

Culture



Anya PETERSON ROYCE, *Ethnic Identity, Strategies of Diversity*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1982. 247 pages (paper)

Robert Paine

Volume 3, Number 1, 1983

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1084177ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1084177ar>

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Publisher(s)

Canadian Anthropology Society / Société Canadienne d'Anthropologie (CASCA), formerly/anciennement Canadian Ethnology Society / Société Canadienne d'Ethnologie

ISSN

0229-009X (print)

2563-710X (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Paine, R. (1983). Review of [Anya PETERSON ROYCE, *Ethnic Identity, Strategies of Diversity*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1982. 247 pages (paper)]. *Culture*, 3(1), 142–143. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1084177ar>

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narratives to ask, “did they get this, this, THIS?” If carriers of folklore project into their expressive arts, so of course do folklorists. Alan Dundes is basic Freud. How does it happen that Freud got so fixed on his mother? Surely the more interesting incest would have been with the sister. That, it seems, has been a preoccupation of the Mediterranean world—the SISTER’s virginity. It is not to my knowledge recorded that many knifed others to defend their mother’s virginity... And how does Dundes remain so male chauvinist despite proclamations against male chauvinism? Witness: “In American culture, in contrast [to the children taking pride in their parents’ achievements and boasting of their ancestors], it is the parents who boast of their children’s accomplishments, while the children may actually consider it a disadvantage to be the *son of a famous father* (my emphasis)” (p. 81). What of: (1) the daughter of a famous father; (2) the daughter of a famous mother (*cf. Mommy Dear*); (3) the son of a famous mother; (4) the sister of a famous mother; (5) the brother of a famous sister...? The possibilities go on.

To sum up: Alan Dundes is a *seminal* thinker. In addition, he is fun to read, writes well and has a good if at times ancient bibliography at his fingertips. He does not change his angle very much: he discovered Freud 20 years ago and has not budged since. He has invented more gunpowder. But, it seems, we need enough of it to keep us aware, averted, and awed. Every field needs its cadflies, and Alan Dundes has taken on the role.

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About virgin mothers: in the purely Canadian application of the principle, there was a family consisting of:

an old father,
a virgin mother,
a child born on Christmas day

But then they overdid it: two years later they had another child born on Christmas day. This was considered hybris, so the holy family fell apart. After all, even God had only one son on Christmas.

+ + +

Second though about the virgin birth: for Christians it is surely a simple criterion of Christ’s divinity. The Trobrianders think in an exactly parallel fashion except that for them the dividing line is not between divinity and humanity, but between humanity and animality: people, in their dogma, are conceived from ancestors while pigs and other animals are conceived in sexual relationships.

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Slightly annoying, in a collection of essays, is the fact that their format has not been made to conform. Thus, Dundes talks of Jesus’ biography in the style of American Anthropologist but of the other topics in the style of the Modern Language Society. Can it be that the AA is more divine than the rest?

Anya PETERSON ROYCE, *Ethnic Identity, Strategies of Diversity*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1982. 247 pages (paper).

By Robert Paine
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In the Introduction, Peterson Royce warns (or encourages?) her readers that they “will be forced to engage in creative reflection and analysis” as she pursues her aim of presenting “theories and analyses that reflect the eclecticism and contrasts that characterize the phenomenon of ethnic identity” (p. 13); further, her book will “revolve around the three factors of power, perception, and purpose” (p. 3); she also spots in advance for us certain key “contrasts” (or “oppositions” or “dichotomies”) that will emerge. These are between institutions and individuals, ethnic content and boundary, the material and the ideological, persistence and change; and “the final and most important contrast is between ‘us’ and ‘them’” without which “ethnic identity does not exist” (pp. 6-13). There follow 8 chapters arranged in four Parts; first, I will comment briefly on each of the Parts.

In Part One, “Definitional Debates and Theoretical Backgrounds”, the author claims to have shown how “models and theories [of ethnicity] were related to trends in the social sciences in general” and “demonstrated the relationship between theory-building and the situations in which theorists are working” (p. 50). While this claim strikes me as much inflated, I am grateful for her discussion of Edward Spicer’s view of ethnicity (pp. 44-49).

Part Two considers colonialism, nationhood and immigration as “the most important larger contexts” of ethnicity over the last two hundred years (pp. 140-41). Inevitably, treatment is over-compressed; this means that (save one possibility to which I return) the book suffers (also in other chapters) from a basic fault in design. For far from engaging in creative reflection, readers are likely to be held to the summarizing, narrative surface of things. Nonetheless, I was grateful for the discus-

sion of nationhood — it introduced me to issues that I now have little excuse for not following up.

Part Three moves closer to the individual (*contra* institution); discussion centres upon symbols, styles and stereotyping, and it is firmly stressed how “ethnic identity at its core involves negotiation within constraints” (p. 214). On symbols, the author stays close to Abner Cohen and I found her (which is not to say Cohen) rather dull; but she is decidedly more interesting in her remarks about the importance of style over tradition (p. 147) and of stereotypes as “programs for action” (pp. 158-59). These matters are also kept in focus for a while through her own Zapotec (especially Juchitan) field data (pp. 169-83). A bonus of this discussion — and of ethnicity as process: the issue that we should never take leave of — is the way it is related to Rosabeth Kanter’s research into tokenism or “token” persons (pp. 195-200).

Finally, Part Four is a short concluding chapter called “Myth & Reality”. I find it flawed, epistemologically. It opens on a misplaced note of despair about how “separating the myth from the reality seems a hopeless task” (p. 219), as though the one should be divorced of reality and the other uncontaminated by myth — and it is ethnicity that we are investigating. The blight of such literal-minded positivism also affects the discussion (very summary) of ethnicity and religious movements, ethnicity and class: here it is as though they are ‘rival’ forces that exclude each other, instead of different rhetorics of value and different principles of aggregation which can be found in various combinations.

What of the book as a whole? Considering the amount of attention we, in anthropology, pay to ethnicity these days, our writings rest upon an alarmingly narrow selective base of theory — it is common for a reference to Fredrick Barth or Abner Cohen to suffice as the sole navigating light; also alarming is our small measure of familiarity with issues (and comparative data, for that matter) handled by political scientists. I am saying that the anthropological treatment of ethnicity today should include a cross-disciplinary dimension, as well as the cross-cultural one which has traditionally distinguished our discipline. The present book goes some way in putting this right: Anya Peterson Royce informs us over a relatively wide register.

But it takes some determination to stay with her to the end: the enterprise that fired her imagination (pp. 1-13) does not really come off. Power, perception and purpose — those three key concepts — amount to so-much ‘scaffolding’: every writer needs some while ‘building’ his (her) book but should it be left there for readers to scramble over?

Treatment of those key “contrasts” turns out to be rather flat. Intellectually, the book is on the timid (over-orthodox) side. But to write about what I believe could have been tackled, would be to put aside reviewing the book that is...

As an introductory text — which I suspect is something rather less grand than the contribution the author herself had in mind — it is more acceptable; and it is as a textbook that its compression — and its statements of basics and its ‘modules’ of ethnography — is a defensible design. But, in that case, it is important students be told that scholars such as Evans-Pritchard and Erving Goffman (unusual for him to be pushed off front-stage) had more than a bit to do with ideas that are here identified with a generation that followed them.

T.O. BEIDELMAN, *Colonial Evangelism: A Socio-Historical Study of an East African Mission at the Grassroots*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1982. 273 pages, US \$29.95 (cloth), US \$10.00 (paper).

By John Barker
University of British Columbia

Missionaries have been by far the largest single group of Westerners to live in close proximity to peoples of cultural traditions alien to their own, particularly during the past two hundred years. It is therefore surprising that, given the obvious importance of understanding the work of missionaries in any detailed assessment of change in Third World countries, so little has been written about missions at the local level. In *Colonial Evangelism* T.O. Beidelman attempts to fill this gap by documenting some aspects of the mutual adjustment of a mission and an African people to each other over time.

Members of the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.), an Anglican organization, began to set up stations amongst the Kaguru people in 1879 in what was soon to become the German colony of Tanganyika (now Tanzania). Beidelman gives a brief account of the early fortunes of the mission and its subsequent development in the context of a colonial society. His chief concern, however, is to set out an analysis of the everyday activities and problems of a small isolated mission. Among other things, he discusses staffing and funding problems in the mission, the participation of missionaries in “secular” social activities (education and medicine), and the attitudes of missionaries towards traditional