

## Culture



**Diane BELL, *Daughters of the Dreaming*, Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1984. 297 pages, US \$14.50 (paper)**

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conférence de l'ASA, témoignait de son enthousiasme naissant pour l'analyse structurale et suggérait (peut-être inconsciemment à l'époque) la notion de lectures multiples du mythe. L'idée est certainement intéressante et a été largement reprise plus tard par Douglas et d'autres, mais elle ne trouve ici ni écho ni réponse.

Par contre, et enfin, le livre offre aussi six textes inédits qui témoignent encore une fois de l'agilité mentale et de la très grande culture anthropologique de l'auteur. À lui seul, le court texte sur les liens entre le cannibalisme, le travestissement rituel et la position sociale des femmes offre des pistes de recherche suffisantes à stimuler plusieurs projets. Et l'intuition que «... les mécanismes de la pensée mythique, confrontée à des circuits logiques trop complexes pour les faire fonctionner tous ensemble, consistent à brancher et à débrancher des relais» (p. 137) pourrait occuper pendant des années les passionnés d'intelligence artificielle. Un livre réunissant toutes ces intuitions, ces tâtonnements et ces très vagues projets que Lévi-Strauss n'a pu lui-même mener à terme au cours d'une carrière déjà chargée, aurait une valeur inestimable. Dans *Paroles données*, ces textes inédits occupent six brefs chapitres, ce qui ne justifie pas l'achat du livre, mais certainement la photocopie de ces quarante-huit pages.

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Diane BELL, *Daughters of the Dreaming*, Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1984. 297 pages, US \$14.50 (paper).

By Pauline Aucoin  
University of Toronto

In *Daughters of the Dreaming*, Diane Bell sets out to detail the world view of Aboriginal women of Central Australia as reflected in their ritual activities, belief system, values, perceived roles, and self-images. Her analysis draws upon eighteen months of field research conducted intermittently between 1976 and 1980 at Warrabri — a government administrative settlement in Northern Territory, and upon work carried out for Aboriginal Land Councils.

As an introduction to this analysis, a brief 'ethnography of fieldwork' is provided. In relating her initial observations of and reactions to women's ritual performances, Bell conveys a sense of the excitement felt upon experiencing the 'otherness' of Aboriginal women's lives. An overview of the history of Aboriginal/Euro-Australian contact in

Central Australia is then provided. For this overview, secondary sources and life-history accounts, collected while in the field, are relied upon. Bell's summary focusses upon the violence, abuse, and atrocities perpetrated by European colonizers during the early 1900's — a period remembered by Aborigines as 'the killing time' (69). Contact saw the usurpation of land, destruction of resources, and the desecration of Aboriginal sacred sites. While Bell notes that this period of contact also saw the erosion of Aboriginal women's status, she argues that women have nonetheless retained much of their independence, importance, and rights within their society.

The independence of women is evidenced for Bell by the presence of women's camps, or 'jimili'. These camps serve both as centres from which women's activities and ritual are organized, and as 'repositories' for the knowledge and heritage of women (110). It is primarily from within the context of these camps that Bell has documented the nature of these women's lives.

Bell rejects the notion that the overall social position of Aboriginal women in Central Australia is a 'marginal' one (233). She holds that female and male domains are 'substantially independent' in both economic and ritual terms — each "elaborating separate gender specific power bases" (23). Though separate, however, the lives and roles of women and men are perceived by Bell to be equal and complimentary. Women and men share responsibility for the maintenance and upholding of Aboriginal Dreamtime Laws, laws which are continually revealed through dreamings, or revelations (196). These dreamings provide the basis for the interpretation of the meaning of one's spiritual and physical world, and they prescribe the moral code which should be upheld within Aboriginal society. Complementarity of roles is also reflected in the responsibilities assigned to each sex. Whereas men are believed to be responsible for 'creative spirit' (187), a role reflected in Aboriginal beliefs regarding conception, women are believed to be responsible for 'nurturance' (144). This role encompasses the nurturance of people, health, social relationships, and the maintenance of relations to land.

Bell argues that nurturing and the celebration of ties to land are central concerns of Aboriginal women. These concerns are clearly reflected in the themes of women's ritual activities, activities which in themselves 'articulate women's models of their social reality' (175). Women perform 'yilpingi' ceremonies, or 'love rituals' (162), which focus upon the 'emotional management' of social relations, and the preservation of health and group

harmony. The importance to women of their role as nurturers of social relations and of ties to land is evident in 'yawulyu' rituals which are concerned with the maintenance of relations to land (152). Ties to land, or country, constitute 'linkages to ritual tracks of land', these tracks being 'dreaming ranges' traversed by ancestral mythological beings (233). Such ties are established through one's kin, classificatory kin, and affinal relations. They form the basis upon which one's social identity is determined (90), and upon which access to and rights in land are ascribed. Shared ties to land serve as a basis for establishing or 'forging' links and social networks over large stretches of territory (134): through these ties, access is gained to different ecological zones and the varying resources encompassed by each (50). Bell argues that women and men are 'joint owners and managers of land' (237), each assuming equal responsibility for the establishment and preservation of these socially and spiritually important ties.

Bell documents women's rituals in some detail, describing dance performances, myths, songs, and the symbolism employed within them. Throughout her description, Bell adamantly rejects the contention of earlier ethnographers and anthropologists that the lives of Aboriginal women may be characterized as 'largely profane' (229). She argues that women's rituals constitute a ceremonial complex which is meaningful and rich in terms of both the traditional and contemporary significance it holds for women and for Aboriginal society as a whole.

In addition to women's ceremonies, Bell also describes the role which women play in certain male ceremonies, in particular male initiation rituals. Bell argues that not only are women knowledgeable of most aspects of these ceremonies, but also that women perform key roles in them. These roles include the feeding and nurturing of boys, the negotiation of marriage arrangements through the nomination of initiates' future mother-in-law, and thus spouse, and the 'turning around' of boys to become men (210).

Regarding the presentation of this work, Bell's style is florid and insuccinct, and the overuse of such stock phrases as 'checks and balances' is irksome. Bell's ethnographic and historical introductions, which comprise nearly one-half of this volume, are by any standard overly long. Little attention has been given to the role of women in economic activities, nor to the importance which ties established to and through land play in the Aboriginal economy. Details of social structure and kinship are relegated to an appendix, and the nature of contemporary interrelations between

Aboriginal women and men, outside of the 'jimili' camps, could be more fully covered.

Despite minor flaws, however, Bell's analysis of the social position of Aboriginal women in Central Australia — their world view and ritual activities — constitutes an important, insightful and for anthropologists, long-awaited contribution to Aboriginal ethnology.

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Joseph PESTIEAU, *Guerres et paix sans État*, Montréal, Hexagone, 1984. 116 pages, cartes, bibliographie.

Par Eric Schwimmer  
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M. Pestieau est un philosophe qui veut expliquer pourquoi les sociétés sans État faisaient la guerre et comment elles parvenaient à conclure la paix. Lecteur avide des données et des théories d'ethnologie, l'auteur en connaît bien les lacunes et les impuissances. Voyageur intrépide, il a appris de sa propre observation comment lire le « non-dit », les connotations implicites de ces textes ethnographiques, connotations transparentes pour ceux qui connaissent les cultures en question, mais pleines d'embûches pour tous les autres qui voudraient en déduire des vérités générales. Il a écrit un livre passionnant où il exprime surtout son amour profond envers ces petites sociétés conservatrices sans État, les seules, selon lui, à offrir à leurs citoyens liberté, égalité et fraternité véritables.

Commençons donc par l'énumération de ses qualités. M. Pestieau a très bien compris les relations complexes existant dans les sociétés tribales entre la guerre, le commerce et la diplomatie. Se fiant à la théorie lévi-straussienne de la guerre, il démontre que Clastres et Sahlins ne font que développer des aspects différents de cette même théorie et qu'ils ne se contredisent pas vraiment. Il ajoute cependant que la complémentarité structurale ne suffit pas en elle-même pour faire la paix, et démontre que chaque culture possède son *habitus* de pratiques bien établies pour transformer les dispositions psychologiques des combattants.

Nous avons aussi beaucoup aimé la discussion de l'arbitrage chez les Kalinga. L'auteur y met bien en valeur ses connaissances personnelles de l'île de Luzon septentrionale. Dans une analyse extrêmement perspicace des sources ethnographiques, il reconstruit le rôle de l'arbitre chez les Kalinga. Ce