

Culture



Bruce KAPFERER, *A Celebration of Demons: Exorcism and the Aesthetics of Healing in Sri Lanka*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983. 238 pages, US \$32.50 (cloth), US \$18.50 (paper)

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[See table of contents](#)

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graphie qui n'en finit pas de véhiculer des explications superficielles, dont celle du sous-développement gaspésien supposément attribuable à une mentalité trop traditionnelle.

J'ai trouvé dans ce chapitre des considérations fort éclairantes pour mes propres études sur l'endettement des Inuit dans le cadre des opérations de la compagnie de la Baie d'Hudson. Il n'y a là rien de surprenant, puisque les compagnies Hyman et de la Baie d'Hudson ne sont que deux facettes parfois bien analogues de l'expansionnisme marchand européen en direction des territoires de l'Amérique, un parallèle auquel Samson fait brièvement allusion dans la conclusion de son ouvrage, et qui ouvre un horizon intéressant vers d'éventuelles comparaisons à faire entre la structure d'organisation et la dynamique d'opération des différentes compagnies marchandes dans ces territoires.

Cette étude de Samson, comme celle de Lepage, n'est qu'un premier effort approfondi pour tirer le maximum de faits d'analyse et d'interprétations de certains fonds d'archives dont on commence à peine à entrevoir toute la richesse. Il n'en constitue pas moins l'établissement d'une tradition dont il faudra tenir compte à l'avenir et dont devront s'inspirer tous ceux qui s'intéressent aux activités des compagnies marchandes, que ce soit en Gaspésie ou ailleurs.

Pour finir, quelques petites remarques bien ponctuelles, sur la « perspective d'anthropologie économique » dont se réclame l'auteur et sur la présentation de l'ouvrage. Je ne suis pas opposé à l'utilisation de l'anthropologie économique dans une étude du genre, bien au contraire. J'aurais souhaité cependant qu'on situe plus clairement le propos général du livre par rapport à cette sous-discipline de l'anthropologie et qu'on le fasse en référant à un corpus de littérature précis. Telle que présentée, la perspective est bien floue et ne permet pas de dire en quoi exactement cet ouvrage peut se réclamer de l'anthropologie.

Plusieurs des photographies qui illustrent le texte n'ont pas de mention d'attribution. Je crois donc, à moins de me tromper, qu'il s'agit de photographies provenant du fonds d'archives de la compagnie Hyman.

Une copie de la publication que j'ai vue entre les mains d'un collègue comportait une longue liste d'*errata*, qui n'apparaissait pas dans la copie expédiée à la revue *Culture*. J'estime que l'effort d'édition de l'ouvrage aurait pu être mieux soutenu et ce, même si c'est une publication gouvernementale. Il m'apparaît aussi que le choix de l'auteur de faire figurer son orientation théorique à la fin de son étude a été judicieux. L'ouvrage de Samson a en

effet toutes les chances d'être distribué à un très vaste public (y compris dans le parc Forillon même) et l'orientation théorique en aurait sans doute rebuté plusieurs. Rappelons enfin que l'ouvrage a été traduit et est disponible en anglais.

Bruce KAPFERER, *A Celebration of Demons: Exorcism and the Aesthetics of Healing in Sri Lanka*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983. 238 pages, US \$32.50 (cloth), US \$18.50 (paper).

By Rebecca Hagey
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How do aesthetic objects create experience in the direct experience of them? How do demons affect the mechanics of the self and how does this relate to the transformations performed and experienced in exorcism?

Bruce Kapferer has long been interested in meaning, signification, ritual, drama and the logic of structures and processes. In this book he asks how transformational efficacy is communicated and made part of the experience of participants in the rite of exorcism. He advances theoretical development of performance aesthetics in his empirical explication of Mahasona and other demon ceremonies among service caste (lower class and peasant) Sinhalese Buddhists around Galle in southern Sri Lanka. He credits Alfred Schutz (who had little to say about aesthetics per se) for his fundamental influence on this work. He continually references Mikel Dufrenne (*The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*. Trans. E.S. Casey et al. Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1973) and Victor Turner, who before his death wrote a succinct endorsement of Kapferer's study for the foreword.

Dufrenne has established a notion of form useful in per-FORM-ance studies that is concerned with how subjects experience meaning in response to an aesthetic stimulus and is also concerned with the logic of human relations and cultural systems. "The form is less the shape of an object than the shape of the system which the subject forms with the object, of that 'rapport with the world' which expresses itself unfailingly in us and is constitutive of both the object and subject" (Dufrenne, 1973: 231, quoted on page 181). After describing and explaining the systematic features of exorcism in the first seven chapters, Kapferer elaborates the organizational and symbolic aspects of music,

dance and comic drama in the final two chapters. These aesthetic productions (manipulations of time-space-reality) give form to the construction and destruction of demons in the ritual process, and give rise to the changed relations instrumental to the SYSTEM of form in the efficacious transformation to improved relations, identity, feeling and consciousness states. Changed relations are traced, not only between the victim, the exorcist, the participants and the demons (the object of aesthetic construction), but also between hypothetical parts of the victim's own being—self versus internalized other.

These last two chapters are the most important part of the book. Being a dualist at heart, Kapferer complements George Herbert Mead's "attitude of the other" and "generalized other" with "attitude of the subjective" and "generalized subjective": "To an extent, the patient in the ritual is denied everyday typifications and is prevented from having an objective self independent of the direct subjective experience of the demonic. ... This permits the patient to become submerged within a personal subjective reality indeed to withdraw, which is a widely reported feature of the trance process. ... This, of course must also mean that the individual will have no consciousness of other. ... Indeed the loss of a "me" and, therefore, the capacity to reflect, should also involve the loss of an "I". ... Without the objectification of the subjective there can be no "I". (pp. 200-202). He asserts specific dynamics for the "I" and "me" for three phases of demonic possession which achieve resolution through exorcism and the re-emergence of the generalized other.

Kapferer writes with conviction about going beyond the explanations of the Sinhalese themselves and about the value of semiotic, structural and phenomenological perspectives. He successfully addresses two etic questions: Why are demonic victims usually women? Why do the elite castes and middle class members scorn exorcism as a sign of social inferiority? He has provided good groundwork for the question "why does it persist in the service castes?"; and someone should pursue the economic study of this elaborate aesthetic production and its relation to subsistence and exchange systems between the service and other castes.

There is a disconcerting style of presentation in this book. Kapferer usually uses the mode "exorcists say that" and then goes on to describe what he has selected to make his point. He almost never quotes his informants directly. This is offset somewhat by his inclusion of a transcript of parts of an exorcism and segments of myth told about various demonic characters participating in the ritual dance.

Photographs from the collection of George and Marie-Claude Papigny help to bring to the book some of the magic and awesome spectacle of performance.

Yet one does not get from this work a sense of the actual experience of the Sinhalese who are compelled to seek exorcism. What one does get is the code executing ritual performance and I found that to be summed up best by Turner in the forward:

"For Sinhalese (not only the lower classes but the middle and upper classes too), reality is mapped by this determinate, asymmetrical ordering of invisible and visible entities, at whose obscure summit is the Buddha (though in a sense, he is outside all "chains of being" whatsoever in a locus of Absolute Nothingness—as the Kyoto School of Buddhist philosophy might define nirvanic emptiness). The "real" is hierarchical, in Kapferer's reading of Sinhalese thought. He argues that demons are masters of "illusion". They cause illness (both what Westerners might call "mental" and "physical" illness) by deluding human beings that they (the demons) occupy a higher place in the unalterable hierarchy of beings than they do, are in fact not demons but deities (who also possess the power of generating illusions, but only for some ultimately edifying purpose). Subversion of hierarchy is to substitute chaos for cosmos, illness for health, disorder for order, falsity for truth, pollution for purity, delusion for plain sensory evidence, vainglory for humility, solipsism for awareness of others, negation for affirmation of social interaction, and so on." (p. x).

So exorcism restores order and hierarchy and integrity of self for the victim. The value of the book is its exploration of the mechanics of the code at several levels as it is reformulated in the various stages of the ritual. Yet I find myself frustrated wading through an eclectic review of anthropological catechism... credos which are plausible when brought to bear on the abstract evidence but which seem unnecessary when the text is available, as in the case of the transcript of parts of the Dahaata paliya (eighteen presentations) comedy of demons or morning watch of the Mahasona. For me this text shrieks out with the horrors of poverty, pain and suffering, and hostility toward forces and persons constraining any escape from these injustices. Kapferer, wanting to advance beyond Obeyesekere's argument that comic relief around these issues provides some sort of catharsis, builds on notions of play frame (Bateson), antirite (Douglas) and inconsistency as the organizing principle of comedy (Handleman). By reducing the meaning of the text to a reflexivity regarding mundane life, it seems to me that Kapferer imposes on Sinhalese ritual the logic of western repressive mentality: "It is entirely appropriate to a reaggregational phase in

a transition rite of healing, a phase which is concerned both to effect a cure through the broadening of perspective on the world and to replace a patient into the movement and dynamic of daily life." (p. 210). On the other hand, a close interpretation of the text reveals a process of the exorcists acknowledging the powerlessness of life and venting all sorts of anguish and blasphemy against it. This seems a different process than the implied stiff-upper-lip-perspective-broadening one Kapferer claims. He does title the section anti-structure and repeats earlier observations about the demonic being a reflection of graft and corruption in the clergy together with a pervasive vulnerability for anyone to succumb to economic and political chaos and disorder, which ultimately can take its toll on the entire household unit.

In many ways this book is a monumental work bringing together many sources of Sri Lankan ethnography touching on the topic. I would not recommend it for undergraduates except for a select group of seniors. It tends to be tedious and repetitive and because it's woven like a fine tapestry, the entire thing has to be read.

Martyn HAMMERSLEY and Paul ATKINSON, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, New York: Tavistock Publications, 1983. 273 pages, \$15.50 (paper).

By Linda Hubbell
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These two British sociologists define ethnography as "participant observation" (p. 2), placing it in context as one of many available methodologies rather than as some separate and conflicting paradigm. The guiding concept of this book is reflexivity, i.e., recognition that researchers, their theories, and their methods are all situated in the social world. While this is a principle to which the average anthropologist often pays lip service, recognition of this truth and systematic incorporation of it into the processes of field research are two different things. The authors' presentation, however, makes the reader pay real attention to facets of social research where reflexivity has often been overlooked, aspects where such attention could actually increase the information derived from research; e.g., they suggest that problems of entry into the field be examined for analytic insights into the social structure of the target group. Parallel discussions concern reflexive approaches to inter-

viewing, the interpretation of documents, analysis, and write-up.

Their first chapter presents reflexivity as a way that "we can develop and test theory without placing reliance on futile appeal to empiricism, of either positivist or naturalist varieties" (p. 25). Chapter Two on research design covers various strategies for developing research problems and for choosing settings, samples, and contexts for study. More practical problems of access to research sites, rapport, and impression management are considered in the next two chapters, along with a brief discussion of the effects of the gender, age, and ethnicity of researchers. Chapters Five and Six take a reflexive approach to interviews, other insider accounts, and to documents ranging from diaries to bureaucratic records; e.g., the authors see interviews as participant observation. Recording, organizing, and analyzing data are described in the following two chapters, with emphasis on the reflexive integration of data collection, analysis, and theory-building. Finally, Hammersley and Atkinson review considerations in writing ethnography—styles of ordering the material and its relationship to intended audiences.

Although *Ethnography* was written mainly for sociological ethnographers, it has far wider application and could easily be used in an anthropology course. While excerpts from actual ethnographic research, which stud the book, come largely from the sociological literature on North America and Europe, anthropological research on complex Western societies is also represented. The book does not, however, use many examples from, nor address itself often to the practicalities of field work in simpler societies nor the Third World generally. The reader will find nothing here about research permits, interpreters, physical hardships, and the other exotic details with which anthropologists delight in regaling their students. Finally, this is not a "how-to" book; i.e., there is no discussion of things like constructing interview questions or types of sampling.

One thing I do find disturbing about Hammersley and Atkinson's book is their apparent endorsement of secret or deceptive research as legitimate, though not without difficulties. This acceptance seems to include, for example, deception to gain entry to the field (pp. 70-71), deception in the form of incognito participant observation (pp. 94-95), and techniques for writing fieldnotes during covert research (pp. 146-147). Also disturbing is the absence in the book of any systematic discussion of research ethics. Thus, the hesitation I might feel about using this book is not due to its sociological slant, but to my reluctance to expose my students to