Culture

Kenelm BURRIDGE, *In The Way: A Study of Christian Missionary Endeavours*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 1991, xvi + 307 pages; appendices, notes, bibliography and index

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This commemorative emplacement has been recently transformed into a historical tourism park. "The Rocks... now furnishes the locale for the development of a sanitized and mythical past which, in its commitment to eradicating all the marks and signs of the area's settlement that cannot be harmonized with its glittering façade... functions as an institutionalized mode of forgetting. The Rocks supplies the site for an encounter with an idealized and fabricated past which has been substituted for, and made possible by, the erasure of those marks which bear a testimony to the real and contradictory complexity of the area's history" (p. 225). Bennet analyzes the rhetoric of national foundation that underlies the current policies of Australian multiculturalism, providing material suitable for comparison with Canada and other "settler" ex-colonies.

In the small town of Tenterfield, where Sir Henry Parkes made a Historic Federation Speech in 1889, thus marking the foundation of the Australian state, a motel stands, conveniently named after the orator. This represents the point of departure for Meaghan Morris in "At Henry Parkes Motel." Morris narrates her own transit along the routes of commemoration, nation-emergence, commuting, and tourism that intersect at this "customized" establishment. Morris takes a nearby chain motel as a counterpoint against which the Henry Parkes is individualized, both by its historical reference and its suburban home aesthetics. Morris addresses time and space in this exercise by the use of different tempos and perspectives of reading. These are deployed to deal with the fact that "the trouble with a motel as a site of analysis is that... motels in fact demolish sense-regimes of place, locale and history. They memorialize only movement, speed, and perpetual circulation" (p. 243). On this base, Morris unfolds the categories of acceleration, transient status, and the transformation of "places" into "space." She argues that in Australia, a doubtful distinction exists between mobility and home, as displacement and endless "progress" constitute the primary habitat of the population.

Conveniently located at the end of the book, as if marking the border of the unexplored, stands Lesley Stern's and Kevin Ballantine's " 'Cup City': Where Nothing Ends, Nothing Happens." This essay consists of reflections on a series of photographs of Freemantle, on the Western Australian coast, where an "epic event" was held in 1986: the

America Yachting Cup. However, the images do not depict any yacht, jet-setters, nor details of the competition. Instead, they show the empty horizon of the sea, a skyline of glittering buildings, banal interfaces of concrete, sand, and trees, as well as casual renderings of locals. these pictures "suggest an air of languid immobility. Space prevails over people – the latter are hanging around as though waiting for something to happen. They are awkward in their desultory vigilance. These photos do not invoke spectacle, excitement, suspense." (p. 277). Stern defines this essay as a subtle "subversion" of the commercial epic of the Cup, taking full grasp of its metaphorical implications: "Can we fill these images with all the plenitude that the void, the empty heart of Australia, has to offer?" (p. 277).Besides the intrinsic worth of providing an overview of the varied landscape of cultural studies in Australia, the book merits an attentive reading for two main reasons: a) it incites to compare and correlate sociocultural phenomena between Australia and other countries with similar historical trajectories; and b) it provides students and scholars outside the field of cultural studies – particularly anthropology, the sociology of culture, and communication studies – with the possibility of effecting a stimulating detour in which often familiar theoretical guidelines are applied to different objects, contexts, and debates.

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This is a profound and thoughtful book by a profound and thoughtful man. In The Way is a distillation of years of reflection on the inner logic and the inner dynamic of the missionary process. Furthermore, it is an attempt to understand the character and motivations of missionaries that caused them to embark on their courses and animated their labours.

Why the title? There is nothing delphic in the choice of words. Missionaries were in the way. Their endeavours were all too frequently provocative, threatening existing orders and calling upon individuals and societies to do the nearly impossi-

ble: to abandon their spiritual and ethical compasses; to die, in effect, and to be reborn in another, transcendent moral order. At the heart of this process were contraries; the dialectic tensions between skepticism and conviction, between the cultural anchors of the Affirmative the metacultural liberation of the Devotional, between the universal and the particular and between the reassuringly familiar and the enticing but inherently unpredictable unfamiliar.

Much of the missionary endeavour with which we are acquainted was a subset of a larger mission, the expansion of the European "word" to the far corners of the globe. Missionaries contributed to and were transformed by that process of imperial expansion. While missionaries are interstitial beings, attempting to transform societies from positions beside those societies, they are, themselves, products of societies. Thus, for many missionaries in the past, the social darwinistic outlook of European societies conflicted with Christian egalitarianism when missionaries encountered "their people" in Africa, Oceania, and elsewhere.

This tension was only one of many. Missionaries found that the Christian message of forgiveness and reconciliation was at odds with the obligatory system and the reciprocal structure at the heart of subsistence societies. Missionary promotion of monogamy illustrates this problem at another level. While missionaries argued that monogamy constituted a moral advance over other forms of marital union, they were confronted with the realization that there were no compelling socio-cultural advantages in monogamy.

It was small wonder that host societies viewed missionary labours as destabilizing. For their part, missionaries found themselves wrestling with complex problems. Did the evil in those societies reside in individuals or in societal structures? Or did it reside in both? Certainly witches and sorcerers appeared to be the embodiment of the evil that missionaries sought to combat. But structural constraints were not to be overlooked either. Christianity sought to transcend constraints. Transcendence and transformation would result in metanoia. Metanoia was more than conversion. The sincerity of conversion was open to question, while metanoia involved a state of grace, of enlightenment, that constituted a complete transformation of heart and mind.

For many, the dilemmas of choice, the contradictions associated with the encompassing of the central mystery of God's love, were too great. Those who found themselves in this state succumbed easily to charismatic figures who promised to resolve the tensions through millenarianisms. Millenarian movements expressed themselves in a wide variety of cultural forms, but were greeted with dismay by missionaries who perceived them as proof of the failure of Christian endeavour. The very exclusiveness of millenarian movements was, after all, hostile to the universalism of the Christian message.

But the retreat from universalism to quietism was not the outcome of hostile forces alone. Missionaries themselves, eager to safeguard the fragile blossom of a tiny community of converts, or driven by their own overzealous egos, were often the architects of theocracies, creating in the process the very structures that they were cerebrally dedicated to transcend.

> Missionaries were and are an eclectic lot: heterogeneous in background and character; homogeneous in their commitment to Christianity. They find themselves poised ambiguously in the vertical and horizontal planes: vertically between systems of status; horizontally between cultures. Their job is to promote a universalist systemic, to create a metaculture which will enable the faithful to move out of cultures into accommodation with the Godhead and back; new persons in a new heaven and a new world.

Anthropologists were and are an eclectic lot, frequently at odds with missionaries over the ownership of "their people." The proprietary issue is only a superficial manifestation of fundamental differences in ways and means that separate the two communities. Anthropologists seek to differentiate the subjects of their analysis from other peoples and to reveal the underlying structures of order in societies. Missionaries, by way of contrast, are dedicated to promoting the universal rather than the particular and to transcending the structures that constrain. Missionaries, Burridge concludes "look to the common and ordinary in an attempt to achieve the wholly extra-ordinary" (p. 240).

Burridge himself has achieved the extraordinary, producing an elegant, closely argued essay that combines his encyclopaedic knowledge of

missionary endeavours with theological, philosophical and anthropological insights. The text, buttressed by fifty missionary biographies (in the concluding appendix), is dense and demanding. But the reader's perseverance, once put to the test, will be amply rewarded. In the Way is, and will remain, a vital aid to anyone dedicated to trying to understand one of the great human phenomena – the missionary movement.

Béatrix LE WITA (J.A. UNDERWOOD, translator), *French Bourgeois Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press and Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1994: 168 pages.

by David S. Moyer

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This book is a translation of *Ni Vue Ni Connue, Approche ethnographique de la culture bourgeoise*, which appeared in 1988 as Number 9 in the Collection Ethnologie de la France published by the Fondation de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme. Usually a translation is either a convenience for the multilingual reader or essential for the unilingual reader. This work goes far beyond simple translation; the translator's notes provide essential material which enables the non-French reader to comprehend the original. Indeed, many of the ethnographic details are so culturally specific that the translation refers to equally culturally specific details of English culture, which may be unfamiliar to North American readers.

A single example gives a sense of the problem and, at the same time, reveals the subtlety and thoroughness of the original ethnography. The original states that an 18-year-old schoolgirl, in the process of commenting on a school photograph, used no less than nine categories of bourgeois, that is, *"pas très bourgeoise; bourgeoise sage; très bourgeoise; très bourgeoise-très BCBG; hyperminette-bourgeoise; petite bourgeoise; bourgeoise cru Sainte-Marie; superbourgeoise; aristo"* (p. 96). This is translated as "not very bourgeois, discrete bourgeois, very bourgeois, very bourgeois-very *BCBG*, hyper-trendy bourgeois, petit bourgeois, Sainte-Marie vintage bourgeois, super-bourgeois, toff [aristo]" (p. 85). Sainte-Marie is the name of the school and the reference is clear in context. The translator adds a footnote which explains BCBG (short for *"bon-chic-bon-genre"*and pronounced "bay-say-bay-zhay").

BCBG: In fact, and in terms of very complex standards, it refers to everything that distinguishes those who know from those who do not, the aristocracy and the ancient bourgeoisie from the rest, the new rich from the old rich (especially those who have now fallen on hard times which is of only relative importance since they are "BCBG"). From the Introduction to Thierry Hantoux, *Guide du BCBG*, Paris: Hermé, 1985 (p. 85).

In England "Sloane ranger" is approximately equivalent, while a Canadian colleague originally from Paris offered "pre-yuppie" as a North American English translation of *BCBG*. There is an important lesson to be learned here about the translation of indigenous ethnographic concepts into an international language that has distinct local cultural variants. Having spent a great deal of time in an earlier chapter on the problems of defining the bourgeoisie, the author wisely does not try to define the nine named categories.

In addition to demonstrating the kind of cultural elaboration that anthropologists find fascinating, the example indicates the elaborate private encoding that typifies much of continental bourgeois culture. In the Netherlands, for instance, one hears the expression *"OSM"* (pronounced "oh-es-em"), and more commonly *"niet OSM"* (not *OSM*). Having heard the expression used by a professor's wife, a Dutch colleague asked her what *OSM* meant. He was told that it meant *"Onze Soort Mensen"* (our kind of people). Half jokingly, he said that by asking what *OSM* meant, he had shown that he obviously was not *OSM*, and as a result his entire university education was wasted. The knowledge or lack of knowledge of these codes is serious business.

Between the private sphere and the public sphere the bourgeoisie erected a system of practices in which learning to recognize these distinguishing signs constituted an essential element. The bourgeois "culture" was acquired and handed down, as we shall see, in the bosom of the family and its educational appendages (p. 59).

Le Wita gives considerable attention to two coded systems that illustrate her point and allow the bourgeoisie to recognize and place each other. One is dress; the other is table manners. The dress section is well described and well illustrated with photographs that never reveal a recognizable bourgeois face. The caption of one photograph