receives and is charged with *kupuri* carried in this channel. If the artist also has a well-developed mind, he or she will be a good artist. Without a good mind, the artist will not be able to express the designs through art.

This Huichol concept can be compared to the description of the good artist from an Aztec codex. The similarities are remarkable.

> The true artist, capable, practicing, skilful,
> maintains dialogue with his heart, meets things with his mind.
> The true artist draws out all from his heart: makes things with calm, with sagacity; works like a true Toltec [that is, with skill]. (*Códice Matritense de la Real Academia*, cited in Anderson, 1990: 153)

The artists' explanations also clarify why I began to feel that it was not necessarily important whether the subject matter of the particular painting comes from a specific dream or vision. What is important is whether the artist is in a state of receptivity or openness to the gods. Out of this openness comes the artistic work, which may have its specific source in a dream, a vision, or an intellectual thought.

The Huichol aesthetic ideal seems to be of an individual artist in direct communication with the gods. The artist uses art as a way of developing a channel of communication with the gods, and reflecting back to others the results of the exchange. Huichol art is not only a visual prayer, as early anthropologists such as Lumholtz understood it to be, but also a demonstration that vision exists. The artist ideally has an obligation to explain to others his or her vision. The yarn painting is one way of doing this.

Conclusions

The conclusions I have cited here have implications for future research on the link between art and shamanism. One particularly interesting direction of research is the linkage I have made here between López Austin's (1988) theories of soul concepts, especially as manifested in animistic centres of the body, and the production of art. Anderson (1990: 241, 247-252) concludes that religious motivations underlie the production of art in most cultures; however, he states that the mechanisms which link the two still remain obscure.

I suggest here that concepts of the soul as seated in the body may be one connecting link between art and the divine, at least for some cultures. Some other authors, such as Laderman (1991) and Atkinson (1989) have drawn similar analogies about the link between the soul as seated in various parts of the body, and aesthetics. When we ask what is the nature of shamanic inspiration, we go beyond the content of the dream or vision, and begin to look at the process of shamanizing itself. I have shown here that shamanic inspiration, in the case of the Huichol, has much wider ramifications than simply "seeing" a vision or "dreaming" a dream. It includes notions of the soul, and of the soul seated in various parts of the body. It also includes an interpretation of how the human soul is linked to the divine, and how communication flows between them. All of these play a part in the making of a shamanic art.

There is a voluminous anthropological literature on soul concepts, and an equally voluminous literature on the production of art. What conclusions might be derived by putting the two together? As I have demonstrated here, the results can deepen our understanding of shamanic art.

In *Ways of Knowing* (1998), Jean-Guy Goulet suggests that indigenous epistemologies or ways of knowing may be radically different from those taken for granted by Western academics. His Dene-Tha informants considered information gained through dream, vision or communication from spirits as valid and important sources of information. As anthropologists, we may need to examine all these sources of knowledge, if we are to ask questions which will elicit indigenous systems of meaning and understanding. As I have suggested here, the idea of dream and vision, which I began my research with, was much too simplistic, and probably very Western. I had to enter more deeply into a Huichol model to understand the process of shamanic inspiration. I began to ask, who is the seer who sees, and how does seeing take place. Thus my focus shifted away from the content of the vision and onto the process of seeing and the nature of the seer.

It is striking that the Huichol ways of knowing persist even in the production of a modern commercial art, such as yarn painting. This may indicate that indigenous epistemological concepts may be resistant to change and may be manifested in so-called "tourist" art. This accords with observations by anthropologists such as Goulet (1998: 200) and Marie-Francoise Guedon (personal communication), that even though the northern Dene practise Christianity, they have modified Western religion substantially to conform with underlying Dene ways of knowing. Similarly, Huichol practising a Western artform such as decorative painting, intended for a Western audience, seem able to maintain an indigenous process and experience of shamanic inspiration.

However, an important caveat is that perhaps only some Huichol artists think this way or understand the deeper meanings of shamanic art. My interviews showed a different picture among some young artists, Christian converts who were not interested in shamanism, or artists who were not raised practising Huichol ceremonies—an increasingly common situation among the generation of young Huichols raised in cities. Such artists tended to see inspiration as intellectual only. On the other hand, older artists raised in a more traditional environment did tend to use the model of mind and heart, whether they were shamans or not.

How does the finding of persistence of ways of knowing compare to other studies of ethnic and tourist arts which derive from a shamanic complex? Several studies suggest that the Huichol may be unusual in their comfort with the idea of using sacred information com-

mercially. For example, in a study of Haida commercial argillite carving, Kaufmann (1976: 65-67) concludes that religious themes could not be portrayed as long as the religion was widely practised. Only after acute cultural breakdown could the arts be made for sale. Parezo (1983: 22) makes a similar point in her study of Navaho sand paintings. The Navaho singers only accepted the sale of sand paintings after the designs had been changed somewhat so that they did not duplicate the ceremonial paintings. In a comparison of Pueblo and Navaho weaving, Kent (1976) shows that weaving was peripheral to the Navaho culture, and therefore, could easily be sold or changed to accommodate market demands. In contrast, certain Pueblo weavings had important social and symbolic meaning, were highly resistant to change and continued to be made mainly for Pueblo markets.

These studies suggest the range of solutions which cultures may adopt in response to pressures to commercialize their religious arts; from complete refusal to sell, through modifying the figures, to unrestricted freedom to sell once the religion had lost its force. In all of these cases, however, the sale of arts which had ongoing religious significance was restricted.

In contrast, the Huichol seem to place little restriction on the type of image depicted, even if generated through visionary processes. One factor may be that they regard commercial paintings as copies of sacred images, rather than originals. Several artists affirmed that they should not sell original art, made for sacred purposes such as offerings for a pilgrimage or images to be kept in a family temple. However, they argued that the gods recognize that people need to support themselves, and so it was acceptable to sell copies. The distinction between sacred original and copy may be an old one in Huichol culture. The 19th-century explorer, Carl Lumholtz (1902: v. 2, 169-171, 181-182), recorded that the Huichol refused to sell him an original statue of the Fire-god, kept in a sacred cave, but were quite happy to make and sell him a copy.

The Huichol artists I interviewed seemed comfortable with the idea of depicting visionary experience, whether it was the artist's own experience or that of others. The important distinction was not the content of the painting, but rather whether the artist has an open heart and is capable of learning through shamanic inspiration. Such an individual can make and sell paintings that have significant shamanic visionary content.

It would be interesting to extend the line of questioning I have used here into other studies of indigenous arts, whether they are traditional arts or commercial arts, which still use themes based in shamanism. There is sparse literature indeed on the process of how shamans envision, and comparatively little on how shamanic vision is related to the making of shamanic arts. As Wardwell (1996: 8) notes regretfully, we may never know the specific interpretation of imagery on the many older shamanic objects kept in museums, because this information was not collected from living shamans at the time. Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff's body of work (see, for example, 1978a, 1978b) stands out in this field, particularly for his work on the relationship between the hallucinogenic plant *ayahuasca*, dream, vision and cultural symbols in several South American nations. However, few others have approached the level of detail he achieved.

Such an analysis may take us into the heart of spiritual philosophy itself, into concepts of the soul, the relationship of the seer to the divine and what dream and vision really mean.

Notes

1 I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for this insight. I would like to thank all three anonymous reviewers, who recommended this article for publication, as well as Dr. Sally Cole, editor. All of these people have made valuable suggestions which brought out interpretations of my data which even I was not aware of, and which have given me new directions to pursue in research with Huichol artists. I am also grateful to Dr. David Young, who fostered this research, and to Dr. Jean-Guy Goulet, for encouragement. The field work interviewing yarn painters was supported by the Mexican Government's Department of Exterior Relations.

2 I did not use pseudonyms, for reasons explored more fully elsewhere (MacLean, 1995: 35-36). However, one consideration was the artists' desire to become better known as artists, and to be associated with their statements; in other words, they were professional artists, making art for public consumption, rather than anonymous folk artists.

3 I thank an anonymous reviewer for emphasizing this point.

4 In Huichol culture, first names rather than surnames are most commonly used. Indeed the Huichol did not use surnames until Spanish census-takers required them to do so in the late 1800s (Lumholtz, 1902: v. 2, 98-99). I follow the Huichol common practice of referring to people by their first names.

5 Most Huichol are familiar with electricity, since they visit the city where even most low-income houses now have access to electricity. They are also familiar with portable tape recorders, which are quite popular, and with cars, although few can afford to own one. In our discussion, Eligio introduced the analogy of electricity and tape recorders. I introduced the idea of a car's steering wheel and motor.

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Comments / Commentaires

Applying Anthropology: Another View of Museum Exhibit Development

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As a long-standing member of the museum anthropology profession, I feel compelled to respond to Laura Jones' article, "Technologies of Interpretation: Design and Redesign of the Tahitian Marketplace at the Field Museum of Natural History" in *Anthropologica* (Jones, 1999). In the article, using her personal involvement with the Tahitian marketplace exhibit as a launching pad, Jones takes aim—at museum anthropology as a profession, as well as at several museum and academic anthropologists who have written critically about the exhibit.

In the main body of the article, she submits her perspective on the development of the Tahitian marketplace recreation (according to Jones, an "exhibit ahead of its time" in having no curator, no artifacts, no labels, no explanations). The Tahitian marketplace is one section of a much larger exhibit, "Traveling the Pacific," which itself is one of three components (together with "Pacific Spirits" and "Ruatepupuke: A Maori Meeting House") that make up the Pacific Island exhibits at Chicago's Field Museum. After "Traveling the Pacific" opened to the public in 1989, the exhibit, and especially the Tahitian marketplace component, were the target of much criticism (although Jones often misreads critiques leveled at "Traveling the Pacific" as comments about the Tahitian marketplace). As a result of the criticisms, the Tahitian marketplace underwent various redesigns, first in the form of minor tinkering in 1991, and then in a more major fashion in 1994-95.

The article concludes with a list of lessons Jones learned from her museum experience. She calls for more innovation and risk taking; less conventional interpretive approaches; an abandonment of permanent installations and expensive renovations; greater use of new electronic media and technologies; the inclusion of a wider range of educators and artists in the exhibit design process; and, most importantly, a breakdown of elitist, classist, racist, colonialist, patronizing hierarchies of "expert" control over truth.

Jones correctly states that museum exhibits comprise a special genre of anthropological communication

that allows for creative opportunities in the practice of applied anthropology. Her labeling of the exhibit process as applied anthropology is an insightful observation. She requests that exhibits be seen as the popular media they are, and not simply as another academic genre. Pursuing this argument, however, she encourages a greater separation of the popular from the academic, which raises serious concerns. Indeed, it is precisely because exhibits have important and unique qualities to contribute to the business of public education, and because they reach such a wide audience (according to a recent New York Times article [Tucker, 1999], Americans now visit museums more than they visit sports events), that exhibits need to present information in a manner that is accurate, sensitive and inclusive—as well as fun.

Rather than drive a wedge deeper between the popular and the academic, why not bring these two modes of educating into closer, mutually beneficial dialogue? Popular venues for the dissemination of knowledge about people and cultures, and even about the profession of anthropology itself, appear in many other forms, such as popular literature, videos and films, and not only in museum exhibits. The concerns raised by Jones' recommendations ripple further afield and raise parallel concerns for these other genres as well.

One of the greatest measures of success of any educational enterprise is the way in which deeper, more accurate understandings are reached by a constant working back and forth between purely intellectual theories and the testing of these in the "real world." In other words, between what museum anthropologists theorize in their academic studies and what museum visitors see and do and think and feel when they move through an exhibit. The continual give-and-take between knowledge gained by academics and the need to present this to the public in accessible and interesting ways was exactly what first attracted me to the field of museum anthropology. Thirty years ago, much like Jones, I was given the rare opportunity of being part of a team that helped install an exhibit. And, like Jones' situation, the exhibit was about the South Pacific. (I was hired to work on the American Museum of Natural History's "Peoples of the Pacific Hall" under the guidance of Margaret Mead, the very guru of popularizing the academic.) Neither Jones nor I is unique in attending to the divide between the theoretical and the popular. It is the underlying bedrock and predicament of museum anthropology. The difference between us is that, whereas Jones' approach leans towards creating a wider gulf, mine aims to lessen the gap as much as possible.

This dialectical relationship between anthropological theory and museum practice has a long history. It was the very well from which, over a century ago, both academic anthropology and museum anthropology arose as disciplines. Boas, known as the "father of American Anthropology," had his passion for understanding human diversity sparked, and his career propelled, when, as an employee at the Royal Ethnographic Museum of Berlin, he witnessed a troupe of Bella Coola Indians perform in Berlin in 1886. The following year, he published his series of theoretical articles about the relationship between ethnological museums and systems of classification (Boas, 1887a, 1887b), already then applying anthropological theory to the practice of museum exhibitry. Now, a century later, the heated dialogues between postmodern, reflexive theorists, on the one hand, and museum employees with practical interests in appealing to diverse audiences and in staying financially afloat, on the other, lie at the core of these "new" types of exhibits. Recent innovative exhibits, like the Pacific Island exhibits at the Field Museum or the "Pacific Voices" exhibit at the Burke Museum (see below), do not spring from intellectual voids, but are consciously molded by anthropological theory of the 1980s and 1990s.

My understanding about the Tahitian marketplace exhibit is that it was the very imbalance between an over-reliance on popular media and an under-utilization of informed anthropology that triggered the critiques of the exhibit and, indeed, informed Jones' decisions about how to redesign it. In stark contrast, a different component of the Field Museum's Pacific exhibits, "Ruatepupuke: A Maori Meeting House," which opened a few years after "Traveling the Pacific," was profoundly influenced by anthropological theories at the time, specifically those about involving indigenous peoples. A Maori scholar, Arapata Hakiwai, was hired as the co-curator to work alongside John Terrell, Curator of Oceanic Archaeology and Ethnology at the Field Museum. Several Maori artists and conservators (Phil Aspinall, Hinemoa Hilliard, Hone Ngata, for example, all of whom are from, or have kin ties to, the community where Ruatepupuke was first built) were intimately involved in the exhibition process. To the best of my knowledge, this exhibit has sparked little, if any, serious critique, either from academics, museum visitors, or Maori individuals.

Not only does Jones display a lack of understanding about the history and complexities of the academic/popular conundrum as played out in museum anthropology, but her specific discussion of the Tahitian marketplace shows a naiveté about contemporary museum anthropology. One of her main pleas is for an end to "elite patronage." The irony of her situation escapes Jones. While calling for an end to elitism in the museum profession,

she seems oblivious to the fact that the Field Museum's choices about the constitution of the decision-making exhibit team was a classic example of the elitist, classist, colonialist hierarchy she claims to want to eradicate. Phyllis Rabineau, the exhibit developer from the Field Museum, while visiting French Polynesia, met with Manouche Lehartel, the Director of the Musée de Tahiti et des îles, who introduced Rabineau to Laura Jones, an American graduate student who happened to be doing research in Tahiti at the time. This triangle—an American exhibit developer, the director of the Musée (a museum controlled by the French colonial government), and an American graduate student—is a far cry from a non-elite solution which would have highlighted Pacific Island community involvement. Why, for example, is the Director of the Tahitian museum the only "native" to be flown to Chicago to participate in the exhibit design process? Where were the Tahitian market vendors, the people who sell flowers, fruit, vegetables, fish, meat and handicrafts? If Tahitian market vendors, crafts people and carpenters had been on hand in Chicago to help make the ersatz market look more like the market in Tahiti, maybe the time and energy-consuming redesign and re-redesign could have been spared.

Another of Jones' recommendations is for the involvement of more educators and artists in the exhibit design process (seemingly unaware that this is exactly what is done in most museums), and for less conventional interpretive approaches that are not afraid of shocking the visitors. During the design process, Jones spent a one-week stint on-site at the museum. As she admits, it was her "first experience" working side-by-side with museum educators and artists (an eye-opening opportunity during which, for the first time, she noticed "how creative, intellectually sophisticated, compassionate and open-minded" the educators and artists were). Although she advocates for more creative involvement, she stifled their input at a moment when they could have truly contributed to the business of public education. For example, when the exhibit team wanted to put a poster of an atomic blast at the entrance to the market and talk about (although difficult, I would imagine, in an exhibit with "no labels") French nuclear colonialism, Jones vetoed their idea. Why? Because her "Tahitian colleagues" (presumably Manouche Lehartel, whose salary is paid directly by the French government) would be "upset." Had her colleagues been less "elite" (people who might very well have scrawled anti-nuclear graffiti on sidewalks and buildings in Tahiti), some of them might have cheered this "less conventional" and "shocking" interpretive approach.

The "most sensitive" of the criticisms were about the lack of involvement of Pacific Islanders. Once the Tahitian marketplace opened to the public, as Jones notes, flaws were not only pointed out and published by museum professionals but were also made evident from comments by the public. Visitors failed to see the marketplace as a representation of contemporary life and instead thought it portrayed Tahiti of the 1950s. This ghost-town quality was due to the lack of "people" in the exhibit, both in the planning process and in the finished product. But what, then, did the museum do to remedy this? They involved, once again, the Director of the Musée de Tahiti et des îles, who decided to bring in the more human presence of the residents of Papeete, the capital of Tahiti and location of the market. Over the next few years, life-size photos of people, photo murals and videotaped interviews were produced and, in 1994-95, added into the exhibit. (But still no poster of the bomb. Or, for that matter, no photos of the burning and looting of Papeete during the anti-nuclear protests that were going on in 1995, the same year that the re-renovation was completed in the museum.)

In Jones' denunciation of my (and others') criticism (Kahn, 1995) of the "absence of Pacific peoples, their voices or images" (yet, is this not the problem she herself acknowledges and then attempts to fix?), she accuses me of not practising good scholarship and doing my research. Yet, the main reason I said that Pacific Islanders had not been involved in "Traveling the Pacific" was because Phyllis Rabineau, the exhibit developer, told me so. When, at the 1990 annual meeting of the American Association of Museums, I asked Rabineau about the level of Pacific Islander involvement with "Traveling the Pacific," she replied that there was little participation because "no Pacific Islanders live in Chicago." Obviously, airfare was an option available only to some.

I would like to conclude with a brief mention of a different Pacific exhibit, namely, the "Pacific Voices" exhibit at the Burke Museum in Seattle, which opened in 1997. "Pacific Voices" addresses almost all of the lessons learned by Jones: innovative interpretive approaches, greater use of new electronic media and technologies, the inclusion of educators and artists, and a breakdown of hierarchies of expert control in favour of community involvement. As the lead curator, I can attest to the fact that the exhibit was shaped by recent anthropological debates about representation and by academic and indigenous critiques of curatorial authority (as is almost any recent anthropological exhibit). The seven-year period during which the exhibit was conceptualized, designed (and redesigned and re-redesigned)

and installed was an intense and continuous collaborative process, involving—in addition to museum curators, academic advisors, educators, exhibit designers, artists, carpenters, video producers, photographers, editors, etc.—over 150 members of Seattle's Asian, Southeast Asian, Pacific Islander and Native Northwest Coast communities (many of whom were themselves the artists, light technicians, musicians, label editors, sound-producers, carpenters, photographers, etc.). I do not intend to hold "Pacific Voices" up as a model exhibit. Far from it. For, no matter how well informed by theory, how noble one's intentions, how collaborative and inclusive the process, or how many perspectives are presented, the pervasive problem of representing dynamic peoples and ideas in confined static spaces is difficult, if not impossible, to resolve. And the gap between academic theorizing and popular education, no matter how lessened, is never erased.

Jones should be pleased to learn, however, that a recent review of the "Pacific Voices" exhibit states that "all museum anthropologists, regardless of the profiles of their institutions, can learn from this exciting experiment in *applied anthropology*" (Dobkins, 1999). Although none of us involved in the creation of "Pacific Voices" had ever thought of labeling our task in this way, I agree that this is what museum anthropologists do, and have always done. For this insight, but this alone, I am indebted to Jones.

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Reply to Regna Darnell's "Toward a History of Canadian Departments of Anthropology"

John Barker *University of British Columbia*

After a promising surge of interest in the 1970s, the project of writing a history of Canadian anthropology appears to have slipped into a state of somnolence. Regna Darnell has done more than anyone to wake us up to the continuing importance of reflecting upon our history, not least in a typically lively and provocative contribution to this journal (Darnell, 1998). I wish to respond to part of that comment here. First, I wish to protest Darnell's characterization of my attitude towards Edward Sapir's place in the history of Canadian anthropology. Second, I want briefly to review the evidence that convinces me that there were no direct Boasian influences in T.F. McIlwraith's field work among the Nuxalk (Bella Coola) First Nation and in the resulting monograph, *The Bella Coola Indians*. These are both very minor points Darnell touches upon in her paper. My comments are offered in the spirit of building upon a fine and useful summary of the state of our historical knowledge. I do not intend them as criticism of the article as a whole.

Darnell observes correctly that in the Introduction to the re-issued edition of *The Bella Coola Indians* I wrote that "Sapir retired in 1925" from his position as Head of the Anthropology Division in the National Museum (Barker, 1992: xxv). I am embarrassed that I wrote "retired" instead of "resigned," which is what I meant. All the same, there is no justification for lumping me in with the unnamed mass of Canadian anthropologists who, Darnell tells us, "have been reluctant to recognize [Sapir's] contribution" to Canadian anthropology (Darnell, 1998: 158). The Introduction is about T.F. McIlwraith and the Nuxalk, not Sapir and the development of Canadian anthropology. It is very clear from the sentence and the paragraph which contain the offending phrase that I am referring only to the undisputed fact that Diamond Jenness took over the Anthropology Division after Sapir's departure in 1925. It is beyond me how anyone could construe any part of that Introduction as denying or belittling "the continuing ties between the Canadian and American anthropologies," if by this odd

phrase Darnell means that Canadian anthropologists continued to be influenced by the writings of their American colleagues after 1925 (ibid.). Sometimes a slip is just a slip—not a slight.

I turn now to the question of American versus British influences upon McIlwraith's research and writing concerning the Nuxalk people. Franz Boas casts such a huge shadow upon Northwest ethnology that it is not surprising that minor figures, like McIlwraith, tend to get subsumed into the category of "follower." Suttles and Jonaitis (1990: 78), for instance, list McIlwraith along with Jenness and Barbeau under the heading of "Boas's Students and Their Students," solely it would seem because of their association with Sapir. As Darnell notes, I also initially perceived Boasian elements to McIlwraith's approach to field work, especially the attention he paid to texts (Barker, 1987: 255). Bruce Trigger, who began his distinguished career as an undergraduate student of McIlwraith's, provides some of the most compelling evidence of an American influence. After securing a scholarship to send Trigger to Yale, McIlwraith confided that he thought of himself as a Boasian and regarded *The Bella Coola Indians* as an example of a Boasian study (Trigger, personal communication; cf. Darnell, 1998: 158). Trigger was left with the impression that McIlwraith had spent a year at Yale's Peabody Museum after leaving Cambridge. That year inspired McIlwraith's keen interest in museum work and shaped his approach to the Nuxalk field work.

What I initially saw as Boasian influences dissolved upon a closer study of McIlwraith's detailed correspondence and the text of *The Bella Coola Indians* itself. McIlwraith was no Boasian, at least in the early 1920s. We can only speculate about why the professor would later insist to one of his most promising students that he was a "Yale man." It is easier to understand why we tend to class McIlwraith among the Boasians on the Northwest Coast. We expect to find "Boasian" traits. And so we do . . . or do we?

Let me first dispose of the alleged Yale connection. McIlwraith attended Cambridge for two years, from 1919 to 1921. Under the tutelage of A.C. Haddon, he gained a strong interest in museum work. In unpublished biographical notes, he remarks that he had his own key to the Cambridge collections and practically lived in the museum over the weekends. McIlwraith went almost directly from Cambridge to Bella Coola in the early months of 1922. In the summer of 1924, after completing his second stint of field work, he was looking for a temporary position to tide him over until he could take up a post he had long been promised at the University of Toronto. With the intervention of Hadden and Clark Wissler, McIlwraith received a seven-month graduate research position at the new Institute of Psychology at Yale. The grant allowed McIlwraith to continue writing up his Nuxalk material while working on a library project on shamanism around the Pacific. While at the Institute, McIlwraith wrote regular reports to Sapir on his progress writing the Bella Coola manuscript. He does not mention receiving any help on the Nuxalk material from anthropologists at Yale. In fact, he complains that the shamanism project tended to get in his way.

The most compelling evidence comes from the Preface to *The Bella Coola Indians* (McIlwraith, 1948). McIlwraith takes up one third of the Preface distinguishing his approach, which he identifies with the "English school of anthropology," from the "American school." More significantly, he acknowledges Haddon and W.H.R. Rivers as his mentors, while thanking Sapir for help on phonology. He acknowledges no other American scholars and does not mention Yale.

But what of the texts? At least half of the two-volumed *The Bella Coola Indians* is taken up with narratives in English translation. Darnell states that McIlwraith abandoned the "native-language text method associated with the Boasians" only when overwhelmed by the volume of material he was receiving, thus further suggesting that McIlwraith had appropriated "a core of the Boasian method" (Darnell, 1998: 158-159). This is fiction. All of the evidence, including McIlwraith's rough field notes, indicate that he recorded narratives in English mixed with Chinook Jargon and Nuxalk from the start (Barker, 1992: xxi). It may not have occurred to him to record texts in the vernacular. The subject never comes up in any of his correspondence. McIlwraith recorded a large number of texts, I imagine, for the same reasons that I did in the course of my own field work in Papua New Guinea. Narratives are relatively easy to record. And the Nuxalk insisted that he write down their stories and histories. Recording narratives does not a Boasian make.

And perhaps this is the main point. If there are few discernable Boasian influences in McIlwraith's approach to the Nuxalk, the Cambridge imprint is not that much bolder. McIlwraith had spent only two years at Cambridge studying undergraduate anthropology—a very brief introduction focussed mostly on museum work and African ethnology. He thus had minimal preparation for field work and very little knowledge of the Northwest coast peoples. Fortunately, the young McIlwraith (he was then in his early 20s) was energetic and resourceful. He quickly adapted to the possibilities that the Nuxalk, in

their declined numbers, presented to him. The dominance of the narratives in *The Bella Coola Indians* is testimony, I am now convinced, of the supreme importance of these sacred histories to the Nuxalk people, and not merely the product of this or that anthropological school.

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Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

Grant Evans and Maria Siu-Mi Tam (eds.), *Hong Kong: The Anthropology of a Chinese Metropolis,* Honolulu: University of Hong Kong Press, 1997, 335 pages, $35.00 (cloth).

Reviewer: *Yuen-fong Woon*
University of Victoria

Written by specialists from different disciplines, this is an excellent collection of articles which addresses two major themes in Hong Kong in the late transitional phase (1984-97): that of political anxiety and cultural retention amidst rapid social change and imminent political changeover.

The first theme is the focus for chapters 2 to 6 and 13. Contributors to this volume argue that as political, education and kinship systems all encourage passivity and paralysis, Hong Kong people tend to express their anxiety over political uncertainty in the cultural realm. This takes the form of increasing homogenization of ethnic identity in Hong Kong (Guldin), revival in folk culture such as herbal tea shops (Cheng Sea Ling) and selective use of traditional geomantic principles to interpret the building design of the new Bank of China (Christina Cheng). In a more postmodern form, political anxiety is reflected in the emergence and popularity of avant-garde theatrical groups such as the Zuni (Lilley). By mounting performances that are uniquely Hong Kong in style and content, these cultural workers seek both to provide a theatrical platform for the politicization of the Hong Kong public and to undermine assumptions about the aesthetic and linguistic superiority of Western and Chinese high cultures. Much along the same line, the incipient challenge to linguistic dominance of Mandarin and English in Hong Kong can be seen in the success of local triad films, comic books and comic television shows in promoting the spread of Cantonese "bad" language to polite society in Hong Kong in the form of popular slang (Bolton and Hutton).

The second theme—that of cultural retention amidst rapid social change in Hong Kong—is the focus for chapters 7 to 11. This theme represents recent scholars' critique of modernization theory that the emergence of a rationalized world will banish premodern thinking and practices to the sidelines. Through their separate examinations of Hong Kong's kinship realm, Selina Chan and Eliza Chan both find that rural women in the New Territories did not resort to Western concepts such as equity, natural justice and human rights in their fight for inheriting their fathers' property. Instead, they re-interpreted Chinese customs in a way that would not undermine patrilineal tradition—a tradition that had been frozen by the Colonial regime for over a century. In her study of Hong Kong women, Martin finds that despite rapid modernization, urban Chinese families have not ceased to be adult-centred—as in the past, children are to adapt to adults' lifestyle. Unlike the West, there is no emphasis on the psychological importance of closeness between mother and young children and therefore no guilty feelings among urban women who returned to full-time work shortly after childbirth. In examining the religious realm, Scott finds that the practice of offering ritual material for the dead has expanded and evolved with modernization. This reflects the continued importance of filial piety, as well as the ongoing belief in the existence of the underworld and the continuity of the dead and the living. Similarly, Lang finds that folk religion has not declined even amidst rapid land redevelopment. In response to economic unpredictability and an uncaring government, the people of Hong Kong look to religious establishments in their various guises to provide a place of quiet retreat, a sense of community, a source of charity, a source of invisible power and a museum for housing cultural memories.

Elements of both themes in this book—political anxiety and cultural retention—converge on chapter 13. Here, Evans focusses on Hong Kong people's ready acceptance of metaphysical explanations offered by traditional religious practitioners of a rumour that child ghosts appeared in a Chinese advertisement. According to him, the belief in ghosts has always been pervasive in Hong Kong. Lacking democratic political channels, Hong Kong people tend to displace their deep anxiety over rapid modernization, political uncertainty and the rising tide of children's suicide onto the traditional supernatural realm.

Taken separately, each article is of high quality. However, I find Robertson's piece somewhat difficult to understand; some theories and assumptions put forward by Martin (pp. 209-210); Scott (p. 236), and Evans (p. 291) seem to me *ad hoc* and unsubstantiated. In addition, I am of the opinion that this diverse collection of articles could have benefited from a conclusion chapter which provides some speculations

to the key question: What does it mean to be a Hong Kong Chinese?

The lack of space does not allow spelling out other minor problems with style, layout and terminologies and phraseologies used by various authors. I shall focus on two problems associated with the Yale system of Cantonese transliteration here. First, there are examples of inconsistency in its usage in the book. The term "jou" (ancestral land trust), to take one example, sometimes appears as "zu" (p. 156) and also as "tso" in the text (pp. 183-184). Second, and more significantly, the use of Cantonese transliteration at once narrows the audience of this book to Cantonese native speakers or English readers proficient in written Chinese. This is unfortunate. Though a Cantonese chauvinist myself, I think that place names should have followed those used in standard maps. Relatively well-known terminologies such as Chinese kinship terms, popular gods, annual festivals and religious and cultural practices, should have been accompanied by Mandarin transliteration inserted in parenthesis in the text or glossary section.

Anne M.O. Griffiths, *In the Shadow of Marriage: Gender and Justice in an African Community,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997, x + 310 pages, 16 halftones, 4 maps, 4 line drawings, $50.00 (cloth), $18.95 (paper).

Reviewer: *Michael D. Levin*
University of Toronto

In a neat visual metaphor, Anne Griffiths' sums up the range of procreative relationships of Kwena women and men. By implication, all other forms of marriage, compared to the statutory form (registered marriages), are somehow incomplete. Marriage under the statute, whether civil or religious, is legally consequential, and in a legal sense, is an ideal. This form of marriage has full and explicit obligations. Marriages under customary law are also legal, but more difficult to confirm and uphold as they require a series of visits between families accompanied by traditional agreements, exchanges and rituals. Other forms of procreative relationships, as Griffiths makes clear, also exist. It is these latter forms, respecting support of children, which rest in the shadow of marriage. Griffiths' study is of negotiations and legal efforts made by mothers to secure support for their children from the children's fathers and move the social definition their procreative relationships, past or current, closer to the fullness of "marriage." At issue is whether marriage was promised or established by the *patlo* ceremony, whether support was ever paid, whether support was sought and paid for the first child in a relationship and so on. These negotiations may evolve into marriage, or into legal contests over whether support obligations exist.

Griffiths gives the reader a full sense of the complex range of relationships women and men form around sex and procreation in Bakwena communities. (Bakwena is one of the traditional Tswana polities. Griffiths' field work concentrated on Molepolole, a village, in southeast Bostwana, within 100 kilometres of Gabarone.) The tension and fluidity in procreative relationships including marriage, the place of marriage and children in the broader context of family histories, the social expectations of families in the "salariat" and the "pesantariat" (terms for emerging classes) and the inconsistent impact of the legal system on social life, are themes of the central ethnographic chapters. Bracketing the four ethnographic chapters are four chapters of arguments about the legal theory. Conceived as a feminist critique of conventional legal theories and a contribution to legal anthropology in the scholarly lineage born of Isaac Schapera's 1938 classic *Handbook of Tswana Law and Custom* Griffiths' argues that her field work studies of how people actually experience the law demonstrate the social context of law. Griffiths makes the claim that her analysis is "in tune with the strong or new form of legal pluralism . . . which undermines a centralist account of law within its own jurisdiction [and] . . . that an analytical model of pluralism can and should be developed out of the normative systems that inhere in social life." Her analysis she claims, moreover, diverges from pluralism in maintaining "the specificity of law without endorsing the image or model of the centralist account" but like a pluralist account examines "a whole range of . . . points of connection across social and legal domains" (p. 236). Many claims are made in these introductory and concluding chapters, but the connections between them and the ethnographic field work that is said to support them are asserted rather than demonstrated. In the absence of integration of the theoretical argument and the ethnographic narrative the reader has difficulty in assessing Griffiths' theoretical contribution.

Griffiths' work may not match her theoretical goals but it does show how the legal system reflects increasing class differentiation in Botswana. It also gives an overall sense of the centrality of the legal system in social life. Griffiths, as a lawyer, argues for the social context of law, but she shows that the law is also a kind of code—more than its statutes and records, against which moral and interpersonal questions can judged and standards tested. Is this legal pluralism? She does not make clear how the theoretical differences affect the understanding of the family histories or cases. The major contribution of this work may be to enlighten Botswana in general, and the legal community there in particular, to the gender biases of Bakwena and Tswana customary and the Botswana common-law legal system(s).

Griffiths makes the case very clearly that inadequate support of children and financial disadvantaging of Bakwena women in property settlements after marriage is clearly a product of customary and formal legal system(s) of Botswana. This reality, though a severe injustice, is not a surprise. As evidence of injustice, however, this book will provide ammunition for those with a concern for the welfare of children to advocate change. Indeed, the advance of the social welfare of

children may be a more valuable contribution than a change in legal theory.

Pauline Greenhill and Diane Tye (eds.), *Undisciplined Women: Tradition and Culture in Canada,* Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997, 306 pages.

Reviewer: *Heather Howard-Bobiwash*
University of Toronto

Undisciplined Women is more than a clever title for this volume, it is a concept. "Acts of indiscipline" (p. xi) characterize this book from how it came into being, to the multiple forms of feminist critical reflection which form its framework of analysis. The contributors challenge not only conventions within the discipline of folklore studies, they also unsteady the borders between disciplines, between academic and non-academic research, between feminist perspectives and between definitions of tradition and culture.

The idea for the book originated in the early 1990s as researchers, attending the annual scholarly meetings of the Folklore Studies Association of Canada/Association canadienne d'ethnologie et du folklore (FSAC/ACEF), contemplated the dearth in the discipline "of recognition of women's culture, women collectors' contributions, and feminist perspectives" (p. x). The "Undisciplined Women Collective" was formed and, over the next few years, met whenever possible to discuss these concerns. Contributors include non-academic folklorists and writers as well as academicians in anthropology, religion, women's studies, art and English. The volume emerged collectively in terms of both its intellectual directions derived from the group discussions, and its content as all the chapters were circulated among all the contributors for comment and development. This "indisciplined" approach to pulling together this edited collection makes it more cohesive and readable than it might otherwise have been given the wide topical and experiential range of its contributors. While certainly labour intensive, this volume also represents a model for feminist mentoring in publishing.

This collection is also situated within the framework of feminist trends more widely. Following somewhat along the path taken over the last three decades in other disciplines, including anthropology, *Undisciplined Women* embodies for folklore studies in Canada the voice of feminist critique and the value of a women-centred approach to theoretical development. In their introduction, Greenhill and Tye outline these tasks for the volume, as well as for the discipline more widely: "to recover women's traditions," to "include critique of patriarchal scholarship," to provide a "reassessment of women's scholarly work" and to create an environment for "gynocriticism"—the generation of "new, feminist scholarship" (p. 7). Regarding this last point, Greenhill and Tye observe how slow off the mark Canadian folklore studies has been in fostering and developing feminist perspectives, as contrasted with their U.S. counterparts: Where "feminist readings and feminist practice are now part of the American folklore scene. Alas, this is not the case in Canada" (p. xiv). This lag can be said to be parallelled by Canadian anthropology (see Cole and Phillips, 1995; and Bridgman, Cole and Howard-Bobiwash, 1999). American volumes most akin in their aims to *Undisciplined Women* include Jordan and Kalcik's (1985) *Women's Folklore, Women's Culture*, Radner's (1993) *Feminist Messages*, Young's (1993) *Bodylore* and Hollis, Pershing and Young's (1994) *Feminist Theory and the Study of Folklore*.

Twenty chapters contribute to one or more of the tasks set forth by Greenhill and Tye, thematically divided into the following sections: "Identifying, Collecting, and Interpreting Women's Folklore," "Images of Women in Canadian Traditional and Popular Culture" and "Women Transform Their Lives and Traditions." These are bracketed by brief but quite useful section introductions and an "Editors' Concluding Statement." Laurel Doucette's opening chapter, "Reclaiming the Study of Our Cultural Lives" provides a very useful critical overview of the development of the exclusion of women and feminist perspectives in Canadian folklore studies, and supports the Collective's assertion that "within the Canadian context there has been a clear discursive struggle played out between folklore as academic study—a largely male-dominated activity—and as non-academic collection—generally a female domain" (p. 14).

As is characteristic more generally of the field of folklore studies, Eastern Canada features most prominently as the geographical location in eight chapters. However, this does not take away from the balance in Canadian diversity that is achieved in this volume. For example, several contributors situate their work in culturally transcendent spaces rather than physically fixed locales: Janice Ristock's chapter which examines the connections between popular film portrayals of independent and/or lesbian women and the growth of misogyny, and Kay Stone's (with Marvyne Jenoff and Susan Gordon) description of women storytellers' creative adaptations of popular fairy tales are two fine examples. Two chapters in French are also important contributions to this volume. Ronald Labelle's account of the work of soeur Catherine Jolicoeur, and Jocelyne Mathieu's analysis of class and women's attire in 20th-century Quebec provide insights on the often subtle tenacity and creativity in women's constructions of the past.

Christine St. Peter and Robin McGrath provide enlightening reflections on the scholarly usage and interpretations of writings by and about Aboriginal women (St. Peter writes about teaching Anne Cameron's *Daughters of Copper Woman*, and McGrath analyzes gender in Inuit autobiography). However, there are no first-hand contributions by Aboriginal women, a lacuna the editors acknowledge and interpret as "omissions result[ing] from a variety of forces, including but not limited to the domination of academic work by whiteness and the power/knowledge base that it implies." This, they

emphasize, underscores the necessity for scholars to challenge these silences by "attending more thoroughly to the issues of gender, sexuality, ethnicity" raised in this volume (p. xiii).

The following chapters are particularly effective, well-written and insightful in their observations of women's forms of expression and the power of gender dynamics in a range of Canadian cultural contexts: Barbara Reiti's study of violence against women and witch legends in Newfoundland, Anne Brydon's presentation of the multiple dimensions of the use of the *Fjallkona* female image by Icelandic settlers in Canada, Pauline Greenhill's description of gender-switching and ambiguity in Maritime ballads, Michael Taft's account of wedding-theatre transvestism in the Prairies, Marie-Annick Desplanques' discussion of women's informal gathering and time-management in a small town in Newfoundland and Susan Shantz's story of a lone woman quilter in Saskatchewan.

This collection provide extremely useful analyses of the diversity of ways in which women participate in preserving, interpreting and generating culture and traditions, as conscious agents in the power relations of both processes of making meaning and the practices of everyday life.

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Reviewer: *Pauline Greenhill*
University of Winnipeg

Well, I have to confess it took me a while to get over the title of this collection. I am afraid it brought out the brat in me; I tried rhyming alternatives (*Creams of Cultural Capital*) and water metaphor alternatives (*Swamps of Cultural Capital*) to exercise/exorcise my annoyance, with limited success in each area. However, the title, which I found off-putting in its naturalizing and reifying of the concept of cultural capital, provides my only real quibble with this book. (And, after all, irritation is memorable.) But the contents are solid and valuable, and that is what should always count.

I should add that *Streams* also came with at least two marks in its favour. First, it is part of the series "Mestizo Spaces/Espaces Métisses," in which *Open the Social Sciences*, the Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences (1996), is also published. This small, eminently readable work not only gives a useful capsule history of the disciplining of the social sciences, including anthropology, but also asks critically what value such disciplining has for academics and for society today. Clearly, this series is in the forefront of critical and accessible writing on issues of concern to anthropologists and other students of culture. Second, a glance at the contributors shows that this is a truly international collection, not just another reproduction of the same old, same old "what Americans think about everything" publication that is all too characteristic of what gets published—and reviewed—in the U.S.

I think it is always necessary to refute the belief that what is published in the U.S. is international, and what is published in Canada, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, etc., is national or regional. Collections like this, by juxtaposing sociocultural contexts and texts, contradicts those who assume that "we" are always interested in everything that happens in the U.S., but only specialists are interested in Corsican identity (discussed by Anne Knudsen with respect to the writing of history and literature) or in theatre in China (explored by Xiaomei Chen, who looks at "Occidentalist" productions).

This is a very useful, thought-provoking collection of concrete, specific examples from a diversity of genres and locations. It is a series of situated elaborations of the concept of cultural capital, particularly useful for showing the value of anthropological views on colonizers as well as colonized. For those of us who are tired of the backlash against poststructuralism, which has in many cases taken the form of an anti-intellectual move against critical thinking of any kind in anthropology, collections such as *Streams* can provide hope that it is not all over but the crying.

Streams is taken from a special issue of *Stanford Literature Review* (1993), but has two additional essays which open and close the collection. The book's aim is to examine "transpositions and recontextualizations of cultural objects as they move across and between national borders" (p. 3), particularly in terms of effects upon the materiality of the notion of culture. The simple/simplistic concept of national borders invoked in the quotation above is, indeed, seriously questioned and problematized by most of the essays, which show how the "mass (and often "illegal") (re)production and circulation of cultural objects [becomes] less and less controllable and predictable and their points of origin more and more difficult to discern" (p. 4).

Most of the essays draw on Pierre Bourdieu's conceptualizations of habitus and cultural capital in *Distinction: A*

Social Critique of Judgement, but they are also consonant with work by Arjun Appadurai, who is represented in the collection, as well as by numerous other social-cultural boundary-crossers, speaking subalterns and undisciplined academics. Appadurai's own essay is a continuation of his work on social/material exchanges. My only quibble is with his periodization that "consumption has *now* [my emphasis] become *a serious form of work* [original emphasis]." I would argue that consumption has for some time been a serious form of work, but the fact that it has been so primarily for women has blinded the disciplined anthropological eye to its significance and meaning.

Another highlight for me was Bruce and Judith Kapferer's exploration of the discourses of Australian identity, which for Canadian readers may uncannily sound issues around region, state, multiculturalism and myth-making here. (OK, I admit it. I like reading pieces which help me think about my own work.) I also liked Biodun Jeyifo's sensitive and intelligent reading of African postcolonial fiction, and was intrigued by Irmela Schneider's examination of American movies on German television. I also admire the aspiration of Robert Weimann's essay, to reconcile concepts of symbolic capital with political economy perspectives. There are also fine essays/reflections by Jean-Francois Lyotard, Mary N. Layoun, Carlos Rincon and Brad Praeger and Michael Richardson.

The epilogue by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht raises some of the limitations of the essays' perspectives, such as the avoidance of engaging with actual exchange value in international marketplaces. Neither do they deal, interestingly, with what feminist sociologist Liz Stanley has called "the academic mode of production" (in *Feminist Praxis* [London: Routledge, 1990]). (However, I am not sure that academic salaries are ultimately as central a point as Gumbrecht's argument would make them. What about other conditions—ownership of the means of production? of the products? the place of students? etc.) Yet all in all this is a useful collection, thought-provoking and generally well and clearly written.

Donald J. Lopez, Jr., *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, 283 pages.

Reviewer: *Marcia Calkowski*
University of Regina

In this book, Lopez eloquently argues that the Western romance of Shangri-la isolates Tibet from the quotidian world and denies Tibetans their agency in constituting such a world. Although, as Lopez observes, the myths of Shangri-la may have more recently drawn Western support to the cause of Tibetan independence, Shangri-la imagery ultimately serves to undermine the realization of this goal. It is this assertion that gives rise to the book's title. The "prisoners of Shangri-la" are the Tibetans, Tibetophiles and Tibetologists who, having crafted, disseminated and, at times, striven to enact these myths, are the architects of their own imprisonment. Throughout the seven chapters of the book, Lopez directs his examination to the confluence of fact and fiction that has formed and is forming the Western image of Shangri-la. The first six chapters are assays of "myths" that contribute to this image: the Western preference for designating Tibetan Buddhism by the non-indigenous construct "lamaism," the emergence of the text known as "The Tibetan Book of the Dead" in the Western spiritual canon, the authorizing principle behind the self-proclaimed autobiographical works of an Englishman-cum-Tibetan lama known as Lobsang Rampa, the Western insistence upon and devoted pursuit of esoteric, extra-Tibetan meanings of the mantra "Om Mani Padme Hum, the "orientalist" approach to interpretations of Tibetan religious art, and the politics of knowledge involved in the fashioning of Tibetan Buddhist programs within Religious Studies Departments in several North American universities. In a sense, these "myths," which Lopez entitles respectively "The Name," "The Book," "The Eye," "The Spell," "The Art" and "The Field," are presented as signposts along the Tibetan "magical mystery tour." As an American Buddhist scholar trained within "The Field," Lopez identifies himself as an erstwhile tour participant while deftly deconstructing the very signposts that have attracted many Westerners to the tour itself. The nuanced explorations in these chapters contribute to a Western ethnohistory of Shangri-la and are the strength of this very well-written book.

The question to ask, Lopez tells us, is why Western myths concerning Tibet "persist and how they continue to circulate unchallenged" (p. 9). He endeavours to answer it by exploring the authoritative nature of the myths. To this end, Lopez provides examples ranging from the mantle of science worn by psychologists who equated the experiences produced by psychotropic drugs with the after death visions described in Tibetan texts, to a delightful account of his straight-faced (and context-free) assignment of Lobsang Rampa's book, *The Third Eye*, to his undergraduate students and their resistance to Lopez's subsequent efforts to impugn the autobiographer's authority. But the question Lopez has asked warrants some qualification. Most of these myths, after all, have been challenged on numerous occasions by Tibetan and Western writers, but many of the myths' interlocutors, like Lopez's students, appear to shrug off such challenges, or, at least, have absolutely no interest in them. Thus, although Lopez correctly locates the myths' persistence in the authority they invoke, his question appears to assume that Westerners would find academic authority naturally ascendent over some other authority.

The final chapter, "The Prison," revisits the proposition that Shangri-la imagery undermines the realization of a Tibetan goal of independence, but stops short of providing a compelling argument to support it. Lopez's discussion of Tibetan agency in this process is limited to the Dalai Lama's

discursive embrace, when addressing Western audiences, of the Shangri-la imagery of a Buddhist modernism. Many Tibetans share Lopez's assessment of Shangri-la imagery, but, equally, many Tibetans have created and engaged their own versions of Shangri-la. Thus, Lopez's argument would be enhanced by some pertinent historical and geographical context. The former would include the distinctive strategies deployed by 20th-century Tibetans in their efforts to garner political support and a comparison of these strategies with the Dalai Lama's journey towards the Nobel Peace Prize; the latter would acknowledge that Indians have their own long-standing, non-Western Shangri-la imagery. Lopez offers the very astute insight that Tibetan refugees arriving in the West found their images as constructed by Western fantasy awaiting them. What we are not told, however, is that Tibetan refugees were astonished to find themselves reflected in some Western mirrors as Chinese.

Lopez has taken on a very complex and intriguing issue, and he has addressed it with considerable élan as well as scholarly depth. This book is highly recommended to anyone interested in Tibet or in the Western construction of Tibet.

Habiba Zaman, *Patriarchy and Purdah: Structural and Systemic Violence against Women in Bangladesh,* Woman and Non-violence Series, No. 5, Uppsala: Life and Peace Institute, 1998.

Reviewer: *Celia Rothenberg*
University of Toronto

This short publication (40 pages) overviews the nature of violence experienced by women in Bangladesh for a non-academic, activist-oriented audience. Zaman's argument is informed by a socialist feminist stance, her experiences growing up in Bangladesh, and her research studying her own society.

Zaman briefly argues that Bangladesh's Muslim Personal Laws are at the root of women's inequality in society. These laws include gendered inheritance practices and polygamy; they are further part of a system which creates obstacles for women who want to divorce their husbands and maintain custody of their children and tends to blame the victim of the crime (pp. 14-15). Due to their unequal position within this system, women experience neglect and violence from the time of their birth through old age (pp. 17-21). The forms of violence Zaman cites include murder, domestic violence, acid-throwing, dowry deaths, rape and trafficking in women and children (pp. 23-28). Related to the rise of the religious right in Bangladesh, Zaman also briefly recounts cases including a stoning for adultery, whipping for a premarital affair and the calls for death against Taslima Nasreen, a well-known feminist writer and activist (pp. 31-34).

The anecdotal evidence offered by Zaman as indicating the structural and systemic nature of violence against women in Bangladesh is shocking, indicating important areas for future research for anthropologists in particular who are inclined to blend their research with activism. While space may not have permitted Zaman to go much beyond the "bare facts," such as they were reported by newspapers in Bangladesh, bringing these issues to the fore alerts us to the need for more attention to be paid to them.

Indeed, Zaman's work encourages us to ask—and look for the answers to—a number of important questions: How do the women themselves articulate their positions within this society? How do women define and experience patriarchy and purdah in practice? How do patriarchy and purdah work together (or not)? How do women operate within these systems, at times engage in resistance and at other moments even collaborate in their perpetuation? How is Islamic belief and practice utilized by those who carry out acts of violence against women? How is it utilized to combat these practices?

Zaman's study addresses an important and sensitive topic, a topic which we now know must be examined in far greater detail and depth than can be offered here. Importantly, Zaman has contributed to creating awareness of the need for future scholars to look at these topics and for activists to become involved with these issues.

Homa Hoodfar, *Between Marriage and the Market: Intimate Politics and Survival in Cairo,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, 302 pages, ISBN 0-520-20611-8 (cloth), 0-520-20825-0 (pbk.).

Reviewer: *Sharon R. Roseman*
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Homa Hoodfar's impressive investigation of the survival strategies practised by the members of low-income households in Cairo will be of interest to anthropologists working on similar projects throughout the world. One of the main strengths of this book is the thoroughness and precision with which Hoodfar outlines both the macro-level influences that constrain individuals, households and communities and the micro-level strategies that people employ in response to these constraints. For example, she carefully establishes explicit connections between the destructive impact since the 1970s of the structural adjustment policies which the governments of developing nations have been pressured to adopt, inflation, rapid increases in prices, the removal of subsidies for some basic goods and the survival strategies of her informants.

The quality and depth of the information that Hoodfar presents indicate the strength of the relationships that she established with individuals living in her field sites. Moreover, her accounts of the struggles and agency of those who shared their lives with her are sensitively composed. On the firm basis of this rich and carefully contoured ethnographic detail, Hoodfar develops a number of penetrating insights about complex ques-

tions such as "the differential impact of development processes on women and men" (p.6), premarital negotiations, the variable impacts of Islamic oppositional movements and the controversial practice of female circumcision.

Like other researchers who have stressed the importance of incorporating into economic analyses all of the work activities performed by women, men and children, Hoodfar demonstrates the major contributions made to economic survival by the performance of unpaid reproductive work such as cooking and childcare. In her comprehensive analysis of survival strategies, she also includes the significance of frugality in planning monetary expenses, of unregulated activities like peddling, of communal contributions supporting life-cycle events and of both horizontal and vertical social networks. One of the most important of the social network systems that Hoodfar describes is the continuous formation of neighbourhood savings associations, these paralleling the formal banking and loan sector to which many lower income households are denied access.

This book also contains a very significant discussion of the gendered practices of seeking, and deciding whether to maintain, different categories of wage employment. From the early 1980s to the early 1990s, she observed a shift in families' preferences with respect to their sons' educational and vocational goals. Many lower-income parents now encourage their male children to pursue apprenticeships in the manual trades as opposed to further academic education. She also found that state employees with "white-collar" positions are forced to either take on second and third jobs in the unregulated sector or ask for unpaid leave from their permanent posts in order to earn substantially higher wages abroad in neighbouring oil-producing countries. Girls and women, in contrast, now complete more years of formal education than previously. Despite difficulties that include the necessity of arranging childcare, some married women with young children continue to work in relatively low-paying government positions partly because of the associated benefits such as maternity leaves and an old age pension plan. Hoodfar found that, by the early 1990s, many women had adopted the practice of veiling; although to some outsiders this strategy might appear to be automatically associated with a reduction in women's access to "modern" economic and political autonomy, she describes how it became a crucial means by which some women were comfortable travelling to earn wage incomes outside the vicinity of their residential neighbourhoods. Other women instead prefer to earn money in self-employment activities (e.g., operating market stalls). To a great extent, the economic survival of households is based on women being able to take advantage of the services available in public institutions and to respond quickly to opportunities to purchase subsidized food items in government shops; both of these responsibilities require someone to wait in long queues and be present when news about prices is circulated in a neighbourhood.

Hoodfar's book includes a discussion of not only labour and consumption patterns but also of the different types of financial arrangements established by the members of Cairo households. In coincidence with her approach to other areas of analysis, rather than adopting previously defined categories for budgeting and money management strategies, she allows her detailed empirical data to lead her toward an excellent account of the patterns underlying the heterogeneity that she finds characterizes the relationships of married couples. One of the most interesting elements of couples' negotiations involves women and men's sometimes varying interpretations of the Islamic tenet that men have the obligation to provide their wives and children with basic economic support. Hoodfar argues that "This religiously sanctioned arrangement, which few social scientists have paid much attention to, has given Egyptian women of the 'working poor' an advantage over many of their counterparts in other parts of the Third World such as Latin America" (p. 142).

The title of this ethnography—which for many readers will invoke the influential 1981 collection *Of Marriage and the Market* (Young, Wolkowitz, and McCullagh [eds.], Routledge and Kegan Paul)—is tied to a clear thread that runs throughout the text:

> Women's apparent conservatism and their adherence to Islamic traditions have a material basis, as they defend their privileges in the face of rapidly changing socioeconomic conditions and the commercialization of the economy, which increase their dependence on their husbands. When terms are agreeable, women take full advantage of the labor market. (P. 103)

The valuable work that Hoodfar has accomplished in empirically documenting and carefully analyzing the strategies that Egyptian women and men have adopted in the face of the ravages of global inequality is to be applauded and should be widely read.

Jean-Loup Amselle, *Mestizo Logics: Anthropology of Identity in Africa and Elsewhere,* Claudia Royal (trans.), Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998, 207 pages.

Reviewer: *Deirdre Meintel*
Université de Montréal

The publication in English translation of Jean-Loup Amselle's remarkable work, *Logiques métisses* (1990) is a most welcome addition to the new literature on ethnicity. In an earlier work, Amselle sought to demonstrate the determining role of the colonial state in creating artificially fixed boundaries that belied the fluidity and continuity that had characterized African societies (Amselle et M'bokolo, 1985). Based on his research among several groups in Mali, including the Fulani, the Malinke and the Bambara, Amselle makes a strong case in *Mestizo Logics* for the constructed character of these societies

as ethnic groups. Rather than clearly separated units, where culture, language, political boundaries and social grouping coincide, he proposes a "chain of societies," a "labile continuum" of cultural schemas and practices governed by a kind of "hybrid logic" (a term that I prefer to the title used in the translation); that is, a "continuist approach" that emphasizes generalized, long-term syncretism where group boundaries exist in a state of flux that goes back as far as can be known. Amselle's "chain of societies" brings to mind Lee Drummond's well-known "cultural continuum" (1980), but takes a more radically constructivist approach, and is less encumbered by notions of pre-existing "cultural systems."

In comparison to writers in the postmodernist current like Drummond and Fischer (1986), Amselle focusses more on social collectivities (ethnic groups, villages, chiefdoms) than on individuals, a feature that should make the book all the more interesting to English-speaking readers. Possibly because of the North American tendency to focus on changes in individuals' identity rather than group definitions, it is rare to find the issue of shifting ethnic boundaries grounded in as much historical data as this book offers.

Also, Amselle's approach makes a refreshing change from the volontaristic tone of many discussions of the construction of ethnic identities (e.g., Mary Water's *Ethnic Options*). Waters' emphasis on individual choices is probably ethnographically accurate in contexts such as the American, but is not necessarily universal, and probably would not work well in the African context. Amselle's book brings out the importance of studying changes in ethnic boundaries on the group level even when individual changes of identity are also at issue. For example, the change of individuals' identifications from "Canadien français" to Québécois was accompanied by important changes on the collective level for Quebec as well as concomitant changes of political relationships between French speakers in Quebec and the rest of Canada.

The new introduction to the English version of this book underscores another very important point in Amselle's approach to identity; namely, that identities are not exclusive: "for instance, social actors may define themselves simultaneously as Moslems and pagans" (p. xi). Now that in Anglo North America, mixedness and cumulative identities seem (finally) to be gaining legitimacy in public and popular discourse, the point is all the more salient to ethnic studies on these shores.

The French edition of this work elicited widespread commentary among Africanists, not always entirely favourable. Some hold, for instance, that Amselle accords too great a weight to colonial regimes in the shaping of essentialized notions of ethnic identity in Africa. However, leaving aside this issue, as it lies beyond this writer's areas of expertise, I would emphasize the general theoretical interest of *Mestizo Logics*. Indeed, it would be unfortunate if this work were thought to be of interest only for Africanists. Besides its innovative approach to ethnicity, one should note the book's concise, pointed discussion of what he calls "American culturalist anthropology" (chap. 2), for example, not to mention the chapter on Bambara religion, intriguingly titled, "White Paganism." One of the great pleasures of reading Amselle's work (this volume and others) is the author's capacity to combine the French *savant*'s broad knowledge of philosophy and history with familiarity with English-speaking authors and their emprical findings.

Finally, a word on the translation. Claudia Royal's rendering of *Logiques métisses* is, on the whole, quite readable, but at times is burdened by a hypercorrectness more in line with French standards of precision than with English usage; for example, "originary syncretism" instead of "original syncretism" (p. 1). Above all, the book's title is misleading. Most North Americans would assume from the title that the work is about Mexicans or Mexican-Americans (Chicanos). "Mestizo" in English does not have the same generalizing capacity as the word "métisse" in French, which can be used in reference to various kinds of mixture. Indeed, in this book, métissage has mostly to do with "mixedness" of various types among Africans, whereas "mestizo" connotes the mixedness of Indian and Spanish following the Conquest. And while "logiques" works well in the French title, singulars and plurals do not always translate literally from French to English. To give slightly facetious examples, while "connaissances" can sometimes mean "acquaintances," it never can be "knowledges"; "cheveux" can only rarely be rendered as "hairs" (as in, "counting the hairs on his head"). I think that *Logiques métisses* would have been better served by a title such as "Hybrid Logic." (Some might object to the botanical aura of "hybrid," though "hybridity" is now well established in the vocabulary of Cultural Studies.) In any case, it is to be hoped that these minor issues will not deter *Mestizo Logics* from finding the wide readership it deserves.

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Tomas Hammar, Grete Brochmann, Kristof Tamas and Thomas Faist (eds.), *International Migration, Immobility and Development: Multidisciplinary Perspectives,* New York: Berg Publishers, 1997, x + 320 pages, $19.50 (paper), $55.00 (cloth).

Reviewer: *Raymond E. Wiest*
University of Manitoba

This book is a carefully crafted compilation of essays on international migration and development—collaborative work of a multidisciplinary group of scholars representing geography, economics, political science, social anthropology and sociology based in the Centre for International Migration and Ethnic Relations in Sweden. The relatively low proportion of total world population that crosses international borders compelled the group to explain "immobility" as well, promising to add a significant new dimension to migration studies. Designed to serve as a textbook for social science courses on migration, the book offers a fairly comprehensive overview of migration theory from a wide range of perspectives in a set of cross-referenced (although unevenly so) essays (chap. 2-8), each written from one of the participating disciplinary perspectives. An introductory essay sets the overall objective and rationale, and the final essay by Thomas Faist (chap. 9) offers an elegant recapitulation and integration of the entire collaborative effort, including an assessment of limitations.

Three questions are posed: Why do some people go? Why do most stay, or return? How is international migration (expressed as South-North migration) related to development (both as stimulus and as effect)? There is an attempt to encompass labour migrants and refugees. The disciplines approach these questions differently and exhibit differential success in broadening discipline-based models and constructs. Several of the essays (especially those from economics) offer incisive discipline-based overviews of the history of migration studies, but show little inclination to address alternative constructs or challenges to underlying, yet culturally constructed, assumptions (e.g., rational action and maximization), points that are implicit, and often explicit, in the essays from other disciplines. These essays (chaps. 3, 4 and 5) approach the problems through what is essentially descriptive modelling (either micro- or macro-structural); there is little attention to process. Conceptual and methodological convergence is apparent in several integrative essays, however, and they each press toward process analysis. The geography essay by Gunnar Malmberg (chap. 2) emphasizes the changing character of time-space relationships in life-course decision making. The political science essay by Ishtiaq Ahmed (chap. 6) offers a dynamic analysis of nation-states, citizenship, despondence, and the significance of "voice" (including voice from abroad) in assessing the potential for "exit." The sociology essay by Faist (chap. 7) argues in favour of a "meso-level" analysis that is "relational" (emphasizing social relationships), with attention to transferability of social capital. This "meso-level" complements a "macro-level" that is "structural" and a "micro-level" that is "individual." The anthropology essay by Gunilla Bjerén (chap. 8) offers a honed statement on anthropological thinking and practice that is processual through attention to gender and reproduction linked to the search for livelihood. This essay is revealingly centred on gender and reproduction in a manner that evokes an very comprehensive, yet concise, treatment of the questions raised by the group. One feature of anthropological thinking expressed by Bjerén, and obviously shared by others in the group, is that "social processes cannot be understood severed from the historical, economic, cultural, etc. context within which the processes occur . . ." (p. 221).

Only five of the essays (chaps. 3, 6, 7, 8 and 9) explicitly address the immobility question; the micro-economics essay (chap. 2) introduces an "insider knowledge" hypothesis to account for immobility and risk aversion, but other essays offer more insight through attention to relationships in social fields, including "transnational social space." This review cannot address the breadth of issues covered in this book, but it should be noted that, along with some very current thinking (e.g., on "migration systems"), a number of well-worn notions (e.g., "cumulative causation") are given new impetus. Of the primary questions addressed, those related to development as stimulus and/or effect of migration are the least satisfying. On these questions the data lead to the kind of answer anthropologists (including Bjerén in this book) often give: "it depends. . . ."

The individual discipline-based essays are likely to have uneven reception across the social science disciplines, but the overall effort is a significant contribution to the multidisciplinary study of migration. Anthropologists will probably benefit most from the chapters by Bjerén, Ahmed and Faist. This clearly written book is suitable as a text for advanced undergraduate and graduate students, although an index would have enhanced the impact of this collaborative success.

Jean-François Moreau (dir.), *L'archéologie sous la loupe: contributions à l'archéométrie,* Collection Paléo-Québec n° 29, Montréal: Recherches amérindiennes au Québec, 1999, 88 pages, ISBN 2-920366-27-0.

Recenseur: *Jean-Marie M. Dubois*
Université de Sherbrooke

Cet ouvrage est le 29^{e} de la collection «Paléo-Québec», établie en 1974 par Patrick Plumet de l'UQAM (Université du Québec à Montréal) et transférée à «Recherches amérindiennes au Québec» en 1996. La plupart des articles de l'ouvrage sont dérivés de communications mises à jour présentées lors du colloque «L'archéologie sous la loupe», tenu dans le cadre du 63^{e} congrès de l'ACFAS (Association canadienne-française pour l'avancement des sciences), à l'UQAC (Université du Québec à Chicoutimi) en mai 1995. Ce colloque était sous la direction de Serge Lebel, alors pro-

fesseur d'archéologie dans cet établissement, et de Jean-François Moreau, professeur d'anthropologie spécialisé en archéologie et directeur du présent ouvrage.

L'objectif de l'ouvrage est de montrer l'évolution de l'application de différentes approches ou techniques des sciences exactes et naturelles en archéologie, ce qui est le champ de l'archéométrie. Dans son introduction, J.-F. Moreau mentionne d'ailleurs que cet ouvrage permet de mesurer le chemin accompli au Québec [. . .] en moins d'un quart de siècle à partir d'un premier recueil de textes publié en 1978 (Moreau, 1978). Même si les sujets d'étude entre les deux ouvrages sont la plupart du temps différents, on y mentionne qu'on porte une attention particulière au raffinement des échelles analytiques. Dans cet ouvrage, on n'aborde cependant pas toutes les techniques archéométriques mais on se concentre sur certaines reliées à la géologie et une reliée à la médecine.

Outre une bonne introduction, rédigée par le directeur de l'ouvrage, qui replace bien le lecteur dans le contexte, le livre regroupe huit articles rédigés par 10 auteurs provenant tous du Québec sauf un provenant de l'Ontario. Ils sont majoritairement archéologues ou anthropologues mais on retrouve un géologue, un ingénieur nucléaire et un physicien. Les articles portent sur des matériaux (os, poterie, roches et métaux) retrouvés du Québec sauf deux articles sur des matériaux en Italie et au Pérou. Les techniques utilisées sont: 1) l'activation neutronique (quatre articles); 2) la microscopie à balayage (deux articles); 3) la fluorescence et la diffraction de rayons X (deux articles); 4) la microscopie optique (deux articles); 5) l'analyse pétrographique de lames minces (deux articles); 6) la datation relative (deux articles); et 7) la paléophathologie (un article).

Le premier article (Robert Larocque) porte sur la paléopathologie des os humains afin d'étudier, entre autres, les maladies carentielles telles le rachitisme, le scorbut et l'anémie. Le deuxième article (Claude Chapdelaine et Greg Kennedy) porte sur l'utilisation de la technique d'activation neutronique pour distinguer des matériaux lithiques et en établir la provenance. Le troisième article (Robert Marquis et Annie Morin) porte sur l'utilisation du microscope électronique à balayage pour la caractérisation géochimique et en minéraux lourds, également pour distinguer des matériaux lithiques et en établir la provenance. Le quatrième article (Guilmine Eyglun) porte sur l'analyse pétrographique de lames minces et sur la diffraction de rayons-X pour étudier la relation entre la composition argileuse de céramiques et les techniques de fabrication ainsi que l'usage fait des objets fabriqués. Le cinquième article (Isabelle C. Druc) porte sur le même sujet mais sur des céramiques du Pérou. Le sixième article (Norman Clermont, Claude Chapdelaine et Greg Kennedy) porte sur la technique d'activation neutronique pour retracer l'origine de poteries. Le septième article (Jean-François Moreau et Ron G.V. Hancock) porte sur l'utilisation de la technique d'activation neutronique ainsi que la datation relative pour retracer l'origine d'alliages de cuivre et établir la technologie de fabrication de chaudrons de traite. Le dernier article (Jean-François Moreau) est en fait une correction à un article déjà publié (Moreau et al., 1994) portant sur un problème de calcul en relation avec la composition en étain d'objets de cuivre en Abitibi.

Méme si ce livre ne présente pas un aperçu de toutes les techniques archéométriques utilisées par les archéologues du Québec, c'est un ouvrage de référence intéressant à acquérir à faible coût, non seulement pour les bibliothèques universitaires ou de centres de recherche spécialisés mais également par les étudiants et les professionnels du domaine.

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Chantal Collard, *Une famille, un village, une nation: la parenté dans Charlevoix, 1900-1960,* Montréal: Les Éditions du Boréal, 1999.

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À ceux qui croient que les monographies de village, centrées sur système de parenté et la famille, dans la tradition anthropologique, sont tombées en désuétude ou n'apportent pas grand'chose de nouveau sur le Québec, se verront dans l'obligation de réviser leurs perceptions en lisant la monographie de Chantal Collard: *Une famille, un village, une nation; la parenté dans Charlevoix, 1900-1960.* Le caractère particulièrement instructif de la vision d'ensemble de l'auteure, même pour quelqu'un qui, comme moi, est natif d'un village situé à proximité du Cap-Saint-Michel, ne tient pas seulement aux aspects comparatifs du Cap-Saint-Michel à des villages ruraux de la France émaillés ici et là au fil des descriptions et analyses de l'auteure pour souligner des filiations qui se sont maintenues en terre d'Amérique sur une tranche de temps d'à peu près dix générations ou encore aux différences qui sont le résultat d'adaptations réussies des colons français en Nouvelle-France, mais aussi à une problématique qui permet l'intégration de ses données en terrain dans un ensemble plus vaste que la communauté étudiée. Il faut souligner que l'auteure vit au Québec depuis plusieurs années et que, de ce fait, elle a acquis une sensibilité très fine par rapport à des faits de réalité du Cap qui seraient demeurés anodins à un observateur aux visions limitées, pour leur conférer une portée plus large que le cadre quotidien de leurs expressions. Certains critiqueront le titre de la monographie estimant qu'il laisse entendre le fait qu'une famille puisse représenter la

totalité des familles d'un village ou encore que ce même village homogène puisse caractériser une nation tout entière dont les composantes sont hétérogènes. À ce propos, je ferai remarquer qu'il ne faut pas concevoir cette projection, dans le titre de l'ouvrage, comme le reflet d'un état de fait qui est actualisé pleinement mais plutôt comme un type social des origines, de nature identitaire dont le déploiement, ici en terre nouvelle, a obéi à des fondements idéologiques, analogues à d'autres villages, et à des dynamiques sociales partagées qui ont en quelque sorte construit cette image virtuelle à l'échelle de vastes groupes partageant des caractéristiques semblables et une fierté d'appartenance commun, c'est-à-dire la nation canadienne-française.

La vision originale de l'auteure à laquelle je référais plus tôt se fonde sur trois caractéristiques interdépendantes : une connaissance approfondie des principaux travaux ethnologiques sur le Québec rural résultant d'une part d'observations prolongées relatives à des communautés villageoises, et d'autre part de profils ethnographiques et démographiques qui esquissent des mouvements de population des milieux ruraux, soit vers des environnements naturels inexploités ou vers des milieux urbains industrialisés; un souci de comprendre, pourquoi et comment le système de parenté dans ce village a constitué les assises, à tout le moins jusqu'aux années soixante, d'une vie sociale «tricotée serrée» par le biais de ses principaux réseaux constitutifs; et une magistrale analyse de la structure et du fonctionnement du système de parenté, dénotant des traits distinctifs et montrant comment ceux-ci traduisent, jusqu'à un certain point, avec fidélité l'idéologie fondamentale dont ils sont les expressions. Ces deux dernières qualités, permettent la démonstration d'une connaissance approfondie du système de parenté des milieux ruraux du Québec qui ne se trouve nulle part ailleurs avec autant de clarté. Je l'explique par une maîtrise assurée d'outils analytiques capables de révéler tout autant les structure et le fonctionnement du système que la trame des relations familiales et la nature des éléments constitutifs des réseaux sociaux par «l'apparentement» et les «enchaînements de mariage».

Je considère cette monographie comme une oeuvre de grande valeur qui élargit à coup sûr nos connaissances sur le Québec. Aux commentaires positifs évoqués plus tôt, il faut en ajouter une autre. Trop souvent les monographies anthropologiques sont fastidieuses à lire parce qu'elles contiennent des développements techniques nombreux et empruntent une conceptualisation qui n'est pas à la portée de tous. De fait, elles sont habituellement conçues pour les spécialistes de la discipline. Celle de Chantal Collard se distingue par son caractère synthétique (à peine 194 pages), par une simplification des concepts anthropologiques en usage dans ce champ d'étude (d'ailleurs il existe un glossaire approprié à la fin du volume qui aide les non-initiés) et par la clarté du style. La manière de décrire la communauté et de raconter, en les organisant selon les schèmes de la parenté, les témoignages que l'auteure a recueillis, reflète visiblement une préoccupation d'en faciliter la lecture pour le plus grand nombre de personnes possible. En effet, elle a gardé des contacts étroits avec les membres de la communauté et effectué des rencontres suivies avec ses informateurs-clefs tout au long de son travail. Elle était consciente que ceux-ci voudraient, à tout prix, connaître les résultats de ses travaux.

Examinons comment la structure de l'ouvrage, ses quatre parties de même que le contenu de chacun des chapitres qu'elles renferment, dans le but de visualiser comment se concrétisent les observations précédentes. La première partie traite du pays des ancêtres tandis que la seconde examine l'économie de la parenté. La troisième partie se rapporte aux idéologies de la parenté alors que la quatrième est centrée sur l'alliance. La structure de la monographie entend assurer que le contenu constitue un tout cohérent, découlant de la cohésion de la famille dans un système de parenté dont les racines se déploient dans un temps ancestral, à l'intérieur duquel l'unité et la continuité deviennent pour ses membres les référents essentiels.

La première partie se compose de deux chapitres traitant respectivement du territoire et de l'histoire de Charlevoix, de la fondation de Cap-Saint-Michel ainsi que de ses références identitaires. Il s'agit ici de présenter un bref historique du territoire charlevoisien qui a attiré ses premiers colons dès le milieu du XVII^{e} siècle dans un milieu géographique rude et accidenté, mais majestueux, pour y pratiquer une économie vivrière basée sur l'agriculture, l'exploitation forestière, la pêche et, dans certains villages comme celui étudié, la navigation. À peu près un siècle plus tard, soit après la Conquête de 1760, les «habitants» du pays passent sous la domination britannique. La guerre a détruit leurs habitations et leurs bâtiments de ferme et plusieurs têtes dirigeantes retournent en France. Les résidants reconstruisent et se remettent à cultiver leurs terres et retrouvent, par l'Acte de Québec de 1764, leur liberté de culte en tant que catholiques et la restitution des lois civiles françaises, y compris le système seigneurial. Mais déjà vers le milieu du XIX^{e} siècle, l'accroissement accéléré de la population, suite à un taux élevé de natalité, oblige les jeunes familles à s'établir sur le plateau charlevoisien ou à émigrer au Saguenay. Les terres à exploiter deviendront dans Charlevoix de plus en plus rares, ce qui obligera les Charlevoisiens à une seconde vague d'émigration, au début du XX^{e} siècle jusqu'aux années soixante. Celle-ci s'étendra sur des territoires de plus en plus éloignés, nouvellement ouverts à la colonisation, en Nouvelle-Angleterre au début du siècle et, par après, dans les milieux urbains et industriels de la Province, les villes de Montréal et de Québec surtout. Ces «filières migratoires» se basent sur les liens familiaux comme le montre l'auteure. L'emprise du clergé, qui était déjà forte dès les débuts de la colonisation, se raffermit tout au long de cette période.

Le premier colon à s'installer au Cap-Saint-Michel en 1765 vint du Perche. Il s'établit «sur une langue de terre entre le fleuve et la montagne» qui permettait la culture des terres alluvionnaires du Saint-Laurent comme l'accès aux ressources de la mer (anguille et marsouins). Huit autres colons le rejoindront dans les 20 années qui suivirent. Dans

ce milieu petit et relativement isolé se développa un système de parenté distinctif des régions françaises d'origine par le biais de l'héritage (système agnatique de la transmission des terres et du bien) lequel résultait de la patrilocalité, favorisait la consolidation du lien patronymique et entraînait l'affaiblissement graduel du système de la dot. Le régime marital de la communauté des biens, toutefois, fort heureusement pour les femmes, ne subit aucun changement. La parenté constitue le système identitaire du village et l'ancêtre fondateur, par le biais de son patronyme, devient l'élément d'identification du village. On retrouve ces mêmes caractéristiques dans des villages voisins, dont celui dans lequel je suis né. Donc il existe à Cap-Saint-Michel une continuité par rapport à un héritage français dont les référents identitaires communautaires – parenté, église, paroisse, municipalité – sont attribués à la nation d'appartenance tout entière. Ces deux références sont dans un rapport d'équivalence pour ainsi dire. La référence identitaire familiale se rapporte aux généalogies. Les généalogies descendantes deviendront la principale référence identitaire : elles partent de l'ancêtre patronymique (première génération) et descendent d'une génération à l'autre en identifiant, pour chacune le nom du fils héritier afin de se rendre ainsi jusqu'à la génération de 1960 indiquant de ce fait même sa profondeur et sa continuité dans le village. Les généalogies ascendantes partent du couple et remontent jusqu'aux ancêtres communs; c'est «l'arbre renversé». À ces assises identitaires s'ajoutent l'ici-bas – le monde des vivants – et l'au-delà – le monde des morts. Ce dernier univers constitue un référent de grande importance par le fait que les vivants tiennent entre leurs mains la destinée, des «bonnes âmes».

L'économie de la parenté se déploie dans deux chapitres. Le premier chapitre, décrit en premier lieu les différentes occupations des gens de la communauté : cultivateurs-bûcherons; navigateurs; journaliers; artisans et commerçants; religieux et religieuses. À remarquer qu'à l'époque, le travail rémunéré des femmes est quasi-inexistant ou lorsqu'il existe, il est de nature temporaire ou à temps partiel à la maison. Le principal rôle de la femme est de contribuer à l'exploitation familiale, d'assumer l'ensemble des tâches domestiques, d'assurer l'apprentissage des enfants et de «prendre soin» des malades et des personnes âgées. Dans un deuxième temps, l'auteure caractérise le milieu comme étant «un terroir plein» qui ne peut à peu près pas recevoir de nouveaux arrivants. À ce titre, il en résulte une société fermée de type égalitaire. Mais un autre aspect important de cette communauté est «son fractionnement interne en dehors des périodes de crise ou de festivités, ce qui laisse place à l'émergence de cliques» (p. 65).

Le deuxième chapitre de cette partie constitue une pièce-maîtresse de la monographie. Si au chapitre précédent on a illustré les différents métiers de la population et les modes correspondants de gestion de l'économie familiale, ici il s'agit de la reproduction des familles et de la gestion humaine de la maisonnée au fur et à mesure qu'elle grossit en nombre et qu'elle vieillit en âge. S'il faut assurer la continuité patronymique sur la ferme (ou dans le métier de navigateur) par la désignation d'un héritier, ne faut-il pas aussi assurer l'établissement des autres enfants qui demeureront au village ou émigreront en ville? Qui plus est, il est prestigieux de donner un ou plusieurs de ses enfants à l'Église (religieuses et religieux). Aussi la mère aura-t-elle à surveiller et préserver l'existence d'une vocation religieuse chez un de ses enfants. L'interdit religieux d'empêcher la famille est puissant, aussi les fonctions reproductives de la famille seront-elles grandes; les femmes devront assumer «leur devoir» tout au long de leur période reproductive et même par après. Deux positions hiérarchiques, auxquelles correspondent des rôles, existent chez les germains : l'aîné et le cadet, des garçons comme des filles. En plus d'être investi de responsabilités, l'aîné doit donner l'exemple aux autres; le cadet lui, constamment en danger d'être remplacé par une prochaine naissance, est l'objet de gâteries. Comme l'affirme l'auteure, «À la classification culturelle des enfants selon le sexe et le rang de naissance correspondent des pratiques différenciées d'établissement, qui prennent aussi en considération les phases du cycle familial» (p. 73). Tous les fils doivent aider leurs parents dans le soutien économique de la maisonnée par la participation aux travaux de la ferme et par la mise en commun des ressources financières de ceux qui sont sur le marché du travail. «L'héritier-successeur» est habituellement choisi parmi les cadets. Parfois on réussira à établir au village un second fils, mais la plupart du temps les autres recevront un apport monétaire au moment de leur mariage et de l'émigration. Les filles aussi sont astreintes au service familial et lorsqu'elles ont un emploi salarié, elles doivent remettre leur salaire en bonne partie au chef de famille et ne garder que ce qui est nécessaire pour leurs besoins personnels et pour la constitution d'un trousseau. Ce genre de régime maintient une absence complète d'autonomie financière des filles avant le mariage, ce qui les place sur un pied d'égalité face au «marché matrimonial». Cette absence d'autonomie subsiste en situation matrimoniale. La section traitant de la reproduction des ordres et des communautés religieuses permet d'établir la contribution extraordinaire des milieux ruraux à la consolidation des effectifs religieux et à la perpétuation des institutions ecclésiales d'avant la «Révolution tranquille».

La troisième partie est consacrée aux idéologies de la parenté et comporte deux chapitres qui prennent un peu plus d'une vingtaine de pages. Le premier traite de la parenté charnelle et de la parenté spirituelle. L'auteure mentionne que lorsqu'on recueille des généalogies orales on est vite confronté par le fait que la parenté charnelle, c'est-à-dire celle qui est le résultat de l'engendrement, en est une parmi plusieurs autres : «les parentés adoptive, spirituelle, substitutive et les parentés d'accueil» (p. 97). Chacune de celles-ci se rapporte à des réalités particulières qui se traduisent par des types de liens de parenté, des configurations de sentiments et des types de rapports sociaux. Mais le sens premier de la notion de parent réfère à un consanguin, donc quelqu'un qui est «du même sang». Ces derniers sont des «parents pro-

pres» par opposition aux parents par alliance dont le statut parental est de moindre importance. Les parents propres se déclinent selon deux axes: «le bord» du père et celui de la mère, tous deux étant d'une importance à peu près équivalente. À Cap-Saint-Michel, comme c'est le cas dans d'autres villages de Charlevoix, le mariage préférentiel est entre cousins issus-issus de germains – du quatre au quatre, comme on dit là-bas – pour lequel il n'existe pas d'interdit par l'Église. Ce type d'union permet de ne pas «affaiblir le sang» tout en réduisant les risques d'apparition de maladies héréditaires. Il existe, particulièrement chez les personnes âgées, une connaissance de la parenté qui remonte à quelques générations en ligne directe et collatérale. Certains spécialistes de la parenté peuvent même défricher les degrés de parenté de tous les membres du village. On distingue entre parents et apparentés; ces derniers occupent des positions en périphérie dans le système et ne sont pas considérés «comme de la parenté». Par contre, il y a certains parents qui sont plus proches que d'autres et ce sont ceux avec lesquels on entretient des liens étroits et constants, liens qui se traduisent par des obligations réciproques. La famille «constitue le noyau dur de la parenté» (p. 104) et inclut à la fois la famille d'origine – celle dans laquelle on a grandi – et la famille d'orientation – celle qui est fondée par le lien sacré du mariage. Dans ce cadre, les «vieux parents» représentent le coeur du réseau. Se référant à la parenté spirituelle, l'auteur discute de la parenté baptismale et la parenté des ordres, deux types de parenté qui ont conservé une place de choix jusqu'aux années soixante dans cette petite société de foi catholique.

Le deuxième chapitre de cette troisième partie se rapporte aux orphelins et adoptés. Dans le premier cas il s'agit d'une parenté substitutive alors que dans le second, d'une parenté adoptive. L'auteure jette ici un coup d'oeil sur les circonstances qui produisent des crises familiales – stérilité du couple, décès prématuré des parents et enfants nés hors du mariage – et amènent les solutions courantes qui sont en rapport avec les valeurs de la communauté, principalement la consanguinité et la filiation spirituelle par la parenté baptismale. Mais ces deux sources du lien parental obligent à des réaménagements du tissu propre au système de parenté, lesquels découlent de préférences personnelles justifiant divers types de comportements. Aussi est-on en présence, selon l'auteure, à des incohérences dans le système de parenté lorsqu'on examine les situations de crise et les phénomènes marginaux. Pour ma part, j'aurais aimé dans cette partie que le concept «d'idéologie de la parenté» soit plus clairement définie. Les illustrations des incohérences auraient ainsi acquises une plus grande valeur de démonstration.

La quatrième partie de la monographie traite de l'alliance et comporte deux chapitres: l'un s'intitule «Se marier au village» et l'autre, «Les mariages dans la parenté». Dans le premier cas, on y traite surtout des mariages endogames – dans la paroisse avec une personne connue – et des mariages exogames qui se rapportent tout autant aux mariages entre conjoints venant de la même région qu'à ceux qui sont natifs de régions différentes. Alors que les premiers types d'alliance impliquent le plus souvent des personnes qui ont tendance à demeurer dans la communauté et qui se sentent bien de vivre dans un milieu près de leurs parents proches, les seconds typent d'alliance se rencontrent surtout chez les émigrants qui ont habituellement une expérience de travail à l'extérieur de Cap-Saint-Michel.

Le célibat, laïque et religieux représente, pour sa part, à peu près 10 pour cent de la population, laquelle est composée principalement de femmes. Le pourcentage élevé de célibataires ne s'expliquerait pas seulement par «l'idéologie du salut individuel» et les obligations reliées aux soins à accorder aux personnes âgées et aux malades mais par une véritable absence de «stratégies familiales» liées à l'absence chez les parents de recherche de conjoints pour les enfants. Entre 1900 et 1960, l'endogamie villageoise est que quatre personnes sur cinq choisissent un conjoint à l'intérieur du village, ce qui représente un taux endogamique fort élevé. Comme l'affirme l'auteure, «Le cadre villageois se révèle ainsi un lieu plein où les échanges sont intenses et la cohérence est forte» (p. 134). L'endogamie régionale avant 1940 est limitée à la région de Charlevoix. Après cette date, c'est une exogamie qui se traduit surtout dans des régions proches (Saguenay, par exemple) et dans des lieux où existent déjà de parents qui souvent ont trouvé un emploi dans leur milieu aux personnes qui leur sont apparentées (Montréal, par exemple).

Le dernier chapitre sur les mariages entre consanguins est certes celui dont le corpus des données sur lequel se base l'analyse est le plus important. L'auteure a recueilli tous les actes de l'État civil du village de 1900 à 1960. Le fichier comprend 4 438 individus, la mention de 1 163 mariages dont à peu près la moitié ont été bénie dans la paroisse durant cette période. Pour 728 de ces mariages, l'auteure a obtenu les noms des parents des conjoints ainsi que ceux de tous les membres des deux fratries. Pour 377 mariages, les quatre grands-parents de chaque conjoint sont connus ainsi que ceux des fratries du père et de la mère des mariés tandis que pour 99 mariages on connaît les arrière-grand-parents ainsi qu'une bonne partie de leurs descendants en ligne directe et collatérale. L'analyse informatique de ces dossiers a fait ressortir clairement l'ensemble des types de mariage entre conjoint apparentés. Ceux-ci sont regroupés par l'auteure sous les trois formes typiques suivantes: mariages consanguins nécessitant une dispense de l'Église catholique (193 en tout, allant des cousins germains aux cousins issus de germains et aux cousins issus – issus de germains); mariages dans la parenté lointaine pour lesquels aucune dispense est nécessaire; et les enchaînements d'alliances qui renvoient au mariage de deux ou trois consanguins d'une famille avec deux ou trois consanguins d'une autre famille. L'auteure nous présente plusieurs types d'enchaînements d'alliance qui sont tous aussi intéressants les uns que les autres. Lorsque deux frères marient deux soeurs, par exemple, les enfants deviennent des cousins frérots-soeurettes, ce qui donne lieu à des associa-

tions très étroites entre eux. Somme toute, les données de ce chapitre, présentées et illustrées dans l'ouvrage de façon synthétique, démontrent, s'il était encore nécessaire, les connaissances approfondies de Chantal Collard de la structure de parenté du village étudié. À ce que je peux constater, il y a des singularités dans le système de parenté du Cap-Saint-Michel, mais le profil d'ensemble ressemble, dans ses principales composantes à celui de plusieurs autres villages charlevoisiens.

La conclusion de l'ouvrage résume les différentes facettes de la physionomie de village charlevoisien, particulièrement en ce qui a trait à la parenté et met en relief de nouveau que les filiations et les ressemblances dans les idéologies, dans la structure et le fonctionnement du système de parenté avec Cap-Saint-Michel se retrouvent non seulement dans des comtés limitrophes ou encore dans des milieux ruraux québécois avant une vocation socio-économique comparable mais même dans des milieux nord-américains se serait graduellement dissocié de ceux de l'Europe et aurait emprunté les voies nouvelles les plus susceptibles d'assurer sa perpétuation et son appropriation de très vastes territoires.

Agnès Fine (dir.), *Adoptions: Ethnologie des parentés choisies,* Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1998.

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La littérature ethnologique sur la parenté se retrouve dans toute l'histoire de l'anthropologie. La question de la parenté réelle ou fictive, de la filiation ou de l'affiliation, et les contraintes qui établissent l'appartenance parentale, dans la multiplicité des cultures et des conceptions de la famille déterminent toujours des réseaux de relations privilégiés complexes, qui fondent des types de société. Nous avons ici une compilation d'études vraiment intéressantes dans le domaine de la parenté en anthropologie, dans la mesure où elle s'inscrit dans la continuité de cette tradition historique et, surtout, où elle introduit de nouvelles perspectives dans le champ d'étude.

Les 10 textes de cet ouvrage dirigé par Agnès Fine apportent un nouveau regard sur l'ethnologie de la parenté, non seulement au plan de la méthode, nourrie de références aux autres sciences humaines (comme l'histoire, le droit, la sociologie, la psychologie, etc.), mais surtout au plan de son apport à la question de la filiation, celle des filiations électives, où la volonté l'emporte de plus en plus sur le biologique. On retourne à la question du naturel et du culturel: d'un côté, la parenté et la filiation par le sang (biologique) est imposé, de l'autre, celle de l'adoption ou d'autres stratégies de nomination et de ressemblance (culturelles), appartient aux choix des participants! La fatalité et l'universalité du monde naturel ne peuvent pas être opposées de façon univoque au choix et à la diversité des stratégies d'adoption. Même quand on considère la filiation par le sang, les systèmes de nomination, de filiation et de classification viennent toujours interpréter et parfois, comme beaucoup de travaux le démontrent, inverser les processus de la reproduction que nous connaissons.

Mais on ne peut pas dire simplement *qu'aujourd'hui on peut de plus en plus choisir sa famille!* C'est vrai que la pluriparentalité établit des relations complexes, que les parentés adoptives (surtout en Occident) sont plus fréquentes aujourd'hui, que de nouveaux procès de reproduction ou de nouvelles typologies de couples révolutionnent les définitions de la filiation. Mais on ne peut pas dire que c'est un phénomène entièrement nouveau; il s'agit d'un phénomène qui prend plus d'ampleur. *On se réfère de plus en plus à la réalité des échanges plutôt qu'aux seuls liens de sang,* et il est toujours vrai que *l'important n'est pas de naître «parents» mais de le devenir en se comportant comme tel.* On constate qu'il existe de multiples manières de «fabriquer» des parents. Cet ouvrage insiste en particulier sur la question des changements dans la filiation que connaissent les sociétés occidentales. On parle ici de l'émergence des nouvelles filiations électives et l'affirmation de la famille comme espace de l'élection affective, et comment ces nouvelles réalités on modifié la définition sociale de la filiation.

L'ouvrage est construit en deux parties: la première parle des «parentés» électives des sociétés lointaines et des sociétés européennes non encore affectées par le «*désenchantement du monde*» (introduction). Il y a ici déjà *l'élection* mais «*intégrées dans une représentation de la parenté fondée sur la lignée des vivants et des morts*». La seconde partie concerne les «parentés électives» de notre société occidentale moderne. On peut dire que si dans la première partie la parenté a une représentation fondée sur la lignée des vivants et des morts, dans la seconde cette représentation est fondée sur *l'absence*! Agnès Fine dit qu'elles «*sont inventées par les individus comme autant d'opérations singulières permettant l'expression de soi, dans sa parenté, ses relations de travail ou de loisir*» (p. 5). Pourtant ici les relations de parenté sont fondées sur *ce qui manque*. Cette absence de reproduction sexuelle, de couple reproducteur, d'appartenance symbolique à une mémoire, de liaison familiale, établit une modification du monde généalogique.

Dans la première partie intitulée «Parentés électives et lignées», la contribution de Monique Jeudy-Ballini («Naître par le sang, renaître par la nourriture: un aspect de l'adoption en Océanie») est une incursion dans la société des Sulka de Nouvelle-Bretagne. Cette recherche effectué en Océanie sur le transfert d'enfants entre géniteurs et adoptants souligne la place de la nourriture («nourrir») dans la définition de la parenté. Pour les Sulka qui font le transfert d'enfants, l'appartenance de celui-ci est fixée avant ce transfert, et la relation entre les parents biologiques et les adoptifs est complémentaire (*«la notion* – pour les Sulka – *de parenté renverrait donc à un triple mérite: le mérite à faire naître, à partager ses enfants*

et à élever – "nourrir" – les enfants des autres» [p. 31]). Jeudy-Ballini fait appel aux conceptions d'autres peuples de l'Océanie dans son analyse, comme les Kamano de Nouvelle-Guinée et les Baining de Nouvelle Bretagne. Mais ceux-ci présentent aussi des différences par rapport aux Sulka! La liaison de l'adoption par la nourriture aux interdits sexuels ne peut être universelle. Pourquoi l'acte sexuel est-il uniquement situé du côté du «naturel» alors que la honte et le «nourrir» sont du côté de l'élection? Est-ce que cette opposition est claire pour les Baining?

On passe ensuite à notre société, dans le sens géographique, avec l'étude de Claudine Leduc sur les pratiques adoptives dans la Grèce classique. Cette contribution ressemble par ses conclusions celle de A. Fine («Le don d'enfant dans l'ancienne France»), même elles sont éloignées de plus de 2 500 ans. Dans les deux cas, l'adoption est une manière de pallier le manque de descendants, et non un don d'enfants entre familles susceptible de créer des liens d'alliance. Assurer la succession dans une continuité physique, matérielle et symbolique est une caractéristique de la culture européenne.

Apportons une attention particulière aux contributions de Bernard Vernier et Bernard Saladin d'Anglure. Ici c'est la question de l'élection de chacun des enfants par leurs parents à l'intérieur même de la parenté de sang! Son travail ethnographique dans la Grèce rurale a permis à Vernier de mettre à jour des mécanismes de genèse des sentiments. Vernier montre que les noms donnés aux enfants et le discours que l'on tient sur leur ressemblance avec leurs ascendants créent des liens électifs entre certains membres de la parenté consanguine. Une symbolique du don est ici mise en oeuvre par l'attribution de la ressemblance a chacune des branches alliées. Au moment de la naissance, avec la désignation du nom (surtout celle des aînés), et ensuite par l'attribution de la ressemblance, on renforce l'alliance. Le travail d'Anglure nous amène à repenser le système de filiation «eskimo». Il révèle que le père et la mère chez les Inuit n'appellent pas leur enfant de la même façon, chacun privilégiant le nom d'un mort que l'enfant réincarne. C'est un système d'appellation et d'adresse qui exprime une symbolique d'appropriation de l'enfant par les deux branches de la famille. Mêmes si les auteurs ont fait leur travail dans des sociétés traditionnelles, les applications pour analyser les mutations familiales d'aujourd'hui son stimulantes. Voir par exemple le rôle de la mère dans la définition d'appartenance de l'enfant.

La deuxième partie («Parentés électives et expression de soi») donne des exemples de la rupture dans les représentations de la filiation aujourd'hui, par une valorisation des liens électifs qu'on peut considérer affectifs. Françoise-Romaine Ouellette («Les usages contemporains de l'adoption») met en évidence l'affirmation de soi, principalement celle des parents adoptifs. La recherche part du cas québécois. L'auteur montre comment les pratiques traditionnelles de l'adoption, fondées sur le secret et la marginalité, ont profondément évolué. Les mêmes questions sont présentes dans la plupart des sociétés occidentales, comme celle de l'adoption internationale. Il y a une nouvelle logique de la filiation, et les responsables politiques doivent y participer comme éducateurs et législateurs. C'est à partir de quelques-uns de ces problèmes que le travail de Michèle Laborde, juriste anthropologue, confronte la loi française de 1972 sur la filiation à celle de 1994 sur la bioéthique.

Soulignons deux autres travaux, ceux de Agnès Martial («Partages et fraternité») et de V. Moulinié («Chez Tatie»). Avec les outils de l'anthropologie sociale et historique Martial fait une réflexion sur les liens entre frères de sang, demi-frères et quasi-frères dans les familles recomposées. Ici le concept de résidence joue un rôle fondamental pour les liens entre ces frères. Nous connaissons l'importance de la résidence dans l'anthropologie de la parenté traditionnelle. Mais ici ce concept joue pour «fabriquer» la parenté. Nous avons ici une question pleine de possibilités pour la compréhension des rapports de familiarité dans la société contemporaine. Véronique Moulinié offre une autre dimension de l'espace pour la définition de parenté, l'espace du travail! Dans le travail (elle analyse d'une manière très novatrice l'entreprise Fréquin), les liens de parenté agissent comme modèles forts de référence pour penser les relations entre les personnes et favoriser une meilleure expression de soi. Le réseau hiérarchique d'une entreprise familiale est manipulé par le réseau des relations familiales.

La parentalité semble se manifester dans la société contemporaine hors d'une liaison à une mémoire qui a disparu (les morts). Elle se joue dans un investissement du sujet affectif où la désignation du nom est une occasion d'exprimer une histoire partagée par les parents et des désirs pour l'avenir, plus que des références aux liens de mémoire.

Nous avons ici un ouvrage très sérieux qui ouvre des champs d'investigations nouveaux et pleins de promesses.

Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Cultural Social Studies), 1998, xi + 191 pages, bibliography, index.

Reviewer: *Neil V. Rosenberg*
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Subtitled *Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century*, this volume offers the perspectives of two Scandinavian-based sociologists on the connections between art and social action. Focussing upon the American "folksong revival" of the middle decades of this century, the book opens and closes with descriptions of the authors' 1995 visit to a memorial celebration for Ralph Rinzler at the Highlander Center in Tennessee. Here the ideas that led to this book "suddenly began to take form . . . We saw, and felt, how songs could conjure up long-lost social movements, and how music could provide an important vehicle for the diffusion of movement ideas to the

broader culture" (p. 1). Certainly the career of Ralph Rinzler exemplifies the way in which movement ideas went into the broader culture. His work at the Smithsonian sparked the "public folklore" movement that led to the penetration of the American federal arts establishment by the folk revivalists turned folklorists. But that particular process is not described here.

Instead the authors point out that most of those who have written about the folksong revival have tended "to miss, or at least downplay, some fundamentally important connections between culture and politics, which continue to represent the sixties in the popular consciousness" (p. 2), and write of their frustration, for example, with Robert Cantwell's *When We Were Good* in the way in which Cantwell separates "the folk revival from the political movements that were taking place at the same time' (p. 2). It is true that most who have written on the subject have viewed the music's radical political connections as peripheral or parallel concerns, or as intellectual entry points abandoned once aesthetic engagement is achieved, rather than the driving force behind it. At the same time other scholars have portrayed the collectors of folksong whose activities underpin all folksong revivals as workers in a conservative anti-modern project in support of "tradition."

So the authors' task is twofold. They must demonstrate the centrality of social-political movement thought within these music, and mount a theoretical argument that moves "tradition" away from dialectical opposition to "progress" into a position in which it is seen as a concept with its own dialectics of innovation and conservatism. These are the concerns of the book's first two chapters: to establish the relevance of humanistic concerns within the theoretical politics of contemporary sociology. Their key term, the work's analytic mantra, is "cognitive praxis": "the knowledge-producing activities that are carried out within social movements." Their aim, as they state, "is to redirect the cognitive approach to music and to consider musical expression in social movements as a kind of cognitive praxis" (p. 7).

The rest of the book consists of "substantive analyses of the mobilization of music, and the making and remaking of musical traditions, within social movements" (p. 5). Examining first American folk music in political contexts from populism through the popular front, they focus upon key figures like Carl Sandburg, John and Alan Lomax, the Seeger family and Woody Guthrie. Then they turn to African American music, moving from DuBois to black power. Next comes a chapter on politics and music in the 1960s, and finally a chapter on "The Swedish Music Movement" covering the period between the 1960s and the 1990s.

This promising combination of theory and date is, unfortunately, beset with problems of distance and abstraction. Although considerable space is devoted to various movements, all are described in the most general of ways; even when given names, dates and places, the reader is rushed along through the civil rights movement, or the popular front, or the Swedish music movement so quickly that one never really gets a good sense of the inner workings of any particular movement vis-à-vis the music in it. It is frustrating to read about the civil rights movement and not learn much beyond the fact that singing at sit-ins was central to the creation of solidarity rather than peripheral to the political facts of the sit-ins. I agree, but why not tell us why and how, and give some specifics? How, for example, did the "Mississippi Caravan of Music" (p. 101), or the Swedish "tent" project (p. 144) actually operate to create cognitive praxis? Alas, the level of narrative is too general to allow for such description.

The authors suggest that from the sociological perspective, this work breaks new ground in its serious attention to humanistic data music. But from the viewpoint of the student of music, it does not go nearly far enough. A fundamental problem is that many of the music they discuss were themselves defined and promoted self-consciously as social movements. Thus there is frequent reference here to blues, but nothing is said about the long, deep and conflicted history of the blues movement. This failure to problematize words that describe musical genres like blues and, most notably, "folk music" and "folksong" limits the theoretical utility of this work. And it would have been a stronger book had the authors chosen to examine fewer movements in greater depth.

Museum Review / Muséologie

Transcending Borders: The Bold New World of Collaboration in Museums,

Reviewer: *M.A. Lelièvre*
University of Cambridge

Across Borders: Beadwork in Iroquois Life is an exhibition celebrating the significance of beadwork in Iroquois society and responds admirably to the goals of collaborative museum exhibiting set forth by the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples (1992).[1] The exhibition's title refers to the political and social barriers that the various Iroquois nations have traversed since European contact. Perhaps a better title to capture the essence of the exhibition would be *Transcending Borders*; for the exhibit demonstrates that many of the borders we perceive to exist are, in fact, imaginary. For example, the six nations that comprise the Hodenasaunee straddle the U.S.-Canadian border; their confederacy has endured despite the imposition of a "New World" political boundary. *Across Borders* transcends other less-tangible borders such as the seemingly incompatible natures of academic research and oral traditions and the Western museological tradition of treating First Peoples as objects versus First Peoples' assertion of their identity and agency. *Across Borders* makes great strides to prove that these dichotomies are false.

Across Borders is the result of a collaborative effort between the McCord Museum, the Castellani Art Museum of

Niagara University, the Kenien'kehaka Raotitiohkwa Cultural Center in Kahnawake, the Tuscarora Nation community beadworkers within New York state and the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. The exhibition recognizes different kinds of knowledge by including information from oral traditions and interviews with beadwork artists as well as from academic research in the text panels and artifact labels. This kind of collaboration surpasses the token efforts of consultation too often made by museums after the curatorial process is firmly established. Iroquois and non-First Nations curators worked together on both the design and the interpretation of the exhibit. Such collaboration between First Nations and non-Aboriginal people in a traditional museum setting raises several challenging questions. Institutional authority, museological procedures, the rights to information and its use and academic freedom are questioned when these two groups interact in the "contact zone" (Ames, 1999: 41-42).

Clifford suggests that when museums are seen as contact zones "their organizing structure as a *collection* becomes an ongoing historical, political and moral *relationship*—a power-charged set of exchanges," in which the processes of the colonial encounter are unfinished (1997: 192). As a contact zone, he envisions museums as potential theatres for continuing negotiations between the protagonists of the colonial narrative. By allowing First Peoples increased access to their material culture and a more prominent voice in the interpretation of their heritage, the colonial encounter will continue but the balance of power may be redressed.

Across Borders combines over 300 beaded objects with oral histories, photography and written archives to create a nuanced interpretation of Iroquois beadwork. The works on display range from political and historical documents such as the "Two-Dog Wampum," which represents an 18th-century peace agreement between the Mohawk of Kahnesatà:ke and the French colonists, to household items, clothing and tourist curios. This diversity of material demonstrates the pervasion of beadwork in Iroquois society. The creation of beadwork is not simply a leisure activity. Its importance can be understood only in relation to Iroquois kinship, history and cosmology.

The exhibition describes the production of Iroquois beadwork by presenting the raw materials used such as bone, shell, wampum and porcupine quills. It also explains the patterns and sewing methods employed in making beadwork. But Iroquois beadwork is not treated as a mere craft, even the descriptions of production make lateral connections that convey the social significance of beadwork. One text panel describes how the creation of beadwork unites all generations. Children assist the beadworkers by sorting beads while listening to elders speak of how previous generations of their families lived. Thus, "the process of making beadwork evokes memories and connects the Iroquois to their ancestors" (*Across Borders* text).

Across Borders is a stylish, sophisticated exhibition; certainly what one would expect from a large, metropolitan museum like the McCord. The themes flow progressively and each section is carefully identified for the visitor to follow in sequence. Its layout, however, is far from linear and its design cleverly creates a variety of spaces that individualize each theme. One of the most striking examples is the section introducing the Iroquois creation story, which was intended to create a sacred and timeless space. The narrative, developed by Kanatakta and Dr. Rickard,[2] tells of a pregnant woman who fell through the hole in the Sky World left by an uprooted tree. The characters and motifs from this story are essential to the repertoire of the Iroquois beadworker. Proceeding from the introductory section, the visitor enters a circular space formed by eight tall, narrow showcases. The area is covered with a translucent midnight blue canopy speckled with golden stars. A soundscape of the Iroquois Thanksgiving Address complements the visual impression of a sacred space. Each showcase features artifacts that represent different themes from the Iroquois creation story; for example, the flock of birds that caught pregnant woman as she fell from the Sky World. Turtles, birds, flowers and fruit are common elements of Iroquois beadwork. This narrative lays the foundation upon which the exhibition is built. Only through understanding the Iroquois cosmology can the visitor appreciate the patterns and motifs that recur in Iroquois beadwork. Thus, the beadwork is portrayed not simply as an art, but an exercise in spiritual expression and preservation.

While the quality of the exhibition's design matches that of any international blockbuster, there are several notable innovations that distinguish *Across Borders* from other high-profile exhibitions of First Nations' material culture. A significant and refreshing difference is the exhibition's emphasis on *real* people—how the beadwork affects the lives of real Iroquois both of the past and the present. This idea is expressed in several ways. Firstly, many of the exhibit's photographs include the names of their subjects on their labels. The introductory section features large-format photographs of Iroquois women and children wearing beaded clothing. Their names and the names of their communities are the primary information the visitor sees on the labels—an inspiring change from the standard "object name, accession number, date" format and one that allows the visitor to identify more intimately with the subjects of the exhibition. There are also quotes from the beadworkers whose creations appear in the exhibit. Rosemary Hill, for example, describes how she was inspired by a Victorian table covering she viewed at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto.

The simple acts of naming the subjects of a photograph and quoting living artists intimates a fundamental, if implicit theme of *Across Borders*; that is, the agency of First Peoples. Through themes such as "Marketing," *Across Borders* challenges the conventional view that the Iroquois and other First Peoples were passive bystanders to the European conquest of the New World. While the Iroquois adapted their life-ways to co-exist with the Europeans, they did not submit to cultural obliteration. The exhibition asserts that the wearing of clothing embellished with elaborate beadwork was an important

way affirming Iroquois identity and sovereignty during the period of cultural repression. Beadwork was also adapted after the European colonization of the New World. The Iroquois incorporated new materials and eventually produced pincushions and broom holders to furnish Victorian homes and curios to satisfy the tourist market. Far from enculturation, *Across Borders* contends that these adaptations were demonstrations of entrepreneurial savvy on the part of the Iroquois. They capitalized on the 19th-century European romanticization of "primitive" or "natural" peoples. Travelling Iroquois actors fabricated stories of stereotypical warriors and chiefs to gratify the European taste for adventure and the exotic. The Iroquois constructed a representation of themselves to survive in the European New World, not to conform to it.

The Iroquois of today do not see the creation of beadwork as a nostalgic activity for those who long for the past. It has developed a distinctive style while maintaining historical traditions. Kanatakta describes the increasing popularity of beadwork in Kahnawake; for example, beaded attire is replacing ball gowns and tuxedos at high school graduation ceremonies (Rollins, 1999: 4). Beadwork continues to play an important role in the assertion of Iroquois identity as it is often presented as gifts during diplomatic meetings.

Across Borders should spark debate among anthropologists, museum professionals and First Peoples interested in the interpretation and presentation of First Nations' material culture. Perhaps more importantly, the exhibition is accessible to the general public. It is visually captivating and while the text is abundant, it is not overwhelming or impenetrable. When viewing an exhibition I like to judge its effectiveness by the reactions of my fellow visitors. At one of *Across Borders'* video booths, a gentleman urged me to listen to the soundtrack "en stéréo." Describing the voice of Joanne Shenaudoah, he made a comment that could also apply to the entire exhibition, "C'est magnifique!"

Across Borders: Beadwork in Iroquois Life was exhibited at the McCord Museum from June 1999 to January 2000. From Montreal it will travel to the Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University in New York State, the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution at the George Gustav Heye Centre in New York City.

Notes

1 The relationship between Canadian museums and First Nations was brought to public attention with the Glenbow Museum's 1988 exhibit *The Spirit Sings*, which was boycotted by the Lubicon Cree. In the wake of considerable dissension, the Assembly of First Nations and the Canadian Museums Association established a Task Force on Museums and First Peoples which published recommendations designed to facilitate and promote the development of partnerships between First Peoples and cultural institutions throughout Canada.

2 Kanatakta, a Mohawk from Kahnawake and the Executive Director of the Kenien'kehaka Raotitiohkwa Cultural Center, and Dr. Jolene Rickard, a Tuscarora art historian and photographer are members of the exhibit's nine-person curatorial team.

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Berlin, B.
1992 *Ethnobiological Classification: Principles of Categorization of Plants and Animals in Traditional Societies*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Descola, P., and G. Palsson
1996 *Nature and Society: Anthropological Perspectives*, London and New York: Routledge.

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Augé, M.
1986 L'anthropologie de la maladie, *L'Homme*, 26(1-2) : 15.

Clément, D.
1955 *La zoologie des Montagnais*, Paris, Louvain : Selaf-Peeters.

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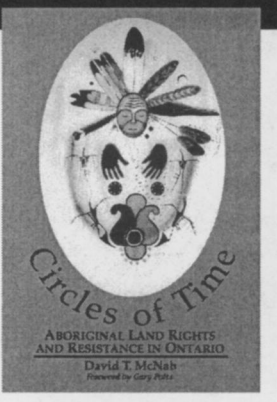

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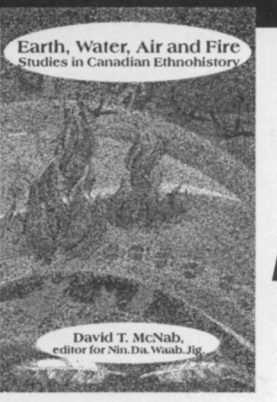

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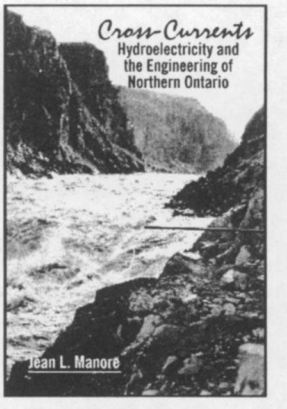

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