

The Central States Anthropological Society

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BULLETIN

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FROM THE EDITOR

This issue invites not only papers and panels for the 2001 Annual Meetings in Lexington Kentucky, it also invites your attention to anthropological thoughts ranging from the serious and sublime to the laughable and ridiculous. You will find commentary on three serious issues dividing our field: (1) the science wars; (2) postmodernism; (3) allegations of unethical conduct in research on the Yanomami Indians. You will also find some proposals for comic relief.

As luck would have it, the dates for our Spring 2001 meeting fall from Thursday **March 29** to Sunday **April 1**. Whereas last year we had the problem of what to do with so important a family time as Easter Sunday morning, this year we are faced with the question of what to do with **April Fool's Day**. We could simply ignore it. But the pattern of acknowledging calendrical rites has now been established. So some minor observance seems in order.

The creative solution to last year's scheduling conflict was program chair Alan Sandstrom's idea of a Sunday morning open session of over brunch. That session on *'The Science Wars in Anthropology, Where Do We Go from Here?'* was a great success, and is reported on in this issue. Well, not to be outdone, this year's program chair, Phyllis Passariello has informally proposed that we go with a theme of humor and culture to keep in the spirit of this year's meeting time. Yours truly, your tardy but earnest editor, is inviting papers, hopefully including several student papers, for a panel on "Fools, clowns, and tricksters: experience meeting culture in laughter." You will see further details inside. As always, panels and papers on any and all

anthropological subjects are equally welcome, but this theme suggested by Phyllis may allow us to revisit some classic anthropological questions. Do chimpanzees really laugh, etc? If they do, what are their jokes? No tickling, now! How gender related are laughter patterns?

Whatever your anthropological interests, use the registration and proposal forms inside to make your own contribution to the Lexington meetings. The proposal deadline is February 5, 2000.

Call for Papers and Arrangements for the CSAS 2001 Annual Meeting

The 78th Annual Meeting of the Central States Anthropological Society (CSAS) will be held at the Hyatt-Regency Hotel in Lexington Kentucky, from Thursday, March 29th, to Sunday, April 1st. The Hyatt-Regency is in downtown Lexington. The contact numbers are:

Hyatt-Regency Hotel
401 West High Street
Lexington, KY 40507
Phone: 859 253 1234
FAX : 859 254 7430

The convention rate is \$99 per room per night whether single, double, or triple occupancy, and the cut-off date for discounted reservations is February 26th, 2001. So room sharing will be a savings and an early booking is advised. Information on travel arrangements and alternative accommodations will appear in the next issue of the **Bulletin** along with the meeting program.

The CSAS invites submission of papers covering all areas of anthropology, including archaeology, bioanthropology, linguistic anthropology, and sociocultural anthropology. Contributions about the history of the CSAS are welcome, and individual poster sessions will also be accepted. Abstracts should be 250 words or less. **The deadline for submission** of proposals for organized sessions or panel presentations, individual papers, teaching workshops, and poster sessions **is Monday February 5, 2000**. This means the final push on your submissions must be no later than the weekend of the 3rd and 4th of February. In fact it would be very helpful if you could get your submissions in by **February 1st as a target deadline**. Please direct all submissions and questions to Program Chair Phyllis Passariello as follows.

Phyllis Passariello, CSAS Program Chair
Anthropology Program
Centre College
600 West Walnut Street
Danville, Kentucky 40422
Voice mail – 859 238 8790
E-mail – passarie@centre.edu

As mentioned above, the informally suggested theme of this year's meeting is **the anthropology of humor**, or conversely, the humor of anthropology! So panels, papers, and exhibits on jesters,

clowns, comedy, satire, trickster figures, and all forms of hilarious outrage are especially welcome. Should some of those outrages have happened at past gatherings of the CSAS or of the larger anthropological tribe as a whole, then a retelling and review of such lighter moments from our collective past might prove especially interesting. The pet cemetery visit at the Nebraska meetings immediately comes to mind! How rest now, the bones and soul of Corky the Jewish cocker spaniel? At any rate, should things of this nature come to mind, now is the time to put together a presentation on them. Check with colleagues to see if a panel or an open session might be arranged.

Forms for meeting registration as well as proposal forms for presentations appear in the following section of this issue of the **Bulletin**. **PLEASE NOTE:** Full registration payment must accompany submitted abstracts in order to be considered. Forms should also be available on the CSAS web page via the American Anthropological Association web site at:

<http://www.ameranthassn.org/csas.htm>

Persons interested in organizing sessions for the meetings should communicate with the CSAS Program Chair, namely Phyllis Passariello, as soon as possible.

A reminder! In registering, please do not forget to consider making a contribution to the Leslie A. White and/or the Beth Wilder Dillingham Student Prize Funds.

Students! This is a good time for you to be thinking about submitting a paper for the 2001 White or Dillingham Prize honors. Any student paper given at the Annual Meeting may be submitted afterward to the Program Chair and the review committee for consideration. Non-student members, please encourage your students to present papers and to submit them for the White and Dillingham competitions. Currently prizes of \$1000 each are awarded to the graduate and undergraduate student winners.

In preparing your abstract or abstracts, please note that the proposal forms below are divided into two parts: **Abstracts, section 1: proposals for an organized session or panel** beginning on page 5 below and **Abstracts, section 2: individual paper proposals** beginning on page 9. Workshop and poster proposals should be made under section 2 as if they were individual paper proposals.

Central States Anthropological Society
78th Annual Meeting
March 29 to April 1, 2001
Hyatt-Regency Hotel, Lexington Kentucky, USA

Registration

To register for the meeting please fill out this form and mail it with a check in the appropriate registration fee amount to the Program Chair. A separate form should be completed for each person registering. Registration will also be possible at the meeting site; however **all persons presenting papers at the meeting should pre-register and pre-pay** the registration fees. The check should be made out to the Central States Anthropological Society, or CSAS.

Please fill in the following information.

Name _____

Mailing address

Affiliation (to appear on badges)

Telephone _____ FAX _____

Email _____

Please check the category in which you are registering.

CSAS member CSAS student member Other student Non member
_____ _____ _____ _____

Contribution to Leslie White Fund _____ and/or Beth Dillingham Fund _____

Mail this form with your check payable to the CSAS to the Program Chair, Phyllis Passariello, at Anthropology Program, Centre College, 606 West Walnut Street, Danville, KY 40422. Voice mail 859 238 8790; E-mail passerie@centre.edu . Please contact for the FAX number.

Abstracts, section 1: proposals for an organized session or panel

Note: Individual paper slots are 20 minutes long (15 minutes for each presentation plus a 5 minute discussion period). Sessions may include 4, 5, or 9 papers. The 9 paper panels should plan a 15 minute break after the fifth paper. Please fill out the following form.

Session or panel title:

Organizer:

Organizer's affiliation

CSAS member? Yes [] No []

Student? Yes [] No []

Chair of session:

Address:

Email:

Phone:

Chairperson of session if different from organizer:

Affiliation:

CSAS member? Yes [] No []

Student? Yes [] No []

Chairperson's address:

Email:

Phone:

Provide an abstract of the session or panel in 250 words or less. Use the space provided on the next page or provide a separate page.

Indicate at the bottom of the next page if there are audio visual needs for the presentations on your panel.

Abstract of session in 250 words or less. Give title, organizer's name and affiliation, then the abstract. End by indicating the four key words of your session or panel at the bottom.

Four key words:

Specify audio visual needs: Slide projector Overhead projector TV/VCR Film projector
(Circle) Data projector Other _____

Participants in the session or panel. List in the desired order of presentation. Note: Each paper named here should be accompanied by an individual paper proposal form , a registration form, and a registration fee.

1. Name:

Affiliation:

Paper title or discussant role:

2. Name:

Affiliation:

Paper title or discussant role:

3. Name:

Affiliation:

Paper title or discussant role:

4. Name :

Affiliation:

Paper title or discussant role:

5. Name:

Affiliation:

Paper title or discussant role:

6. Name:

Affiliation:

5. Name:

Affiliation:

Paper title or discussant role

6. Name:

Affiliation:

Paper title or discussant role:

7. Name:

Affiliation:

Paper title or discussant role:

8. Name:

Affiliation:

Paper title or discussant role:

9. Name:

Affiliation:

Paper title or discussant role:

Be sure to submit the supporting individual paper proposals as well as the registration fees and forms for each participant. Also be sure to submit your materials by the February 5th deadline. In fact it would help greatly if all the materials were in by February 1, 2000.

Abstracts, section 2: individual paper proposals.
Workshop and poster proposals are also to be included here.

Please fill out the following form regarding your proposed paper, workshop, or poster display.

Paper/presentation title:

First author:

First author's affiliation:

CSAS member? Yes [] No []

Student? Yes [] No []

Address:

Email:

Phone:

Second author:

Second author's affiliation:

CSAS member? Yes [] No []

Student? Yes [] No []

Address:

Email:

Phone:

Signature of faculty sponsor if authors are students:

An abstract of 250 words or less should be given on the next page or on a page provided.

Abstract of 250 words or less. Use the space below or provide a separate page. Give the title, the author's or presenter's name and affiliation. Then give your abstract. End by indicating four key words relating to your presentation. Also specify any audio visual needs for your presentation.

Four key words describing content or issues:

Specify audio visual needs: Slide projector Overhead projector TV/VCR Film projector
(Circle) Data projector Other _____

Panel on Divine Tricksters, Sacred Clowns, Ritual Fools,

and Their Equivalents Proposed

Ceremonial fools, clowns, and tricksters have long been a focus of cultural analysis. At times this may have been a case of ceremonial fools being studied by actual fools but the topic stays interesting. Recent forays into this territory include Mathias Guenther's very close analysis of Khoisan religion and folklore in his book, *Tricksters and Trancers: Bushmen Religion and Society*; Robert Brightman's very probing paper called '*Traditions of Subversion and Subversions of Tradition: Cultural Criticism in Maidu Clown Performance*' which appeared in the June 1999 issue of the *American Anthropologist*; and neuro-psychologist Robert R. Provine's very refreshing book simply called *Laughter*. Provine's work serves as an excellent resource as well as a possible foil for fresh anthropological thinking on the topic.

Humor and even laughter itself seem always to elude the sober explanatory grasp of social science. Yet this inexhaustible topic always deserves another fresh look. Bob McKinley is hoping to put together a panel on laughter, culture, and humor and would like members interested in these issues to contact him about giving papers. The projected title of the panel is *Fools, Clowns, and Tricksters: Experience Meeting Culture in Laughter*.

Papers for the panel could address classic questions from the literature or be about something new. Here are some starters. Why are high gods and trickster figures often treated in mythology and belief as different 'manifestations' of the same divine being? Why are 'sacred clowns' ritually licenced to commit sacrilege? What do clowns dissemble, and what, by a calculus of inverses, do they put together? How far have we come in our understanding of the psychology of laughter? Are humans the only laughing species? Is a sense of humor in the frontal lobes? Is laughter a release of psychic energy as repression lets up on the 'id'? What makes for comedy in any given culture? How are power and gender related to laughter patterns? Is political satire gaining force or taming down in contemporary mass polities like our own? Are inter-net jokes a new genre? Or is this just the professional classes catching up with what the blue collar workers were doing all along, namely, making it a priority to tell a good one? Finally, why did William James reject humor as a gate to religious experience, while other writers and many other cultures have included this experiential gate to a religious view?

Provine's book, *Laughter*, suggests many possibilities for observationally based studies that could be carried out by students regarding the social and individual dimensions of laughter. His evolutionary inferences about laughter and speech might also be critically examined in a brief paper. Potential participants in the panel are encouraged to give Provine's book a close look.

Put simply, the panel will explore humor and laughter as important dimensions of both experience and culture. If you or your students would be interested in participating in such a panel please contact Bob Mckinley at: Department of Religious Studies, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, 48824; phone 517 272 7741; email mckinle5@pilot.msu.edu; FAX 517 432 1460. Please indicate your idea for a paper and how you can be contacted.

A Report on Last Spring's Science and Anthropology Session

The plenary open meeting on *The Science Wars in Anthropology: Where Do We Go from Here?*

held at the Bloomington meeting last spring proved most stimulating to all who attended. Alan Sandstrom, then First Vice President of CSAS, and Robert W. Sussman, Editor-in-Chief of the *American Anthropologist* led the discussion. Alan registered concern about the frequent attacks by interpretive and postmodern anthropologists on scientific goals in cultural anthropology. Robert gave an editor's testimony to the fierceness of this debate as he has encountered it in dealing with decisions on publication policies and with complaints from subscribers.

Alan began his remarks with the disclosure that he was speaking as a partisan in the science wars. Laying down the gauntlet he declared:

I find most of the current critique of science in anthropology and other fields to be incredibly myopic and muddled. I will be interested to hear partisans of the other camp enter into the debate. But we want to keep our focus on "where do we go from here?"

He pointed out that anthropology had long known a division between its scientific and its humanistic emphases, but in the past this was not the source of a bitter split. It was for the most part accepted as the almost creative tension that distinguished the field as a whole. In support of this point, others present recalled that anthropology had for sometime prided itself in being the most humanistic of the sciences and the most scientific of the humanities. However, as Alan continued to point out, this division became more openly hostile and even destructive in the 1980s. As he put it: "science now became seen as not simply inappropriate in the study of human beings but in league with the devils of imperialism, patriarchal authority, economic exploitation, and even fascism."

Alan cautioned that the diversity of epistemologies in anthropology today has become a barrier to a shared professional discourse on humanity and culture, and this puts the future of our field in doubt. With no agreement on epistemology, how is research to be judged? What would be the "signs of progress in our empirical studies?" What would indicate that anthropological knowledge and or understanding is ever cumulative? Alan's final warning was that this internal division comes at a very bad time for anthropologists, because we are now in a period when, as he put it, "changes in the political economy of universities and in the global economy" are already beginning to weaken and displace anthropology when it comes to the competition for jobs and resources. Journalists, market analysts, political writers, travelers, and perhaps even missionaries will fill the vacuum left by a diminished anthropology. This, if accurate, is a dire scenario because anthropology has, in the past, been one of the most broadening perspectives in either the social sciences or the humanities. That, indeed, has been its major contribution to modern consciousness.

In short, this is no time to indulge in the luxurious pursuit of institutional masochism! Such were the initial thoughts offered from the side of the science partisans.

There is indeed a deep and surprisingly bitter division in our field. Whatever this may come to in the long run, it is very clear that it has become very difficult to keep up a connected discourse within anthropology and between the various anthropologies of today and those of the past.

Standing in the middle of all of this, Robert Sussman next drew our attention to the controversy stirred by a recent plea for more continuity within anthropology based on a better informed understanding of anthropology's intellectual past. This plea was raised by Herbert Lewis in an essay that appeared in the September 1998 issue of the *American Anthropologist* under the title 'The Misrepresentation of Anthropology and Its Consequences.' Lewis's essay had come up in discussion and had received many words of praise. The consensus in the room was that Lewis had been one hundred per cent correct to point out the overdrawn nature of most post-structuralist and postmodern criticisms of anthropology. Lewis's point is that many recent generations of students have only known these attacks on anthropology without knowing the theoretical concerns or the ethnographic contributions of those being attacked. If there were ever to be a formula for making both institutional amnesia and institutional masochism endemic to a profession, this is it. What surprised the group assembled was to hear from Robert that Lewis's paper did not receive such a warm welcome from all other quarters in anthropology. In fact strong objections had come in even though Lewis's paper produced an interesting series of follow-up commentaries. This was viewed as a further sign that the present rift is a very real one.

Reflecting the same sentiment as Lewis's essay, Alan summed up his remarks. The heavy internal critiques of cultural anthropology by those writing in a reflexive and post-modern mode bore the brunt of Alan's well reasoned plea that we at least learn to live and let live on the matter of anthropology being, at times at least, a science. One does not become an ally of colonialism, racism, capitalism, or patriarchy just by trying to be scientific. He argued that a great deal of knowledge and knowledge production would be lost without maintaining this goal. The challenge of cultural facts beyond one's own culture are better faced and better appreciated when one trusts in the attempt at objectivity rather than when one shrinks in fear of distortion. The claim that all such attempts at honest reporting are naive at best and out right political domination at worst was strongly refuted by Alan. Others in the audience tended to agree and spoke of the longer heritage of intellectual integrity in anthropology in spite of its emergence in colonial situations.

The split over empirical versus interpretive approaches was also discussed. Here again the view was expressed that anthropology had always required both of these orientations. Mention was made of the familiar etic and emic distinction. It seems that the epistemological difference tagged by these two terms has become an even bigger 'wedge' issue now than it was back when the cultural materialists were using it in their polemical blasts against their 'idealist' opponents, the structuralists and the symbolic anthropologists.

For most of its history, anthropology's double sidedness has seemed a simple matter of two separate anthropological goals with two separate methodologies. The scientific goal has been to explain the differences and similarities among cultures over time. The humanistic goal has been to share in the humanity of others, or as some would say to expand the scope of human

discourse through the translation of cultures. The method for achieving the scientific goal was to use the **model of the test**. Inter-subjectively agreed upon data would be treated as the 'objective' criteria for refuting or supporting theories and hypotheses about humans and culture. That was conceived as a test of explanatory ideas. Even descriptive reporting required the best one could do at some level of cross-checking one's information. One's intuitions and impressions still counted as suggestive first hints as to what in one's data would be most revealing. Later observers might pick up on these hints and find them relevant.

The method for achieving the humanistic goal was to interpret differences in meaning, and the means for doing this was **the model of the text**. So **test and text** were both on hand, but they more or less co-existed. At times the humanistic approach would inject itself into the scientific approach, as for example in the area of formulating theories of culturally informed social action. At other times the scientific approach would enter the humanistic approach by finding, or at least claiming to find, energy needs as an explanation for religious beliefs such as regarding the cow as sacred. Normally the two goals were pursued as complementary to each other. The real split over this came with the recent critique of the text as well as the test. It is not just science that is under attack in today's anthropology, an established form of interpreting and translating cultures has also been challenged by postmodern critics. This is what makes the current situation so acute. Here, in my view, is why.

Critical postmodern thinkers find even the interpretation of others and their cultures, let alone the attempt to explain their behavior, as a kind of violence. They claim that in using the model of the text one settles on too limited or fixed a view of what others are about. Because other subjects are thus constructed in terms of their 'otherness' they become essentialized and exoticized in a single stroke. This is considered very bad by contemporary postmodern critics. They treat this error as the inextinguishable flaw of all the anthropology that has gone before. The ethnographic goal of translating cultures that was presented in its classic form by Evans-Pritchard thus becomes, with hindsight, politically, intellectually, and perhaps even morally suspect. It may be that interpretive anthropologists do not necessarily see their own interpretive work in quite this rigid and essentializing a manner, but the objection remains nonetheless.

Gracia Clark of Indiana University, our convention host, did come to a moderate defense of postmodern views on this very point. As opposed to seeing the salient meanings and aspects of a culture as its central text to interpret, she expressed the view that it is very important to accept what postmodern critics are saying about varied discourses within all cultures. Discourse is already more alive than is a text, and in discourse there can be contestation over meanings. In other words, the thrust here is that all meanings, including the silences, can be contested by actors under their own agency. The matter of power and issues of dominance and resistance can then be brought into our analytical 'interpretations.' People act by giving their own tellings and interpretations of life on both sides of power: both in dominance and in resistance. In short, the dominant view of things is never the only one, and the project of listening for alternative discourses is for current researchers every bit as basic to a penetrating social analysis as are the issues which anthropologists treated as of central importance in the past. Listening to alternative

discourses may seem more fragmented and fragmenting than synthesizing the dominant text of a culture, but it is a valid project. In fact, in supplying what has been left out, it offers a necessary rectification of much that was done perhaps too narrowly in the past. Not only that, but anthropology itself has to avoid becoming the silencer of resistance discourses and the promoter or creator of dominance discourse. So the recommendation here is to have more voices and fewer frozen ethnographic portraits. A flat rejection of postmodern approaches would therefore leave out something important. So spoke the defense.

What ensued were many reflections on how the past of anthropological thought was being mis-characterized by its critics. Weren't notions of alternative cultural patterns part of the stock and trade of twentieth century anthropology from the twenties to the fifties? Hadn't Goffman, not to mention Linton and Vance Packard, scooped Bourdieu? Listening to the conversation, one got the distinct impression that those skeptical about post-structuralism and postmodernism were suspecting that they were somehow witnessing a re-invention of the wheel, only this time as a square!

The argument that a complete backlash against postmodernism might be a case of throwing the baby out with the bath water was given a somewhat skeptical reception by the group on hand. What did emerge was a reluctant willingness to acknowledge that an honest disagreement could lie behind this controversy. Concern over serious mis-characterizations on both sides continued to set the tone. So the two camps remained very far apart.

If there was an answer to the session's rhetorical question '*Where do we go from here?*', it was that while it may be impossible and perhaps even unsound to try to return to what anthropology was before the **fear of othering** set in, it is nonetheless crucial to keep in touch with and build on that past. It also appears that extra effort must be given to keeping the channels of communication open across this present intellectual divide.

To keep these channels open, Robert Sussman spoke in favor of a balanced editorial policy at the *American Anthropologist*. Members were invited to send their in views. Others chipped in that anthropology had always known and survived rival theoretical perspective in the past. Even the shift to functionalism was once called *the* revolution in anthropology! It was suggested that within its wider discourse anthropology has known **three grand narratives**: **first**, the narrative of **progress**, i.e. evolutionism (and some forms of Marxism); **second**, the narrative of **integration and coherence**, i.e. relativism, functionalism, structuralism, and early interpretive anthropology; **third**, the narrative of **liberation** through deconstruction, i.e. (other forms of Marxism and now) postmodern and literary criticism styles of anthropology. Recognizing these three grand narratives may not make it any easier to talk across them, but it could perhaps make us more aware of the possibility that some honest disagreements are behind the current rift. Identifying them also makes it clear that no such narrative even at the height of its influence upon the field has ever, nor could it ever, just by itself complete the combined scientific and humanistic goals of anthropology. In the language of postmodernism itself, there is always something more needing to be said than can be said by the dominant discourse of any day.

Reported by Bob McKinley

Comment: Postmodernism certainly is not science, but could it be religion?

Following the discussion of *The Science Wars in Anthropology* at last Spring's meeting the thought occurs that the issues raised by postmodernism in anthropology and related fields has something to do with a shift towards writing liberation narratives rather than coherence of meaning narratives. A prominent feature of postmodern writing is the use of a vocabulary of subjectivity. A central object of consideration is '*the subject*' (no irony intended), and a major process receiving attention is that called '*the construction of the subject or of subjectivity.*' Culture comes in as a secondary consideration in the negotiation of the subject's construction. This might more generally be termed a matter of constructing the identity of the subject. This, of course, would make the subject into a social self. Culture in any larger predetermined social sense is held in suspicion here. It becomes part of the oppressive process whereby politically powerless subjects fall under the control of dominant forms of discourse and are impeded from freely constructing their own independent subjectivities. Resistance is deemed possible through alternative discourses, but these will be muffled and perhaps even silenced. Only critical analysis by postmodern writers can bring these silenced subaltern voices to a wider audience.

What the value neutral social scientists in the middle of the twentieth century might have called a measure of cultural determinism in social self concepts has in postmodern writing become the summation of a series of almost deliberate acts of Gramscian cultural hegemony. Most subjects are victims of culture waiting to be relieved. Consequently it is through the culturally deconstructive work of the postmodern writers that a bit of liberation, however removed and vicarious, is offered to these oppressed souls.

Along with the vocabulary of subjectivity comes that of agency. This is about the autonomy of self both in action and in the construction of alternative discourses that in some way counter the dominant discourses of power. All of this vocabulary concerning the subject, subjectivity, agents, and agency, seems to be about individuals, individualism, volition, selves, and the autonomy of selves. How or why the old vocabulary for these concepts has become taboo in postmodern writings raises some questions about the religious compulsions behind this movement. After all, as Durkheim pointed out long ago, the individual is one of the most sacred concepts, or as he put it, collective representations in Western culture. Could the liberation narrative really be a hymn to the autonomous self as the ultimate of sacred collective representations for all of the world as well as in the West? Is all the fear of othering really a missionary campaign aimed at '*selfing*' the world for the sake of Western individualism?

I fear that the answer is 'yes,' but before stating why, let me recall an instructive story told by a retired colleague about the difference between traditional South Asian society and American society on the matter of self autonomy and the attachment of self to others. He reported that the anthropologist Robert Spencer used to cite in class the example of a South Asian roommate

Spencer had known during his own college days. That anonymous roommate had overheard some American friends, female I believe, speaking of their families. What concerned him was that the speakers in question said things like: "I'm not sure if I really like my mother." He found this strange and said: "I could never make myself think about whether or not I liked my mother or my uncle. It would be like asking do I like my left arm. We are joined. I cannot be me without them." So here was a neat lesson in the relational quality of self, a quality that by comparative implication one culture affirms and the other denies. The West affirms the autonomy of self, South Asia affirms the relational quality of self. Such examples abound in the literature, yet the project of postmodernism seems to be that of a universal affirmation of the autonomy of self against cultural hegemonies.

If this were just a case of projecting a Western concept onto others that would be a mere intellectual error, a clear cultural bias of sorts, but nothing so charged as to be considered religious. But since the particular concept being projected has been cited as one of the West's most truly sacred notions, matters are different. The project starts to look very religious after all. Perhaps this explains the very righteous tone of much postmodern writing, especially when attacking the sins of othering or essentializing. Consider the following points, now keeping in mind the possible missionary impulse behind postmodern righteousness.

The writer who deconstructs a dominant discourse, or who, on the other hand, resurrects a 'subaltern' discourse, what James Scott calls a 'hidden transcript', puts him or herself in the heroic role of liberator. He or she is almost doing the work of justice and salvation. The liberation is all vicarious but it is cogent. It speaks to constraints on the autonomy of individual subjects coming from their now exposed hegemonic and power driven forms of culture.

The culture concept itself has nearly fallen to this mode of analysis. It is declared a tool of hegemony. Even studying culture becomes questionable since in the process one might essentialize it, thereby adding to its power over the unsuspecting subject. Exposing all this, which is the endless task of the ardent post-modernist, has the effect of suggesting an important counterfactual might-have-been, namely, the freedom individual actors, those perennial 'subjects' of postmodern discourse, might have possessed were it not for the power over them and that power's allegedly inherent capacity to control culture. In this project of vicarious liberation, it is unquestionably assumed that what, or who (sic!), gets liberated is an individual.

As indicated above, here is exactly where we need to be suspicious of the liberation narrative. Durkheim told us long ago that the concept of the individual in Western culture is one of its greatest and most sacralized collective representations. Forgoing the arguments about this for now, if Durkheim is correct then we can see something in postmodern criticism that we did not see before. We see a campaign to convert everyone who has ever lived on the planet into the reified Western notion of the autonomous self. This is a missionary effort aimed at conversion. This Mormonesque project is done in the virtual space of academic discourse and it is done on behalf of Western culture's most sacred collective representation: the autonomous self, stripped of culture but baptized with agency. In the interpretive perspective of this religion others are not

allowed to be other, and socialized selves are not allowed to be social. These are taboos.

Another religious aspect of this movement is the image of deconstruction itself. Since culture and structure become the enemy, cutting them into pieces and thereby de-essentializing them is a righteous project. I call this the sacrificial dismemberment of culture. As with the more bloody sacrifices of old, these intellectual acts of sacrifice are artful and methodic. They use a tortuously elaborate verbal violence to triumph over what is presumed to be a more threatening and evil form of violence, namely culture and its oppressiveness. A vicarious liberation from cultural captivity is thereby created in which millions of human subjects are spared the historic fate of living under relentless attacks by their cultures upon their 'subjectivities.'

Again, as with the sacrifices of old, these new ones promise blessings. The blessings promised go well beyond the mere intellectual project of revisionist history. They include the greatest blessing of all: righteousness triumphing over evil. And on the list of namable evils are: colonialism, patriarchy, Orientalism, racism, sexism, global capitalism, essentialism, and the hegemonic suppression of otherwise independent subjects.

To me there really is a religious impulse behind all of this. It is a cult of self. This is a new and unconscious religion serving as the opiate of the hyper-intellectual class. The extreme piety of this new religion is what gives conviction to the intellectual elites who now want to speak for the subaltern. To be turned back into anthropology this new religion must go back to speaking **about** rather than **for** whomever and whomever's situation it seeks to understand. It must also allow again for a recognition of the truth of cultural differences even in the face of globalism. Others must again be allowed to be other, and social selves must again be allowed to be social. Lastly, the fetish term 'subaltern' should be dropped along with the millenarian term 'late capitalism.' Where are Oscar Lewis and Francis Hsu now that we really need them

Bob McKinley

Exposes of an expose: the reactions to Patrick Tierney's dark claims

As if to provide a case in point justifying postmodern and other attacks upon anthropology, a scandal over research among the Yanomami Indians has come upon us. CSAS members are no doubt aware of the anthropology on trail quality of the controversy now brewing in the wake of the publication of Patrick Tierney's book, *Darkness in El Dorado*. Much media attention has already been given to Tierney's very serious accusations against Napoleon Chagnon, Jacques Lizot, and others who have worked with the Yonomami Indians of Venezuela and Brazil. The ethical issues involved are large and will be of concern for quite some time to come. However, an initial rush to judgement against Chagnon and others seems to have been premature. Although Tierney has been fairly careful with many of his facts, especially those regarding the upset of Yanomami inter-village trade relations due to the sudden influx of steel knives provided by the research organizations sponsoring Chagnon and geneticist James Neel, it does seem that he stretched things much too far in implying that the researchers were directly responsible for a

lethal measles epidemic.

A general concern for all anthropologists should be the political fate of the Yanomami peoples. Various bodies looking into Tierney's charges will have to deal with this issue in a way that transcends the narrower allegations against particular individuals.

We can give space to just one hard lesson from this controversy. The title of Chagnon's well known book, *The Fierce People*, is cited as having supported those who want to force the Yanomami off of their lands. Of course attributing inhuman violence to Indian peoples goes back to the conquest, which, of course, was second to none for its own inhuman violence. Still, those pursuing the old policy of getting rid of the savages could not have hoped for a better epithet for their victims than that provided by Chagnon. Professional anthropology thus came, in an unwitting way, to support racial hatred against Indians. Here we have a case where despite the quality of the ethnography, exoticizing and essentializing really did do harm. Attempts to deny the violence of the Yanomami or to explain away their warfare patterns as completely due to the contact situation do not seem to be quite the right answer to this. The Yanomami did uphold a value 'waiteri', or fierceness. It was something they admired in predatory animals and wild 'hekura' spirits. That a man should want to possess this quality as well was not a falsification of Yanomami values by Chagnon. But dispensing the Yanomami to the world as the fierce people was a mistake, a cruel and tragic mistake.

We recall that revisionist ethnography tried to remove the label of '*The Harmless People*' from the Kung Bushmen. So too, counter images of the Yanomami have been put forth. But their headline identity from Chagnon's book title remains a factor in their political fate at the hands of settlers, miners, corporations, and governments. In its day, that title may have served a purpose in the anthropological community because it announced a rare contribution to the ethnographic record: one describing a pre-state society still unpacified, still politically autonomous, and still fighting organized wars. Such a study was almost the descriptive missing piece in neo-evolutionist social theory, and this was the school centered at the University of Michigan that gave Chagnon his start. He is not the only one who, given the circumstances of that time, might have found it quite difficult to resist the sensationalist and essentialist title that he gave to his book. Now we all know the costs. Oh for the wisdom of Raymond Firth, who knew to title his classic of Polynesian ethnography simply '*We, the Tikopia*'.

No doubt more will come out on this. If readers would like to comment on this case in the next **Bulletin**, please send your comments to Bob Mckinley at: Email mckinle5@pilot.msu.edu

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