

Books¹

Review Essay: Ritual as Cognitive Process, Performance as History

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Performances. By Greg Dening. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. 296 pp.

The Archetypal Actions of Ritual: A Theory of Ritual Illustrated by the Jain Rite of Worship. By Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994. 293 pp.

The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance. By Richard Schechner. New York: Routledge, 1995. 283 pp.

Ritual studies are multidisciplinary. They run the gamut from the ontology of ritual consciousness and the emergence of meaning to the externalization of abstract ideas in culture and behavior and their absorption into social structures and religion over time. This mix makes analytic closure on the subject precious, in part for lack of agreement on what ritual is and does. Richard Schechner (university professor and a theater director at the Tisch School of the Arts, New York University) says that the upshot of ritual is artificially heightened behavior, normally displayed publicly, that marks "the startling ability of human beings to create themselves, to change, to become—for better or for worse—what they ordinarily are not" (p. 1). That makes it performative and transformative. Ritual is also restorative in the sense that it recalls, retrieves, and reenacts living behavior before it. It is "twice-behaved behavior" (p. 1). So conceived, ritual can be myth in action, a Malinowskian frame for enactment, and a charter for the present assignment of meaning to something important from the past. With his genius for history's anthropology, Greg Dening (formerly Max Crawford Professor of History at the University of Melbourne) might say that there is history in that, for the history he identifies is grounded in personal knowledge and has mythic and performative qualities, perhaps especially in its "re-call" and "re-presentation" in texts. Caroline Hum-

phrey and James Laidlaw (anthropologists at King's College, Cambridge) ask new questions about ritual as process: reviewing not only what ritual is and perhaps what ought not to be thought of as ritual for analytic reasons, they also ask what in the world of human experience can be ritualized. "Practically everything" is the fascinating answer. It follows that history repeating itself in any common cultural frame has the potential for being ritual—or at least ritualized. With apologies to Marshall Sahlins, Eric Wolf, Charles D. Laughlin Jr., and Pierre Bourdieu, whose innovative work in related areas cannot be considered here, we might also ask, if history can be ritualized, where is the history in ritual? A creative interpretation of the three books at hand allows the question, but pursuing it runs the risk of muddying further the intellectual swirl that refuses easy definition of ritual in the first place.

HUMPHREY AND LAIDLAW

The Archetypal Actions of Ritual presents not only a new theory of ritual action and ritualization but a new *kind* of theory that is grounded in phenomenology and anchored ethnographically in the *puja* as practiced by Jains of modern Jaipur. The *puja* is a rite consisting of a number of specific and named acts in which a deity is worshipped with sincerity and piety through prayer, offerings, and associated rituals (pp. 24–26). Humphrey and Laidlaw went to Jaipur "with the idea of exploring the range of symbolic meanings which the restricted series of acts of the Jain daily *puja* might have" (p. 1). Contrary to expectations based on existing anthropological theory and the idea that rituals are essentially systems of meanings or primarily means of communicating meanings (p. 100) and on what seemed from the outside "a superabundance of meaning," the *puja* was consistently described by its practitioners as being "empty of meaning" (p. 36). It appeared to be simple to fulfill as a category of activity by just "going through the motions," if not as something better replaced by alternative means to the same ends. The *puja* actually requires a special commitment of "meaning to mean" in the sense of adding idiosyncratic content as symbolic meaning and being serious about the commitment to do so. To contextualize it properly, the authors needed "to describe the ways in which ritual in general, and the *puja* in particular, have perennially evoked religious doubts, claims, and counter-claims among the Jains" (p. 36).

Aware of the potential contentiousness of their claims, the authors attempt to substantiate their case by describing the *puja* in practice, theory, and history relative to other approaches to the subject of ritual in

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anthropology (pp. 13–14). This material is used to identify and analyze ritual on criteria that discriminate between ritual and nonritual action primarily in the context of religion. It is also used to criticize many assumptions and arguments anthropologists have made about the nature of ritual and to ground points about ritual in general. Important anthropological interests in the history, social functions, economic importance, religious symbolism, cosmological ideas, and ethical values of ritual are not disparaged or discouraged. But the authors do “insist that these various interests will not serve as a theory of ritual” (p. 71), and they say that it is a mistake to approach ritual either as a distinct category of events or, as Edmund Leach once defined it, as a given aspect of all actions (pp. 72–73). Much of the cultural and social content embraced (expressed, manipulated, celebrated) in ritual action does not in fact define it or differentiate it from other kinds of activities (such as “theatrical performance, acting under orders, habit, conventional behaviour, games, etc.” [p. 3]). Moreover, the same content can be (and frequently is) expressed in other ways, in and out of a religious context. Ritualization itself “creates a different form of knowledge: a different way of thinking about, and a different way of organizing acts” (p. 150). The authors also find it essential that their theory should encompass ritualized action both “as a social phenomenon” and “as it is cognized by individual persons” because reactions to ritual occur at both levels, “the two cannot be understood separately,” and “what is interesting about ritual in general is their relation to one another” (p. 6).

The concept of ritualization as something that can (but does not necessarily) happen to anything calls for differentiation between ritualized and nonritualized action to frame ritual itself. The authors show that “elaborate models, coherent meanings, and consistent interpretations of the [*puja*] are things which people *may come to have*, through, and as a reaction to, performing it. These models do not underlie it” (p. 265). They also admit that “the fact that different purposes, indeed whole different vocabularies, interpretations, and meanings, can attach to the same prescribed act, can cause considerable confusion” (p. 185). But they argue nonetheless for the Jains and other societies and religions examined in the text that “it is better to see the discursive models and meanings of rituals as one of the possible responses to ritual, rather than as underlying its constitution” (p. 265). They conclude (p. 265):

Seeing things this way enables us to understand the varieties of meanings attached to ritual, for it allows us: (1) to distinguish the collective representations to which commentary and dispute about rituals can give rise from the representations individuals may form of those ritual acts; (2) to distinguish these cognitive representations from the propositional meanings people may hang on their actions; and (3) to distinguish these from the practical know-how they must have in order to enact them;

(4) to distinguish the above in turn from the purposes people have in performing ritual (whether socially sanctioned or not); and (5) to distinguish all of these from the reasons why ritual exists.

Ritual emerges from this as a quality of action rather than a class of events or institutions (p. 121).

Talk of purposes and representations raises the issue of intentionality directly, and much of the book is dedicated to exploring the strategic relationship between intention and meaning that is central to the conscious act. Intentionality emphasizes the other, or the object, in codetermining the nature of conscious acts, and it is the most important and problematic category of phenomenology, in which, following Husserl, consciousness is always *of* something. Drawing heavily on Merleau-Ponty (whose phenomenology is very different from Husserl’s), especially his thinking about “abstract action”—“a category invented in order to explain features of action and consciousness” (p. 236) in which “movements not relevant to any particular situation” are identified (p. 235)—Humphrey and Laidlaw argue that ritualization is the process of transforming ordinary, everyday acts into ritual through a ritual stance that “begins with a particular modification of the normal intentionality of human action” (p. 71). It modifies the relation between meaning and action (p. 90) by severing “the link, present in everyday activity, between the ‘intentional meaning’ of the agent and the identity of the act which he or she performs” (p. 100). That puts a burden on the authors to isolate “the objective characteristics of ritual action as it is constituted by thinking subjects” (p. 159), in part on the premise that, because “ritual is human action, and not an object in the world like a tree or the sun, any theory about it must involve the fact that the subjective attitudes which are taken towards it in any particular context will shape the specific manifestations of the general phenomenon which are there for the observer to see” (p. 36).

Humphrey and Laidlaw make the original claim that “when acting ritually, it is because your act is other than an ordinary intentional act that you perform it” (p. 99), but they do not make the mistake of separating action from or opposing it to thought (p. 5). They engage the knotty problem that not all actors are conscious of their intentions (cf. Schechner on play, p. 40, and on performance, p. 240), especially through their analysis of “emergent moods” (pp. 227–44) and by defending their claim that in ritual, “as in few other human activities, the actors both are, and are not, the authors of their acts” (p. 5). It follows that it is not possible to explain (p. 5) or identify (p. 100) the “ritual acts which people perform only by their individual motives, intentions, or purposes. On the other hand, it is just as implausible to tidy away such intentions by subsuming them in historical and sociological ‘causes’ ” (p. 5). Ritualization as a transformation of meaning and action is thus explained “by discussing the ways in which action in general can be said to be meaningful” (p. 90) in a framework that is

not disturbed or nullified by variety in intentionality. This is nested in the higher-level problem of differentiating between ritualized and nonritualized action, in what is really the crux of their theory—understanding action as a *ritual mode*. And they admit that “the idea that there is such a mode is perhaps the most controversial claim in this book” (p. 268).

SCHECHNER

The Future of Ritual assembles some of Schechner’s studies among Euro-Americans, Afro-Americans, Native Americans, and Asians in New Guinea, South Africa, India, and the United States. He examines subjects ranging from street-theater politics to shadow-puppet theater and notes that they “were often more social, political, or religious than artistic” and intended more “to effect and cause life” than to reflect or express it (p. 21). Such live performance, he says, “increasingly happens not as art but as religious practice, political demonstration, popular entertainment, sports match, or intimate face-to-face encounter” (p. 21), a fact he makes obvious in his accounts of the tragic confrontations of young and old in Tiananmen Square in 1989, the drama of breaching the Berlin Wall, the anti-Vietnam demonstrations in Washington in 1970, and the restless manipulations of ritual and symbol in Mardi Gras and in his take on Spring Break in Daytona Beach. The collection also includes Schechner’s account of Waehma, the Lenten cycle drama at Pascua Pueblo near Tucson, “where a village of Yaquis annually don their Chapayeka masks to play out again their relationship not only to Jesus but also to their friends and family and to the whole outside world” (p. 22).

Schechner’s thinking about ritual and performance seems enriched especially by his studies of the Indic *maya-lila*, which is “fundamentally a performative-creative act of continuous playing where ultimate positivist distinctions between ‘true’ and ‘false,’ ‘real’ and ‘unreal’ cannot be made” (p. 29; cf. Humphrey and Laidlaw, pp. 257–58), and by his immersion in the spectacular Ramlila of Ramnagar in North India—a 31-day ritual drama that reveals some of the multiple realities and contradictions of *maya-lila* as it reconfigures an entire city “so that celebrants can participate with the Hindu gods as they enact,” reiterate, and renew the epic adventures of Vishnu-Rama and the tyrannical Ravana (pp. 22, 31, 133). Elsewhere, contemplating the power struggle between Indonesian and Western scholars over developing and defining the Javanese shadow-puppet theater (*wayang kulit*), Schechner asks an important question about intrusive observation and change: “What will happen to such performances, especially as they are repositioned by writers like myself?” (p. 22). The last chapter (which provides the title for the book) is “about ritual and violence, playing and pretending,” themes still unresolved from his “earliest published essays of more than twenty-five years ago” (p. 22).

Schechner notes in his introduction that avant-garde

studies of ritual and theater undertaken by writers, actors, scholars, designers, directors, and artists have become much too complicated to remain singular in our modern, culturally and politically compartmentalized world. The context of performance studies is now one in which events “are recorded, replayed, ritualized, and recycled” (p. 19) and the “four great spheres of performance—entertainment, healing, education, and ritualizing—are in play with each other” (p. 20). Similarly, rituals—no matter how broadly defined, “as concept, praxis, process, ideology, yearning, experience, function,” or ambiguously extended “as part of the evolutionary development of animals,” “structures with formal qualities and definable relationships,” “symbolic systems of meaning,” “performative actions or processes,” or “experiences”—are clearly “not safe deposit vaults of accepted ideas but in many cases dynamic performative systems generating new materials and recombining traditional actions in new ways” (p. 228). Building on exciting work by Jerzy Grotowski and Felicitas D. Goodman, Schechner also declares that the future of ritual lies in “the continued encounter between imagination and memory translated into doable acts of the body” (p. 263).

Schechner’s focus on play (chap. 2), which “can be a very serious matter” (p. 20), is pioneering in several ways. Like ritual, play escapes easy definition because the concept covers too much ground. In the West, it is “a rotten category, an activity tainted by unreality, inauthenticity, duplicity, make believe, looseness, fooling around, and inconsequentiality,” although its integrity as a subject of study “has been a little uplifted by being associated with ritual and game theory. The defense department takes play seriously when it stages war games and simulations” (p. 27). Faced with similar conceptual difficulties, Victor Turner switched his focus from play to playfulness, but that still left serious problems. Paralleling the changing focus from ritual to ritualizing in Humphrey and Laidlaw, Schechner says that we “need to stop looking so hard at play, or play genres, and investigate *playing*, the ongoing, underlying process of off-balancing, loosening, bending, twisting, reconfiguring, and transforming—the permeating, eruptive/disruptive energy and mood below, behind, and to the sides of focused attention” (p. 43). Furthermore, Schechner sees the subject as less intractable “if ‘play acts’ are measured against six templates: structure; process; experience; function; ideology; and frame” (p. 25). The payoff is that “play acts, players, spectators, and observers can be independently analyzed in terms of each of these templates,” and they yield many possible interplays (p. 26).

A coherent theory of play is no easier to come by than a coherent definition of it. But such a theory (pp. 26–27)

would assert that play and ritual are complementary, ethologically based behaviors which in humans continue undiminished throughout life; that

play creates its own (permeable) boundaries and realms: multiple realities that are slippery, porous, and full of creative lying and deceit; that play is dangerous and, because it is, players need to feel secure in order to begin playing; that the perils of playing are often masked or disguised by saying that play is “fun,” “voluntary,” a “leisure activity,” or “ephemeral”—when in fact the fun of playing, when there is fun, is in playing with fire, going in over one’s head, inverting accepted procedures and hierarchies; that play is performative, involving players, directors, spectators, and commentators in a quadrilocal exchange that, because each kind of participant often has her or his own passionately pursued goals, is frequently at cross-purposes.

Leaving this “unified theory-to-be” for another time (p. 27), Schechner isolates three key aspects of it: (1) the fact that play has *multiple realities*; (2) *dark play*, which “subverts order, dissolves frames, breaks its own rules, so that the playing itself is in danger of being destroyed, as in spying, con games, undercover actions, and double agency” (p. 36); and, (3) *generating performances*, the ontological processes which Schechner finds are “a recurrent theme connecting dark play, Western ideas of play,” and his powerful performance theory derived from the *maya-lila* (p. 39). “Indeed,” he says, “art and ritual, especially performance, are the homeground of playing. This is because the process of making performances does not so much imitate playing as epitomize it” (p. 41).

Schechner reviews in conclusion the nexus of circumstances that defines the human species, including “speech, bipedal locomotion, brain size and complexity, social organization,” and adds another broad category to the list: *performed dreams*. Dreaming is easily recognized as something that is simultaneously present and ancient as practice. It is another recall activity that is not exactly ritual but easily ritualized and embraced by ritual—liminality writ large, existing completely in a subjunctive “as if” world and taking “place between the clarity of reasoned thought and the confusion of lived and recollected experience” (p. 261), until or unless it is acted out (spoken, danced, sung, etc.). Acting it out changes its character by rupturing “the boundary between the virtual and the actual, a boundary animals (we presume) have no choice but to keep intact. Among people, the ‘as if’ of dreaming is by means of performance transformed into the ‘is’ of bodily actions” (p. 263), thereby making realities which are beyond appearance to the naked eye or external observer manifest through ritual enactment. In this manner dreaming “enters the social arena, the ritual-aesthetic sphere,” and “can be taught to others. It can be revised, combined, and transformed to accord with—or radically break from—tradition” (p. 263). “And,” he adds, “once the boundary between dreaming and doing is ruptured, all kinds of things—conceptual, fantastic, recollected—spill through in both directions. The quantity and quality of dreaming changes as do the kinds of performances

enacted—or played. The ‘playing’ [which he has proposed] as the ground of all human experience . . . is truly a dreamfield of unlimited possibilities” (p. 263).

DENING

Slipping the noose of “high history”—calculated on Great Men and Bigger Events—*Performance* puts history on the stage of Everyman and catches ritual in the script and the encore. Like Schechner’s, Denning’s volume is a collection of his essays, some new and some quite well known. “Possessing Tahiti,” set in the drama of crossing cultures, shows that cultural appropriation happens on both sides of the encounter equation. Not only did Europeans possess Tahiti but it possessed them in special ways. In “Sharks That Walk on Land” Denning addresses narratives that reveal something of “the historical consciousness of two cultures in the death of Captain Cook” (p. xiv). “Hollywood Makes History” concerns the filming of *Mutiny on the Bounty* and is strategic to Denning’s reflections on the “theatricality of history-making,” including ways of making history into theater (p. xv). Other essays engage a history of the rituals of war and the rituals needed in war in the context of the loss of classmates from Xavier in “School at War,” the multiple realities invested in the 1814 Battle of Valparaiso (the “story of how dramatising the past allowed men to kill one another” [p. xv]), and the celebration of ANZAC Day in Melbourne, in connection with which Denning notes poignantly that the “problem of history, of myths, of signs and symbols,” is that they “are all in time” and “cannot be set in stone or in gold. If one would catch them, see them culturally at work, one must catch their changing, their inventions, their attachment to a fluent present” (p. 226). This book—like Denning’s entire academic career—is dedicated to such a catching, notwithstanding the long shot that it has proven to be.

The remaining essays support this aim by rethinking some of the Mead/Freeman controversy as a bundle of performances, by reflecting on the implications of Bruce Chatwin’s mythic “Songlines” on the cultural intertwining of lives and landscapes in the seaways of Oceania, and by sharing an eloquent soliloquy on symbol, ritual, and disappointing change in the Mass from one of Denning’s Sundays in San Giacomo. There is history in that Sunday ritual experience, even if it is cut very close to the ground in Denning’s personalization of it (he is a former Jesuit priest). On the very Brechtian premise that all performance, “in life or in theater, produces performance consciousness” (p. xvi), and given that history making is locked into the performances of Everyman, Denning insists that “we history-makers must know ourselves,” that “we must have an ethnographic sense of our cultural persons” (p. 30) as historians, actors in the present, and as writers, performers of texts, and that we must experience our own performance consciousness as both an empathetic and an aesthetic avenue into the performances of others (p. 112). Knowing at the same time that “the past will not be replicated or re-

peated, but represented, shaped, staged, performed in some way other than it originally existed" (p. xiv), he says that it must be apprehended by bringing the past and the present together. In this sense "histories are public knowledge of the past that make a present" (p. 38). Like ritual, history in this sense is universal: "Knowledge of the past is expressed by all human beings according to their different cultural and social systems. History is a generic form of consciousness in which the past experience of oneself or of others in an environment outside of oneself is transformed into symbols that are exchanged" (p. 36). It is a form of public knowledge of the past that makes a present (p. 38). History tells us who we are. We reinvent ourselves by reinventing our histories.

Does the same hold for replaying rituals? Certainly ritual is a form of public knowledge that, in its doing, as Denning says, makes a present. But for Schechner ritual violence "is not a remembrance of things past." In terms of his theory of the "restoration of behavior" (p. 259)

the present moment is a negotiation between a wished-for future and a rehearsable, therefore changeable, past. History is always in flux; that is what makes it so like a performance. The mortgaged future is always death; the past is always life-as-remembered, or restaged. Individuals, all of whom will die, are assimilated into families, groups, religions, and ideologies which are putatively immortal. The stories these groups tell, their ritual enactments, concern temporary and uneasy triumphs over death.

In Denning's terms, they are ways of returning the past to its own present or, rather, "returning to the past those qualities of the present that it once possessed" (pp. xv-xvi). Creating the circumstances for that, of course, is also the classic entrée to performance and ritual. Ritual action is reinforcing, re-presenting, renewing, and original experience all wrapped in one—the truth of which is something that we cannot know through the telling but must experience in some way.

For Denning, "all relics of the past . . . are marked with the meanings of the occasion of their origins and they are always translated into something else for the moments they survive. Historical consciousness is always built out of that double meaning. History is always the past and the present bound together in the sparse and selected symbols that time throws up" (pp. 46-47)—textualized and narrated, it is an impersonation of sorts (p. 104). History in the pastoral *maya-lila* would seem to be exactly this kind of experience: past recalled to present and narrativized, reenacted, remembered, revived—behaved again. There is also a self-conscious mediation of these boundaries and agencies in the *puja*. So we have to ask again, Where—or what—is the *history in ritual*? The *ritual in history* is for Denning contained in "pre-senting" it, "re'pre'senting" it, writing it, and telling it, and knowing all the while that it is reinvented at the same time (p. xiv; see also Schechner, p. 233). The

process of ritualizing subject matter, theme, and form or structure for Schechner is found in recycling, reusing, archiving, and recalling—in performing in order "to be included in an archive"—in seeking roots, exploring and perhaps plundering "religious experiences, expressions, practices, and liturgies to make art" (Schechner, pp. 19-20)—and perhaps history?

CONCLUSIONS

For Humphrey and Laidlaw, as for Schechner, ritual is about saying and doing as an act of transforming. All three books demonstrate the value of careful and lengthy fieldwork that keeps its options open for analysis and conclusions. Obviously, not everything there is to say of consequence about this subject that seems to fascinate ethnographic fieldworkers, theater students, and theologians alike has been said. Rather than conceive of ritual as a set of rules or rubrics for culturally condensed behavior, Victor Turner saw it essentially as enactment and performance, thereby stretching a structural path for actors and academics alike from ritual to theater. Drama, we know, figures largely in our interpretations of ourselves—in the attempt to make sense of our significant and mysterious experiences and through such actions to mark the changing nature of the world and our place in it. There is always tension between the old and the new, between the already created and the emerging creations of life. Tradition is both affirmed and put at risk, but ritual aims more at containment and refreshed respect for things past than at revolution. And it does not necessarily preclude great creativity. Self-centered in action, ritual is sometimes singular in the sense of being performed by individuals irrespective of other observers; it is sometimes played out in whole groups of actors without additional audiences; and it is sometimes confined to the classic form of actors who play explicitly for audiences other than themselves. But it is all "twice-behaved," as Schechner says, if not scriptable. It is nowhere socially equalized but everywhere socially constrained and contingent—culturally constituted in different ways. It is also everywhere meaningful, but that is not to deny variation even in the repetition of what is apparently the same act by the same individual in what may appear to be the same physical and cultural context.

Humphrey and Laidlaw ask us to look anew at the problems of intentionality and meaning in ritual and especially at the process of ritualizing itself. Given its universal possibilities, how do we employ this process as individuals and cultures? What can be ritualized? Certainly history as it is given in texts. Schechner steers us through his vast cross-cultural experiences to the overtracking of play, ritual, and theater and to the global importance of learning to enact (and reenact) our dreams. Denning insinuates history and text into the conversation about performance, ritual, and theater in new ways, and reading him in this context raises the question of what counts as history in ritual. Humphrey, Laidlaw, and Schechner might have used the term "his-

tory" for much that they have described in otherwise historical terms. The point is more than semantic and has its own history in studies of ritual and culture change. My part is to ask what the rituals of history making (acting it out, writing it up) are as compared with, say, the particular cultural histories calculated in ritual as "twice-behaved" behavior. What is actually represented as history in ritual, and what does it mean? Does that shed any light on the ways we have traditionally thought of myth and its relation to ritual? On myth and history? On Sahlins's theory of practice, which puts performative tradition at the heart of history making?

Given the emphasis on ritual time and memory expressions in these works, another angle might be to expand the inquiry under the rubric of the culture of mnemonics, of which all forms of history and ritual calculations are a part. Large-mindedness has always been an anthropological strength, and the present works certainly lean in that direction. They all seek some purchase on the universal qualities of ritual. The wider net has the advantage of opening up new comparative territory, ideally with the goal of illuminating a more complete and coherent set of particulars on the original topic. The disadvantage, of course, returning the larger sweep of knowledge preservation and resurrection devices to ritual per se (let alone the concept of history), is that we may end up just dumping more mud in the swirl of this already enormously complicated subject matter. Clarity may lie elsewhere. For now, it can be said of the present works that they give us the benefit of discovery processes that transcend answers already stored: new questions from old contexts, old questions resurrected in new frames. Their combined narrative amounts to more history of the practice of ritual and a provocative platform for additional research.

Marriage and Other Kinds of Political Participation

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Avenues of Participation: Family, Politics, and Networks in Urban Quarters of Cairo. By D. Singerman. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995. 335 pp.

Avenues of Participation begins by posing a series of central questions addressed primarily to political scientists. Their significance, however, is far more general. Under repressive conditions, Singerman asks, where do we place the locus of politics, and how are we to understand the meaning of political participation (p. 5)? Justly criticizing political scientists either for their general

inattention to nonelite classes or for theorizing the latter out of the political life of societies altogether, she clearly articulates the reasons for this state of affairs.

She points to a number of concepts and theories in political science to explain why the dynamics of political action and participation always seem to lie somewhere between the state, state-sanctioned political institutions, and the machinations of the elite classes. For example, the highly problematic but long-standing emphasis on the centrality of intentionality, definitions of "action" and "collective" emanating from rational-choice theory, and the equally problematic dichotomy between the "public" and "private" realms have tended to prevent serious consideration of the role of nonelite classes. The latter, their struggles for reproduction, and the consequences of such struggles for the nation and for its political present and future have been deemed either marginal or insignificant. Not surprisingly, therefore (p. 4),

Whenever there is an outbreak of political expression despite authoritarianism, whether in the form of a demonstration, a strike, sabotage, dissident writing, interest group activity, or a social movement, analysts scramble to understand those in the popular sector and their demands. Visible and direct resistance is noticed, yet these same political forces predate and postdate demonstrations

"Scramble" is apt, since the conditions of possibility for political (including artistic) expression under authoritarian regimes have for the most part eluded understanding, let alone solid theorization. A very good example of this scramble may be seen in many of the writings on the Iranian revolution of 1979—the overthrow of an all-powerful regime by mass demonstrations. The theoretical apparatus of the social sciences seems regularly to fail when it comes to explaining massive political changes brought about by the actions of nonelite classes living under authoritarian states.

Along with that of the popular classes, Singerman argues, the role of women has been left out of political science studies. Among its other accomplishments, *Avenues of Participation* unravels and illuminates the multiple roles of women and men in the larger community and vis-à-vis each other as marriage partners, siblings, and parents.

In setting up her theoretical framework, she undercuts the rigid line drawn between political behavior and individual self-interest and argues for the crucial role of extrasystemic, "informal," illegal or quasi-legal activities that nonelite classes engage in for the purposes of reproduction. Parallel distribution markets, prayers, charity to the poor, networking, and so on, are simultaneously acts of self-interest and articulations of individual and collective political interest—their categorization as one or the other ignores the "complex motivations that influence behavior" (p. 7).

A main theme of *Avenues of Participation* is that struggles to obtain the "basic needs" of any given community are inseparable from and often the same as more

“visibly” political acts. Singerman therefore focuses on efforts in reproducing the family: obtaining (subsidized) food, housing, and education, finding a job and a mate. On the significance of finding marriage partners, she writes (p. 15):

While this goal might not seem to be political in nature, to the *sha'b* [nonelite, popular classes] and to most Egyptians, both urban and rural, the struggle to marry off the younger generation is the largest economic struggle they face in their lifetimes. . . . it is one of the most important issues around which “low politics” is centered.

In chapters 2 and 3, Singerman undertakes an extended and admirably detailed examination of the processes that families engage in to make their reproduction possible. She argues successfully against assigning the family only to the “private” realm: not only do a variety of networks “connect” it to the bureaucracy and “local private and public institutions” but the contest over “resources, power, and legitimacy” itself centers on “redrawing the boundaries” between the two realms (p. 45). Among the many original data offered in this study, chapter 2 provides tables of itemized marriage expenses for a man, a woman, a “typical trousseau,” and a comparison of the dowries of a mother and her five daughters, each of whom married sometime between 1947 and 1985. These are also data fit for all kinds of social histories because of the details offered on, for example, clothing (three pajamas, five robes, four bras, two sets of Chinese slippers, etc.), appliances, furniture, kitchenware, linens, and so on (pp. 112–19).

On the more sober side, the ratio of the capital required to marry to the income of families and their other expenses makes clear what an astonishingly difficult proposition marriage has become, in part because of the Open Door Policy introduced by Sadat in 1974. With “typical earnings” of EL100 to EL150 for men and EL60 for women per month, a marriage at an “average cost” of EL15,000 would seem all but impossible. Yet people do marry, and Singerman discusses in very interesting detail, with many personal stories and anecdotes, the kinds of efforts that are expended on the part of the bride and the groom and their families to accumulate the necessary capital (see esp. pp. 121–26). What is crucial to her argument is that these efforts result in the creation of institutions and networks that have an influence on the national economy and politics of Egypt.

For instance, when people need a large sum in order to pay key money to obtain an apartment or buy a piece of land or a taxi or embark on a new business venture, they participate in savings associations (*gama'iyyaat*) that are outside of the banking system. Singerman offers three “crude estimates” of “assets of informal savings associations throughout Egypt” (p. 129) the lowest of which shows the level to be 35% of gross domestic savings—clearly a substantial amount. This money does not circulate in the banking system, and hence “the state’s capacity to extract surplus revenue from its citizens is somewhat complicated by *gama'iyyaat*”

(p. 130). The consequences of such acts (intended or not) also reduce the control of the state in the housing sector and in the continuous settlement of new outlying areas of the city (p. 131):

Businesses and trade are not regulated, taxes are not collected, and the community develops its own mechanisms of law enforcement and arbitration. The growth of illegal settlements and communities, due in part to the seemingly innocuous “social” goal of reproducing the family, presents a political and economic predicament, if not challenge, to the Egyptian state.

The conceptual gain in calling the networks that families rely on for their reproduction “informal” remains unclear. The suffix “informal” is added to almost any activity that the nonelite classes engage in. Networking of the kind Singerman describes cuts across the ruling and nonruling classes in Egypt. The building of networks is by definition rather unregulatable. In a similar vein, since the “informal economy” is part of the “formal economy” and regulating either is for the most part a matter of degree (as exemplified by the experiences of the shoemaker who is extensively quoted on pp. 207–27), the label creates a category whose distinctness is questionable. In fact, the illuminating case of the shoemaker comes under the section heading “Informality Meets the State.” If it is the case that the “state is linked to its citizens by informal as well as formal political institutions” (p. 40), then what makes some networks, economic, and political activities “informal”? Singerman’s thesis on the untenable distinction between self-interest and political action and her call for consideration of a wider range of political interests and for more nuanced analyses of state-society relations would be better served without the continuous recourse to “informality.”

The theoretical challenges the book poses, combined with its solid fieldwork, make it a significant contribution to Middle Eastern studies and to political theory. *Avenues of Participation* is a successful example of cross-disciplinary research.

Human Attractiveness Dressed Up in Neo-Darwinian Chic

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Physical Attractiveness and the Theory of Sexual Selection. By Doug Jones. Ann Arbor: Museum of Anthropology Publications, University of Michigan, 1996. 174 pp.

Biologists and anthropologists have long observed that many animals, when given a choice, select as mates in-

dividuals with particularly pronounced attributes, viz., a bright-red breast, long tail, or large antlers. Of course, many animals have no such obvious preferences, selecting either fortuitously or by other criteria (such as similarity to self). For those animals that do appear to select mates on the basis of particular attributes, biologists entertain three explanatory hypotheses. These are that the preferred attribute is (1) an indicator of genetic superiority that will be transmitted to offspring, providing them with some kind of competitive advantage; (2) an indicator of phenotypic superiority that will increase the likelihood of mating success (for example, if a certain characteristic represents a low parasite load, the mate might be better able to assist in feeding young); or (3) a reflection of a sensory bias, that is, a fortuitous preference for a certain attribute due to causes not directly related to reproductive fitness. These three hypothetical explanations are not mutually exclusive, and therefore tests are problematic. Add to this, in human populations, the complicating factor of abiding social forms that operate as another selective pressure and the whole question of sexual selection becomes, unsurprisingly, quite controversial.

Doug Jones's *Physical Attractiveness and the Theory of Sexual Selection* seeks to discover whether humans display any regular mate preferences and, if so, how these preferences can best be explained. He begins with an encyclopedic but uncritical and somewhat confused review of the current issues in sexual selection, leading the reader to expect much more than any research project could ever deliver. The research he actually reports, however, in a field known for bitter polarities between biological and cultural points of view, while preliminary and carefully hedged, does bring us one hesitant step down a new and possibly more promising path.

The body of the book is a report on original anthropological research undertaken among various populations: three different Brazilian populations, U.S. college students, Russian graduate students, and native groups in Paraguay and Venezuela. The results do not answer any of the questions posed so bravely at the beginning of the volume, nor do they justify some of the overly confident claims made in the course of the argument (for example, that humans possess an "innate template" of the preferred face [p. 128]). The conclusions, at least, are honestly modest: the author resists the impulse to parade a favorite theory and instead offers the reader a small cluster of significant findings that, in the final analysis, do not justify the adaptationist explanation that he seeks.

Jones has attempted to incorporate the significance of social organization into his research to a greater extent than many others in his field, but in the end he fails to bring the evidence he cites into his theory. For example, he dismisses the significance of arranged marriages with no explanation. He is to be commended for addressing the significance of political dominance and theories of race in relation to standards of physical beauty, but he weakly refers to "surrounding cultural values" (p. 144) and suggests that "culture overrides

more typical responses" (p. 98), implying but not stating that some values (but which?!) are not embodied in individuals in the same way as his imputed "human nature." Perhaps in his future work he will be bold enough to abandon archaic dualisms as well as the assumption that a disciplined investigation of social factors threatens rather than operates in conjunction with the theory of natural selection.

For biologists the book will have disappointments as well. Jones is exploring whether sexual selection operates among humans or not, and it is clear that he believes it must. He seeks his proof in how various people value and rate physical beauty in one another. For example, he finds that attractiveness (as judged by the opposite sex) declines with age more rapidly for females than for males and that males are attracted to neotenous female faces but females are not attracted to neotenous male faces. This information may suggest that neotenous faces will be selected for among females, but no evidence is given on this question. Jones uses the information to imply that men may have been selected to prefer neotenous faces, but this is just one of a number of possible explanations, and he gives us no reason to choose his adaptationist view over other ones. Most seriously, Jones never ascertains whether physical attractiveness, however defined, is actually correlated with mate choice and reproduction. This is a crucial piece of the puzzle, and without it all the data in the world on what people find attractive have no bearing on theories of selection.

In the end, Jones's efforts call simplistic adaptationism into question and challenge assumptions about an individualistic, noncultural "human nature" perhaps more than he would like. It is to his credit that he has not tried to explain this away but has instead offered us openings for more effective models.

Egalitarian Ideology and Hierarchy in Japanese Unions

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Japanese Workers in Protest: An Ethnography of Consciousness and Experience. By Christena L. Turner. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. 268 pp.

Japanese Workers in Protest takes us into the little-known world of Japanese company labor unions and shows us some of the day-to-day events in two specific unions' efforts in the early 1980s to reopen bankrupt companies under worker control. On the basis of fieldwork at two Tokyo union-run companies—"Unikon Camera," a small camera manufacturing firm that

had achieved worker control in 1980, and “Universal Shoes,” a small shoe company that was still in mid-struggle at the time of her fieldwork in the early 1980s—Christena Turner argues for an understanding of Japanese union activity as founded less on explicit ideological commitments, class consciousness, or political activism (particularly of union leaders) than on the ambivalent, tentative, and fluid daily thoughts, actions, and work of rank-and-file members. This is what she means by “an ethnography of consciousness and experience”; as she writes in the introduction, “Class consciousness and solidarity are built out of experience as much as out of ideology, and the motivation to protest is sustained in anger over threats to unexamined, commonsense assumptions about human dignity as often as in discursively debated issues of workers’ rights” (p. 18). Deriving theoretical inspiration from Bourdieu and Giddens, among others, Turner argues for a processual understanding of human action, expressed among her informants as a sense that “things don’t quite add up” (*warikirenai*). She explains (p. 19):

Warikirenai, the inability to resolve things clearly once and for all, becomes more than the verbal sigh at the end of a long confusing conversation, a frustrating union meeting, or an exhausting and unsuccessful negotiation session. It becomes a theoretical starting point for analysis, suggesting that consciousness and action be seen through a temporal dimension. It is the unfinished, processual nature of social life which constitutes experience for most people most of the time.

The seven remaining chapters of the book attempt, with varying degrees of success, to provide snapshots of particular moments in the evolution of worker consciousness through meetings, trips, demonstrations, and work.

In chapter 2, Turner briefly sketches the history of Unikon union labor disputes with management and then follows some of the union members through their participation in Sōkōdō, the immense, all-day joint labor demonstration that takes place four times a year in the financial districts of Tokyo. Noting the ambivalences and inconsistencies that characterized members’ participation, she observes that their anger derived less from abstract concepts of economic injustice than from a highly personalized sense of injured dignity as human beings. The skill of union leaders lay in “weaving the threads of heartfelt offense against human dignity and ideological protest into collective actions” (p. 64). In chapter 3, Turner demonstrates the ways in which the union leadership uses organized trips to draw members together through affective ties and feelings of solidarity. Describing a trip to Nikkō, a local resort, she shows how such trips establish closeness while maintaining hierarchy, enacting the contradictions of the workers’ daily experience. Chapter 4 explores a direct example of such contradictions, the discovery by the rank-and-file members that immediately after gaining control of the company the union leadership had unilaterally decided

to relocate and restructure the company without their knowledge or consent. A direct betrayal of the democratic and egalitarian decision-making principles that had prevailed throughout the previous years of struggle, this decision produced widespread disappointment and disillusionment, especially among women workers, many of whom were summarily dismissed. Workers responded with resignation, but, as Turner shows, here as in other spheres of Japanese life, resignation is “not passive, easy, or equivalent to ‘doing nothing’” (p. 140) but an active choice and a form of self-discipline and protest lived in the complexity of daily life.

Chapters 5 and 6 turn to Universal Shoes to show how worker consciousness in this company is formed through the staging of union ideals through participation in an annual meeting and in the Sōkōdō demonstration mentioned above. Again, Turner shows the competing motivations, conflicting personal histories, and “calculated acquiescences” that inspire fluid and inconsistent worker commitment to the stated union ideals of democracy and egalitarianism. Noting the deep silence of the Universal rank-and-file in the face of leader’s speeches and exhortations to “speak up,” Turner observes that for Universal workers “silence . . . was itself a statement” (p. 231). As at Unikon, egalitarian ideologies came into direct conflict with real organization hierarchy, and the result was a certain cynical apathy among the workers. This did not affect their pride in their work, however: chapter 7 attempts to show the daily work routines of Universal workers and the sharing of skills and labor in the making of a single pair of shoes. Partly because of this shared artisanal pride, perhaps, the union sustained more of its egalitarian ideals after gaining control of the company than did Unikon by becoming a wholly legal workers’ cooperative, one of only 300 throughout Japan (p. 244). What the experiences of both union-run companies demonstrate, however, as Turner argues in chapter 8, is that in Japan, decisive collective action is created “with some decidedly uncollected thoughts” (p. 248).

This book is valuable because it is the first to shed ethnographic light on this extremely important sphere of Japanese society. Much of the ethnographic material here is fascinating, and parts of it should be required reading in any course on Japan to counterbalance the anthropological overemphasis on Japanese white-collar business environments. The text as a whole, however, is disappointing, primarily because of its writing and organization. Turner’s almost constant use of passive sentence structure renders the most interesting observations flat. Given her theoretical emphasis on agency, it is ironic that her writing removes agency from her informants at almost every turn. This problem is exacerbated by a tendency to psychologize: she continually tells us what her informants were thinking without allowing them to speak for themselves. In the words of an old English professor of mine, she “tells rather than shows,” and her arguments are weakened by a dependence on abstractions such as “experience” and “consciousness” without the tangible physical details and

direct quotes, conversations, and characterizations that render these concepts vivid and real in actual individuals' lives. One of the most effective chapters is the short chapter 7, "Working as Protest," in which Turner evocatively but too briefly sketches some of the sights and sounds of the factory floor. This chapter contains a perhaps unintentionally funny moment, when the author recounts how one of the artisan shoemakers at Universal, Kanda-san, "one day confessed that he couldn't tell me much about 'consciousness' but he was confident he could teach me anything I wanted to know about making shoes" (p. 228). I feel sure that we all could learn a great deal more about work, protest, and commitment from listening to Kanda-san talk about grains and glue than about "consciousness" and "solidarity" and only wish that the text had given us that opportunity.

In sum, however, *Japanese Workers in Protest* is an important contribution to the field of Japanese studies. It goes far toward breaking down the still stereotypical image of the docile, complacent (and white-collar) Japanese worker and adds a great deal to our understanding of protest, agency, and labor in contemporary Japan. In conjunction with other recent workplace ethnographies, it provides a much more nuanced picture of Japanese business practices than was previously available in English.

A Macrosociological Approach to Tourism

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Leisure Migration: A Sociological Study of Tourism.
By József Böröcz. New York: Pergamon, 1996.

In *Leisure Migration*, József Böröcz, a member of the Institute for Political Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Science, proposes a novel politico-economic, macrosociological approach to tourism, conceiving of tourists as migrants who differ from other strangers "by *not* performing income earning activities while away from home" (p. 7). Böröcz argues that approaching tourism as a form of migration provides its study "with a point of reference—the literature on labor migration and refugee flows" (pp. 7–8). He seeks to rephrase the basic themes of the study of labor migration for the study of leisure migration. Leisure migration is conceived as mediated by "a transnationally organized institutional structure, the tourism industry" (p. 12), which also constitutes the key institutional link between tourists and locals (p. 7). The tourism industry thus becomes the focus of Böröcz's study. In his view, tourism is not just any travel

for leisure but a standardized, normalized, and commercialized form of leisure travel which emerges and flourishes under capitalism. The tourist industry is therefore "inextricably intertwined with . . . industrial capitalism" (p. 29); it is, in fact, the institutional form of "travel-capitalism." Central to this approach is the claim that the "essence of the tourism business is control over tourist experience and [over] the flow of travel-related commodities, capital and currencies by managing [travel] services on a commercial basis" (p. 151). In industrial tourism, global diversity therefore becomes a product. The main thrust of the book consists of an examination of the origins of tourism as an institution and of the major macrosociological economic and political factors which have shaped the structure of leisure migration flows.

By an ingenious analysis of the history of mental maps of Europe emerging from guidebooks and of the first use of the concepts "tourist," "tourism," and "touristic" in European languages, Böröcz shows that leisure migration was institutionalized in Western Europe earlier than in Eastern Europe and that its spread "reproduces structural patterns of the uneven development of industrial capitalism" (p. 48). Contrary to the widely held opinion that tourists seek to escape from the industrially developed cores to the less developed periphery, he finds a strong correlation between tourism and industrial capitalism, which created the infrastructure necessary to support leisure migration on a large scale. Core-to-core travel is the dominant form of leisure migration.

While Böröcz's argument is a general one, it is illustrated by an extensive historical case study of Austrian and Hungarian tourism. In that effort he is much assisted by his intimate knowledge of recent Hungarian economic and political history and by his mastery of sources in the Hungarian language, which render his analysis of interest to anyone concerned with the dynamics of Eastern European societies under "state socialism" even as they serve to explain the dynamics of Hungarian tourism. He finds that within the Austro-Hungarian empire there were "grave regional inequalities [in tourism development], approximately along the lines of unequal development of late 19th-century Central European capitalism" (p. 62). Tourism development in the Hungarian part of the empire and in the dowager state of Hungary was later and slower than in its Austrian counterpart. This difference persisted up to the 1990s despite the cataclysmic events and changes in regimes which the region underwent during the modern period.

Böröcz bases his macrosociological analysis of the structure of international tourist flows primarily on the uneven development between states; this analysis is further refined by a consideration of the different socio-political blocks into which the European interstate system was split after World War II. Austria and Hungary again provide an enlightening example: Böröcz shows how the composition of incoming tourism from Western and Eastern Europe to these two countries changed

after the war as a consequence of neutral Austria's association with the West and Hungary's membership in the Soviet-dominated Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA). Particularly enlightening is his analysis of the distinction in leisure migration to Hungary between tourism from other Eastern European countries, based on intergovernmental administrative and political arrangements, and tourism from Western countries, based on economic considerations. As a relatively liberal and developed Eastern country, Hungary enjoyed favorable terms of trade with other state-socialist countries, for whose citizens it became a surrogate destination to the West; its terms of trade with the West were unfavorable, but it sought to attract Western tourists as a source of "hard currencies." Böröcz's description of the dependency of Hungary on both world blocks and its manifestation in the complex formal and informal activities of both state and private tourist enterprises in the course of the gradual erosion of Hungarian state socialism is one of the most enlightening sections of the book.

Throughout the book the author effectively employs relatively simple quantitative historical data on absolute and relative tourism flows between European states and destinations to support his macrosociological analysis. He gets to a more concrete local level only towards the end of the book, where he illustrates his analysis of Hungarian tourism with two pertinent case studies taken from his own research. There is thus little of direct relevance in this work for anthropologists except for an insightful analysis of the wider frameworks which structure the specific local situations and micro-processes that they study. His brief consideration of "weak ties" between persons which have fostered tourism between states belonging to different sociopolitical blocks is one example of possible linkage between macrosociological and anthropological approaches.

Böröcz's exemplary study of the historical development of tourism in Austria and Hungary most effectively bears out his general argument. It would be interesting to inquire whether his analytical framework would be equally effective for the analysis of the macrostructure of leisure migration in other parts of the world, such as Southeast Asia, where states at different levels of capitalist development and belonging to different sociopolitical blocks also coexist.

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