

Reviews

Imagination. Popular Images of Genetics. By Jose Van Dijck. (New York: New York University Press, 1998. Pp. vii + 235, bibliography, index.)

In *Imagination. Popular Images of Genetics*, Jose Van Dijck makes an important contribution to the emerging literature on the media and to cultural analyses of molecular biology and society. Those who witnessed the remarkable press conference at the White House in the summer of 2000, where President William Clinton brought together Francis Collins from the government-funded Human Genome Project with Craig Venter, CEO of Celera Genomics, the key private sector rival to the publicly funded venture, will appreciate Van Dijck's work as she attempts to unpack the mythology and metaphors deployed since the 1950s in the "gene race" to unlock "the book of life" (21). Van Dijk sets out to challenge the schools of thought subscribed to by many in the scientific and journalistic communities who espouse theories of technology diffusion which are essentially teleological narratives: scientific progress gradually wipes away layers of ignorance to reveal a broader understanding and acceptance of scientific claims and technologies. She correctly points out that these narratives do not come to terms with the "polyvalent struggles for the meaning of genetics" (5) which move in fits and starts as diverse actors contest competing truth claims and control over science and its representation.

Van Dijck views these struggles over meaning through the lens of theater, or in her words, "the theater of representation" (16) which plays out as a drama complete with metaphors, stages, scripts, and actors assuming various roles. Central to the theatrical presentation of truth and meaning would be the images deployed by actors and how they shape perceptions of what counts, who can speak, and the place of gender in the construction of representations. Throughout the book she examines the leading scientists, journalists, artists, writers, and political activists engaged in the drama. She does not attempt to describe these groups as unified categories. Among the ranks of feminists, for example, there are important differences in the underlying assumptions of the constructions of nature and culture and how these terms are deployed in the rhetoric of criticism. Many feminists share the fundamental assumption that nature and culture comprise a dyad or accept a strict separation between science and society, while others have sought to transcend such traditional grounds for criticism.

The book is organized by chronological periods, each marking a new script and set of roles in the drama in which actors play against each other. However, often these actors carry over metaphors from previous times or works of fiction and science while giving them a new valence in any given historical moment. She begins her narrative with the 1950s as scientists attempted to refashion biology by distancing it from the discourse

of Nazi eugenics. They accomplished this through new images and the “New Biology” which sought to situate molecular biology in a neutral political space. She highlights the role of one of the leading scientists or “founding fathers,” James Watson and his own account of the discovery of the DNA molecule. His narrative deployed religious imagery for the “code of life” as well as a patriarchal view of knowledge production in the biological sciences. The journalistic actors largely viewed the New Biology with “awe and mistrust” (50) while strictly enforcing the separation between science and society.

The 1960s marked a shift in the cultural politics affecting both journalism and science. A more apocalyptic view of science emerged in science fiction. By the 1970s a more oppositional role for journalists emerged as they increasingly rejected any claims to objectivity while frequently assuming the roles of judge, prosecutor and jury. This accompanied a shift in the image of the gene. Originally viewed as neutral, genes became endowed with agency. In the journalistic and science fiction mediums we find images of scientists as negligent, selfish, and capitalistic. Both genes and geneticists become marked as enemies of nature. The same dyad of science and nature played a role in bringing together seemingly oppositional sides as both genetic and social determinists jostled for control of the meanings of genetic sciences. Important critics such as Jeremy Rifkin found a voice in the 1970s as a more activist journalism emerged. A new regulatory discourse in the form of bioethics began assuming a larger role in the

debate through the deployment of the discourses of compassion, justice, and responsibility while simultaneously advocating ethical training for scientists. The Human Genome Project was perhaps the largest funder of bioethics research, yet, many would argue, an ineffective one. Van Dijck correctly points out that bioethicists could become part of the debate as long as the way scientists worked remained untouched. We might use some of her observations here to call into question the role of bioethics in contemporary debates over the politics and ethics of technology. The Asilomar Conference of 1975 is presented as a first attempt by scientists to regulate their own profession while managing the journalistic discourse at the same time. The conference thus marks a point of growing tension among scientists themselves.

The late 1970s and early 1980s mark a new era in the discourse as biotechnology firms emerged on the scene as an outgrowth of university and private sector collaborations and networks. The public relations discourse assumed new meaning in the rise of biotechnology in constructing the image of the scientist as heroic doctor struggling for the cure. Throughout the 1980s and 90s criticism of genetics became more dispersed through the media, artists, academy, and science fiction. The most interesting examples provided here compare the fictional works of Robert Pollack and Richard Powers and feminist writers such as Octavia Butler. Here we find more powerful musings over the role of metaphors and images to visualize DNA, genes, genomes, and the future. Throughout this work, Van Dijck chal-

lenges us to rethink the linear notions of technology diffusion in favor of her metaphor of circular transformation of knowledge and a more complex understanding of knowledge production and representation—powerful metaphors in the continuing contest of meaning as biotechnology assumes greater importance in our everyday lives.

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La mort en direct. Les snuff movies [Death "Live." Snuff Movies]. By Sarah Finger, with the collaboration of Kevin Boissezon. Documents. (Paris, Le Cherche Midi, 2001. Pp. 217.)

It is well-known that the proliferation of imitations, parodies, and hoaxes makes it problematic to decide on the reality of many phenomena in the realm of anomalies, as well as that of contemporary legend. The term "ostension," created by Umberto Eco and first used by Dégh and Vázsonyi ("Does the Word 'Dog' Bite? Ostensive Action as a Means of Legend-Telling," *Journal of Folklore Research* 20, 1983:5-34), seems appropriate to summarize these copying and reproductive appropriations. The concept of "memes" also comes to mind, suggested by Richard Dawkins in *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976). My approach to the theme will be oblique, my examples successively touching on the frivolous and then focusing on the unpalatable: first Lovecraft's *Necronomicon* and then "snuff movies."

The *Necronomicon*, H.P. Lovecraft's best-known fictional manuscript, started to exist in the 1960s as a fictitious library catalog reference (located at Miskatonic University), then developed when hoax editions began appearing in the 1970s. Soon video games and web pages complicated and expanded the picture. Thus in July 2001, a wide "Necronomicon" web search (using Google) gave around 40,000 web pages, reduced to 9,000 with the exclusion of games, limitation to English, and recent (one-year) updating (see <http://www.hplovecraft.com/cre->

ation/necron/). National libraries such as Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the Library of Congress, and the British Library each keep about four or five of these hoax books. Most of them are still on sale. Can the *Necronomicon* still be considered not to exist in 2001?

In 2001, French journalist Sarah Finger published *La mort en direct. Les snuff movies* [Death "Live." Snuff Movies]. This investigative book discusses the belief in snuff movies' existence that has been with us since the mid-1970s, when the first accusations put forward by anti-pornography crusaders appeared and generated unsuccessful investigations by the FBI. The existence of snuff movies is debated—and debunked—on most urban legend sites (for example, urbanlegends.com, urbanmyths.com, urbanlegendsabout.com, and totse.com/en/conspiracy/institutional_analysis/folklore.html—corresponding to the disappeared pioneer alt.folklore.urban). This "dark legend," which presents some analogies to the organ theft narratives that were widespread in the early 1990s (see, e.g., my article "Organ Theft Narratives" in *Western Folklore* 56, 1997:1-37), enjoys widespread belief among the general public, but finds little credence among professionals aware of the realities of the field, pornographers as well as police (cf. <http://www.apbnews.com/media/gfiles/snuff>). As was the case for organ theft narratives, a motley bunch, mostly moral crusaders and feminists, defend the reality of snuff films' existence. An old acquaintance and staunch defender of the reality of organ thefts, Renée Bridel (of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, a

human rights organization in Geneva) is the author of a December 1981 report entitled "La traite des enfants" [The Trade in Children] that presented one of the early fictional films, *Hardcore*, as evidence of the existence of snuff movies.

The belief builds upon several factors. One is the fascination with serial killers, the new ogres which attract abundant rumors of trophy films of victims. In rare cases, such films existed, as in the Leonard Lake and Charles Ng case, in which the films were shown to the California jury during Ng's 1999 trial, 14 years after Lake's arrest, but they were not marketed by their makers. Another factor is the shocked reactions which stress that horrendous evil accompanies the industry of pornography. Figures in the porn industry such as Larry Flint (*Hustler*) and Al Goldstein (*Screw*) openly express their skepticism as to the existence of snuff movies. Goldstein even offered \$100,000 to anyone who could "come up with an American film showing a death that was made in America that was commercially distributed" (cf. <http://www.apbnews.com/media/gfiles/snuff>). A third factor is the existence of an array of "death films" (cf. David Kerekes and David Slater: *Killing for Culture. An Illustrated History of Death Films from Mondo to Snuff*. London: Creation Books, 1995). These films include shock documentaries, imitations of snuff movies and mainstream fictions.

Shock documentaries appear in series, and the 1980s *Faces of Death* has followed in the line of the Italian pioneers *Mondo* (1960s) and *Cannibal* (1970s). The latest isolated ones quoted by Sarah Finger are *Death Scenes*, released in the US

in 1989, and *Executions*, released in the UK in 1995. Their appeal is based on their supposed authenticity, though it is well known that they include a rather large proportion of made-up documents. Their number and persistence indicates they are marketable items with their own specialized audience.

Imitations of snuff movies are fairly rare, but present on the pornography market. The first one, *Snuff*, released in 1976, actively sought to create scandal by its aggressive marketing (see Scott Aaron Stine: "The Snuff Film. The Making of an Urban Legend," *Skeptical Inquirer* 23(3), May-June 1999:29-33). Its producer was very pleased when feminists of the National Organization of Women and Women Against Violence Against Women picketed the theaters showing the film. Its story is lengthily told in all documents on the subject (ibid., Finger 38-43). More complicated is the story of *Guinea Pig*, a Japanese series, one episode of which, *Flower of Flesh and Blood*, provoked FBI investigations. It was concluded that the tortures and dismemberment shown (of a young female held captive by a man clad in a samurai attire) did not correspond to real murders. The same conclusions were reached for *Seppuku*.

Snuff movies have also inspired numerous mainstream fictional movies and "It is safe to say that there are more films about snuff films than there are actual snuff films in existence" (Stine 33). It would be a futile exercise to describe them here; *Killing for Culture* and Finger (57-68) both already list them from 1978 *Hardcore* (Paul Schrader) to 1999 *8mm* (Joel Schumacher). Finger mentions a

little known film, the Spanish 1996 *Tesis*, which presents the classic scenario (first seen in *Candyman* and developed in the *Urban Legends* series) of the folklore student who discovers facts that match the legend she is studying and becomes a victim. In *Tesis* she is kidnapped by a sadistic fellow student who tortures and kills in front of a camera. The videos are processed in the university's underground by an accomplice who is a university professor. Some of these films are rumored to be "based on fact" just as the 1974 *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* was said to refer to the Ed Gein case. This supposed authenticity was also the case for the (non-gore) 1999 *Blair Witch Project*, whose slick online marketing, launching the movie as the report of a true event, is now being imitated by all major movies.

Fictional books are also abundant, both in the mainstream (Brett Easton Ellis's *Less Than Zero*) and the *roman noir* genres (Gregory McDonald's *Rafael*). Their links with films are close; the two titles quoted have become films (*Rafael* inspired 1997 *The Brave*, starring Johnny Depp). These fictions alternate between two types of killers: psychopaths and profit-minded businessmen of the porn industry.

The really original part of Finger's book reviews the accusations regarding snuff movies that have surged in Europe since the shock created by the discovery of the multiple murders of Marc Dutroux in Belgium (161-177). These rumors only concern child victims. In the unfinished investigation into the Dutroux case unbalanced witnesses asserting the existence of snuff movies have long been heard by the authorities, but they are

now totally discredited. Police investigations of these accusations have so far not found solid evidence of murders, but videos from Russia showing ill-treatment of children have been seized in Italy.

Reading about snuff movies is an unbalancing experience. There are so many closely imitative products that one ends up wondering whether they can still be said not to exist. In the review of all expressive forms close to the snuff movies, the most disturbing one is not discussed in Finger's book, but on a page maintained by British Matthew Hunt under the title *Censorship: Bad Taste and Extreme Culture* (<http://members.tripod.co.uk/mathunt/censored.html>). In this extensive list of avant-garde art, the successive sections, "Literature," "Theatre," "Music," "Photography," "Cinema," "Art," and "Performance Art," are each more nauseating than the last. The performance art section alone catalogues on-stage or filmed acts of copulation, masturbation, fellatio, bestiality, vomiting, excretion, coprophagy, disembowlement, dismemberment, genital mutilation, self-trepanation, and plastic surgery. After reading this summary, even the non-censorship-oriented student of contemporary culture (and I count myself one) gets the feeling that the numerous "imitations" abundantly attest to the fact that snuff movies are already with us.

Will the snuff-movies legend turn into fact? The unending quest has perhaps generated a profit motive which was not there at the outset.

Snuff is a means by which the media can prick public morality. Despite no such film ever being found, in any place, anywhere, the media continues to indiscriminately nurture and promote the myth as fact. Perhaps in so doing—reiterating its potential monetary value and projecting potential markets—it will one day succeed in making snuff a true commercial reality (Kerekes and Slater, *ibid.*).

But also, probably more importantly, a general voyeuristic tendency will perhaps bring into existence the sci-fi short stories of the 1950s. The connection was suggested by Josh Tyrangiel in *Time* magazine (Eur. ed., July 23, 2001:64):

Snuff fans had to be cheered last week as the inexorable march of network television toward live-murder broadcasts took another step forward. Justin Sebik, 26, a contestant on the CBS reality snoozefest *Big Brother 2*, was tossed from the show after he really wielded a butcher knife, really held it to the throat of a fellow contestant he was kissing and really asked, "Would you be mad at me if I killed you?"

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Folklore, Heritage Politics and Ethnic Diversity. A Festschrift for Barbro Klein. Edited by Pertti J. Anttonen in collaboration with Anna-Leena Siikala, Stein R. Mathisen, and Leif Magnusson. (Botkyrka: Multicultural Center, 2000. Pp. 278+ 7 ill.)

This book is at the same time a collection of symposium papers and a festschrift for Barbro Klein, who recently turned sixty years of age. Klein graduated from Stockholm University in 1961 and studied folkloristics with Richard M. Dorson at Bloomington, Indiana, where she also took her Ph.D. in 1970. For several years she taught at different American universities, including the University of California at Berkeley and the University of Pennsylvania. In the 1980s she returned to Stockholm University, where she was appointed professor in 1996. She is now a director of the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study in the Social Sciences in Uppsala. The first essay in the collection, by Anna-Leena Siikala, is a sketch of Klein's life in folklore on both sides of the Atlantic. The symposium, held in June 1998 in Botkyrka, Sweden, was organized by a Nordic research project sharing the same name as the book. The purpose of the project is to "investigate the role of folklore and folkloristics in the reshaping of Nordic life that is now taking place as a result of the recent extensive transnational migrations and related changes in the political maps of the world" (23). In a short essay Roger D. Abrahams elaborates on some of the themes of the research project and exem-

plifies how other folklore scholars have treated them.

In his contribution, Pertti Anttonen, the book's leading editor, gives an outline of some such political map changes. He demonstrates that the allegedly homogeneous national cultures should be described more appropriately as homogenized. The production of homogeneity is an historical and political process, constantly challenged by heterogenizing forces. The population of Finland, which is the example Anttonen chooses, has always been mixed. The political call for national unity, however, has demanded rhetoric of a genetically coherent Fenno-Ugric ethnicity constructed in opposition to the surrounding Indo-European ones. A central symbolic position has been attributed to Karelia, an area most of which has never even belonged to the state of Finland, but whose language, folk poetry, and customs have been regarded as representing the most ancient and genuine layers of Finnish culture. The Sami, on the other hand, whose languages are closely related to Finnish, and who presumably have inhabited northern Scandinavia at least as long as any other group, have consistently been denied any role in the shaping of the national culture of Finland.

In her article, Regina Bendix discusses one of the project's key words—heritage—a "strange, neutralizing word" that "has the power to disempower, to hide history and politics by putting everything into a collective pot of 'culture' and 'past,' possibly adding the adjective 'important' to it" (42). Early modern society created its modernity by inventing

a contrasting past that was to be collected, preserved, and put on display in museums. Hierarchical patterns, power systems, economic structures, and excluding mechanisms were effectively wiped away from the ideal image of a genuine, authentic national culture. Bendix illustrates how the concept of heritage in today's late modern society plays the same role in hiding aspects of power and diversity. To clarify her point, she compares the terms "heredity" and "hybridity," semantically precise, biological concepts that highlight such structures instead of concealing them. Heredity emphasizes legal inheritance and hereditary privileges as well as political and military struggles. Hybridity underscores the existence of class differences and conflicts, diversity, injustice, prejudice, multi-culturality, and heterogeneity.

Kjell Olsen discusses how the exhibits of Alta museum in northernmost Norway take part in constructing ethnicity. Olsen regards the story told by the museum as a master narrative inviting tourists to interpret Alta's ethnically mixed situation (locally represented groups include Sami, Norwegians, Kvens, Russians, Finlanders, and Tamils) in terms of Western European ideas about First World (civilized) and Fourth World (indigenous) peoples. Locally told stories question this picture by telling of geographical boundaries between coastland Norwegians and inland Sami, of blurred or non-existent ethnic boundaries, and by adding all kinds of individual reactions to the exhibition.

Using examples from Swedish museums, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett

shows how heritage is constructed in an interplay between exhibited objects, the words of the museum curators, and the responses of the visitors.

In her article, Anna-Leena Siikala follows the development of ritual during the last decade in the Republic of Udmurtia, west of the Ural Mountains. During Soviet times, this area was strictly closed because of its military industry. Sacrificial rituals were performed secretly. Today, the region is well connected to the rest of the world, and the religious rituals have been transformed into national festivals, broadcast on television, where international artists perform. A thorough understanding of contemporary heritage production can only be reached against the backdrop of globalization. Furthermore, in contrast to a scholar from the social sciences, Siikala argues, "the folklorist is in a position to identify not only the means of constructing and manifesting the individual self, but also the shared models of thinking, feeling, and experiencing" (82).

Frank J. Korom illustrates the idea of tradition as a symbolic process, previously explored by Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin ("Tradition: Genuine or Spurious." *Journal of American Folklore* 97: 273-90), with examples of politically contested traditions in Trinidad.

Karin Becker reports from her joint fieldwork with Barbro Klein in a multicultural area of municipal garden lots outside Stockholm, claiming that photographs should reconstruct the experience of being in the field (105). She also discusses how photography is a process of negotiation with the informants, and how the photographs can be used

ethnographically. In line with the present context, Becker exemplifies how gardening maintains links to the past, and at the same time literally establishes new roots. In gardening, emotions and traditions are territorialized and embodied in highly visual forms.

Using Gotland's Medieval Week festival as her example, Lotten Gustafsson shows how medieval buildings, play with identity, and negotiations between local inhabitants and newcomers are used in a process of reconsideration of identity.

Stein Mathisen shows how in early collections of Sami folklore, collectors and publishers tended to characterize Sami culture as homogeneous. However, a closer look at two of the main Sami spokespersons shows that while one of them acted as a translator and mediator in a multicultural fishing and trading community, the other had taught reindeer herding to Eskimos in Alaska and met with African Americans and Native Americans in the U.S.A.

Mikako Iwatake describes how Kunio Yanagida (1875-1962) constructed a form of folkloristics that was uniquely Japanese but lay within the framework of German philology, which, according to Iwatake, is tainted with "Aryanist racism, Eurocentrism, nationalism and sexism" (207). Yanagida's ethnography put rice-cropping farmers at the cultural center, while mountain peoples and itinerant groups were regarded as culturally peripheral. The Ainu people, mostly inhabiting the northern island of Hokkaido, were denied a place in Japanese culture, while Okinawans, occupying the southernmost group of islands,

were supposed to preserve some traces of ancient Japanese culture.

Orvar Löfgren illustrates how different attitudes to "the national" (an abstract noun not defined in the article, but which seems to mean a discourse about national culture and symbols) mirror transformations in society. During the 1960s and 1970s, national rhetoric was seldom used in Sweden, which at this time became both more cosmopolitan and more homogenized. The debate preceding Sweden's entry into the European Union, the influx of immigrants from different countries, and the emergence of neo-fascist organizations generated new attitudes towards national symbols. The Swedish flag can be used as decoration on birthday cakes or as a racist symbol excluding certain ethnic groups.

A festschrift for Barbro Klein would of course not be complete without the participation of the jubilee-celebrator herself. The enthusiastic, ever-present Barbro would certainly not let such minor details as her own sixtieth birthday stop her from taking part in the intellectual discussion. Her contribution to this volume summarizes the history of the project and its first symposium. Not least important, she hints at some points of discussion that were not followed through at the Botkyrka symposium. A central question appears to be how heritage is actually produced in processes of, on the one hand, hiding and concealment, and on the other, dramatization and exoticization (29). The common denominator of the authors is perhaps less a joint stance on questions concerning heritage politics and ethnic diversity than an open-minded curiosity and de-

sire to grasp and understand what goes on in the world around us. Several of the authors use intellectual tools borrowed from our scholarly neighbors, mainly sociologists and anthropologists, but they borrow critically. They seem to be convinced, and I certainly am, that our own field of science, folkloristics, carries with it more than sufficient intellectual potential to vastly expand our research into, in Barbro Klein's words, "tradition worlds that have never before entered our scholarly horizons" (35). This anthology can be regarded as an attempt to outline some daring, challenging, oppositional, politically conscious roads into the future for tomorrow's folkloristics.

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Spectacular Nature: Corporate Culture and the Sea World Experience. By Susan G. Davis. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997. Pp. xii + 313, 18 maps/figures, notes, index.)

The multi-faceted discipline of cultural studies examines the theories and practices of everyday life that we use to explain and make sense of the world around us. Gender, sexuality, race, nationhood, and society are the specific but arbitrary products of social construction. Language, identity, politics, and culture all contribute, mold, reflect, and reproduce these models and frameworks in which we live. But what exactly are the influences of corporate culture? To what extent are our lives and experiences mediated by profit-driven corporations and organizations? Susan Davis, in *Spectacular Nature: Corporate Culture and the Sea World Experience*, examines these questions in the context of a particular form of recreational consumption in our consumer culture: the nature theme park. She deconstructs Sea World in San Diego, exposing the extensive influence of the economic forces underlying this privatized, commercialized space. As the title of her book suggests, *Spectacular Nature* offers a comprehensive examination of Sea World, its creation, its meaning, and its nature spectacle as mediated by corporate culture.

Public and commercialized space has long been subjected to analysis by numerous academics in fields as diverse as sociology, history, political economy, anthropology, communication, and more recently, cultural studies. In this respect, studies of the commodification of pub-

lic space and its commercialization are nothing new. However, using a more contemporary, multi-disciplinary approach to Sea World, Davis focuses her analytical gaze on the multiple “texts” that make up the theme park as a whole in order to examine the underlying social orders that shape, influence, and control our experiences within the park. With an eye of a folklorist, the patience of an anthropologist, and the shrewdness of an economist, she unpacks the carefully constructed nature theme park as a “consumer good [intended] for a contemporary mass market” (4) that hides behind a façade of scientific research, animal conservation, and environmentalism.

Reducing Sea World to a purely profit-making machine exposes an interesting text for analysis. Or, as Davis posits, “to unpack the meanings of places like Sea World, it is useful to speak of theme-parked nature as an industrial product and to look closely at the industry that produces it” (19). With meticulous detail, Davis traces how Sea World’s early beginnings evolved with the commercialization of San Diego’s tourism identity. In so doing, Davis reveals how the park has thoroughly integrated itself into the geographical and social history of San Diego, thereby ensuring an inextricable association with the local vernacular culture. This alliance provides the basis for much of the park’s success, not only as a site for controlled (read “segregated”) public recreational and educational space, but as an emblem of Southern California’s tourism trade. Situating the park in this way, Davis underscores the status that Sea World has in

relation to other types of tourist attractions in the community. Sea World not only provides thousands of low paying jobs, but it also draws in millions of tourists that feed the local tourist industry.

After having established Sea World’s history and locality within this commodified public space, Davis delves into the machinations behind the park’s theme: the nature spectacle. Relying on nearly a decade’s worth of repeated visits, in-depth interviews with park employees, photographs, architectural analysis, and countless field trips with local schoolchildren, Davis articulates the process by which Sea World continually defines and refines its experience to the consumer. Sea World creates and displays versions of nature that are modeled on our expectations, hopes, fears, and fantasies. For instance, Davis found that in creating the ARCO sponsored Penguin Encounter, “designers thought they had to keep the penguins from appearing overcrowded to their public. People are made uncomfortable by the sight of swarming animals. Crowding might indicate mistreatment in captivity, and just as bad, . . . it might remind viewers themselves of feeling bunched up” (108)—this despite the intense crowding in natural environments. This reinterpretation of reality “connect[s] customers to nature . . . and gives the domination of nature a gentle, civilized face” (35). At the same time, these manufactured spectacles create “a process of reflecting on our own experiences” (108). This displacement of what we see is used to manipulate our perceptions of and about nature, our relationship with nature, and our concerns about our inter-

actions with nature and the environment.

But as popular culture changes with the ebb and flow of our consumer driven, material lives, so must the image of Sea World be packaged and re-packaged to accommodate growing concerns about animal extinction, dwindling natural resources, and polluted environments. Sea World, in Davis's words, "profits by selling people's dreams back to them" (244). The beautiful landscapes, the carefully scripted shows, the trained and anthropomorphized animals, the multi-ethnic workforce, the family-oriented themes, and the contrived conservatism all contribute to the promotion and production of a site for mass consumption that simultaneously reinforces certain ideological beliefs and reinterprets the harsh world around us. Clearly, Sea World's success lies in its ability to change and re-invent itself with the ever-changing cultural climate by selling that which we want to see, need to see, and hope to see.

Spectacular Nature is the culmination of tremendous dedication and research. Logically organized, easy to read, Davis employs a number of multi-/interdisciplinary approaches to make sense of the theme park's messages: anthropology, sociology, folklore, and media studies just to name a few. The importance of this approach cannot be overstated. The complexities of popular culture in today's contemporary, multi-faceted, consumer-driven society require all of the above and more. Equally important is recognizing one's positioning. Constantly reminding us of her own changing perceptions, Davis foregrounds how her own ideology and political beliefs have influenced her interpretations. In-

deed, the evolution of her initially indifferent analysis into her subsequent cynicism warrants considered attention. But as Davis guides the reader through precise and detailed analysis in clear and eloquent prose, one can neither deny the compelling logic of her arguments regarding the power and pervasiveness of corporate capitalism nor fully fathom the ramifications of such a reality. *Spectacular Nature* may be a fascinating study of the nature theme park Sea World, but it also demands that we question the more mundane constructions of our everyday lives.

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Sami Folkloristics. Edited by Juha Pentikäinen, in cooperation with Harald Gaski, Vuokko Hirvonen, Jelena Sergejeva, and Krister Stoor. NNF Publications, 6. (Turku: Nordic Network of Folklore, 2000. Pp. 280.)

When the great botanical systematizer Carl von Linné (Linnaeus) visited Lapland on a collecting expedition in 1732, he was fascinated by the indigenous population. Their simple reindeer-herding lifestyle, as he saw it, put them in a golden age, on an Elysian field lacking the complications of a society based on agriculture. Had he been inured to constant cold since childhood, Linné famously said, he would quite readily have changed place with one of the reindeer herders he observed on his journey. Linné even planned a book on these people, to be called *Lachesis Lapponica*, a work that never saw the light of day. But there was already a long tradition of informed writings about this indigenous population of Fenno-Scandia, going back to the Middle Ages in Iceland (in sagas placed in Norway) and even the Viking Age in England (interpolated into the translation of the *Historia adversus Paganos* undertaken at the court of King Alfred the Great). Description of the Sami people—an endeavor known in its earlier stages as “Lappology”—stretches back to humanism and shared Linné’s view of the people as an exotic other. Besides description of the material culture, the emphasis was on religion, a religion lost or driven underground by the conversion of the Sami to Christianity and, one sus-

pects, state and church vigilance and recidivism.

The research picture of the Sami has to some extent continued to emphasize the pre-Conversion cult and religion and has therefore been based on the older written sources. Although much folklore was collected and published over the years, and a type index of legends was produced by J. K. Qvigstad in 1925, Sami folkloristics has not exactly been a growth industry. Perhaps it is because many of the best workers in the field enter it, as do four of the eight authors represented in this book, from the discipline of history of religion. Certainly, as the essay by Stein Mathisen shows, even the folklorists recording Sami material in the earlier part of this century—a classic collecting period in Scandinavia—thought little of the originality and future of the materials they were documenting. For this and many other reasons a book on Sami Folkloristics is to be welcomed.

In the Preface, Juha Pentikäinen writes:

This book bearing a programmatic title *Sami Folkloristics* is an indication of a new era both in the discipline of folkloristics in general and in a new field recognized as Sami studies in particular. (8)

The book consists of ten articles divided into two parts, “Sami research history” and “Sami folklore interpreted.” Part 1 includes Håkon Rydving, “The Missionary Accounts from the 17th and 18th Centuries—The Evaluation and Interpretation of Sources,” Juha Pentikäinen,

"Lars Levi Læstadius as Sami Mythologist and Mythographer," Stein Mathisen, "Changing Narratives about Sami Folklore—A Review of Research on Sami Folklore in the Norwegian Area," Pentikäinen, "Finnish Research on Sami Folklore," and Jelena Sergejeva, "The Research History of Kola and Skolt Sami Folklore." Part 2 includes Harald Gaski, "The Secretive Yoik—Yoik Lyrics as Literature and Tradition," Vuokko Hirvonen, "How to Make the Daughter of a Giant a Sami—a Myth of the Sami People's Origin," Sergejeva, "The Sun as Father in the Kola and Skolt Sami Tradition," and Thomas A. DuBois, "Folklore, Boundaries and Audience in *The Pathfinder*."

As a glance at these titles suggests, and as a reading of the articles will bear out, the claim of the indication of a new era in the discipline of folkloristics is overstated. The articles of greatest theoretical interest are by the two trained folklorists, Mathisen and DuBois. Following Edward M. Bruner ("Ethnography as Narrative" *The Anthropology of Experience*, ed. Victor W. Turner and Edward M. Bruner, 139-55. Urbana and Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 1986), Mathisen traces the development of Sami folklore scholarship as a narrative in itself, which is to say that he situates scholarship over the years within master narratives about the Sami within Norwegian culture. DuBois invokes theory toward the end of his article by placing the film *Pathfinder* in Barth's "middle level" of ethnic interactions, but the article in general constitutes a common-sense separation of elements in the film that would appeal to the inside (Sami) and

outside audiences, and he shows how these elements work together.

The claim of the indication of a new field recognized as Sami folkloristics is not justified. Certainly there has been growth in Sami studies lately, however one chooses to define the concept, but part 1 focuses essentially on Lappology, and the four studies in part 2 lack a unifying theme.

There is, indeed, a kind of inherent contradiction between the first half of the book, focusing largely on the older materials and the corresponding older research and accepting a split into national research histories, and the second half, with its emphasis on the vale of interpretation that is internal to the Sami community and not immediately informed by the older research materials or the sensibilities of the nation states which facilitated such research. But one reads both parts with interest, rather as one reads through a favorite research journal, and there is much to be learned from and react to in each article.

As with any collaborative project, there are inconsistencies, occasional repetition, and the odd linguistic misstep. My favorites are the calque "learned to know" for "became acquainted with" (11), and the legend "Sami dresses" beneath an illustration showing both a man and woman in traditional costume. More vexing is the editorial decision to stick with dialect orthographies, a decision, wholly unassailable on both ideological and scholarly grounds, that might nevertheless confuse precisely the audience of non-specialists for whom the book is presumably intended. This confusion extends to the index, which I would as-

sume to be an entry-point for some users. A student seeking information on, for example, Sami Shamanism, would find an entry on "Sami shaman," just beneath "Sami drum," which s/he might realize was related. But there is also an entry on "Shaman drums," one on "Shamanic" and one on "Shamanism;" as if this were not confusing enough, there are also entries for "Noaidi," where many people with some prior discipline knowledge might look, and cross-references to that entry from "Nâjd" and "Nyõdd." The careless index typifies what I fear will be the difficulty and perhaps frustration of students and researchers looking for a thorough and systematic treatment of Sami folkloristics instead of a volume of loosely related individual pieces.

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Difficult Reputations: Collective Memories of the Evil, Inept, and Controversial. By Gary Alan Fine. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001. Pp. xi + 267, acknowledgments, chapter references, index.)

Gary Fine has given us an illuminating study of historical and literary figures from Colonial to mid-twentieth century America. His subjects are varied and sometimes unexpected, including not only individuals who once lived but also a pair of literary characters (Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* and Humbert Humbert) and a place (Sinclair Lewis's Sauk Centre, represented in *Main Street* as Gopher Prairie). Although Fine approaches his material sociologically, his inclusion of literary texts underscores his point that the construction of reputation, like the construction of a work of fiction, involves an imaginative shaping of character and plot. Thus Benedict Arnold, subject of his first chapter, is constructed as a villain with the sinister duplicity of Shakespeare's Richard III, another figure who would lend himself beautifully to such reputational analysis.

Reputational analysis inevitably raises an epistemological question: in what senses do we "know" Richard III, or Benedict Arnold, or O. J. Simpson? In his introduction Fine touches on the fact that we may "recognize the thinness of our knowledge of [celebrity] figures" even as the fact of their celebrity connects us to them and affords us opportunities to "converse about vital social matters" that their lives illustrate. Celebrity, in fact, confers a fictive familiarity so that we

respond to celebrities “as if we knew their motivations and values” (4). Thus even at the outset we see how equivocal the term “knowledge” is as applied to the subject of reputation, since Fine himself gets caught in the slippage between “thin” knowledge (of the obscure and arguably unknowable “actual” individual) and the “thick” knowing that we construct as we engage in the fiction-making that surrounds celebrities. At times, Fine’s attention to explaining his theoretical stance—a social constructionism modified by “cautious naturalism” (15-17)—actually hampers his analysis, since reputation, unlike the individuals possessing (or masked by) reputation, has no possible existence apart from its constructed one.

The eight chapter titles give a good overview of the nature and scope of the book: “Benedict Arnold and the Commemoration of Treason,” “Warren Harding and the Memory of Incompetence,” “John Brown and the Legitimation of Political Violence,” “Fatty Arbuckle and the Creation of Public Attention,” “Henry Ford and the Multiple-Audience Problem,” “Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, and the Creation of Imaginary Social Relations,” “Herman Melville and the Demise of Literary Reputation,” and “Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street*, and Community Reputation.” Each chapter, as well as the introduction, ends with an extensive list of references.

The “difficult reputations” to which the book’s title refers are reputations that are not positive and stable. Fine examines three types: reputations that are negative because the individual has violated the society’s canonical values; repu-

tations that are contested, that is, in the process of being formed or re-formed; and reputations that are divided along the lines of differing subcultural viewpoints and values. These three categories are useful as an initial approach to the subject, but because of their overlap, they have a certain conceptual awkwardness. Contested reputations are identified as those of a specific category, yet contestation is also a process to which any sort of reputation—positive or negative, singular or plural—may be subjected—in other words, contestation is a potential attribute of the whole.

Fine’s cases effectively show how the processes of reputation formation and revision exhibit certain common characteristics regardless of historical period. Such a study could be augmented by an examination of the particular effects of current journalistic/communications practices and media. For instance, how has the Internet, with its capacity to facilitate the contestation and proliferation of multiple reputations, increased reputational “difficulty”? What are the consequences of the American appetite for tabloid journalism (and its televised counterpart), with its increasingly shameless invasions and inventions of private lives, so that would-be heroes are reduced to buffoons by being caught, literally or figuratively, with their pants down? At the same time, public relations has fostered the reverse phenomenon, a sort of preemptive strike whereby the managers of a public figure glorify that individual, for instance as a “compassionate conservative,” which of course invites contestation but also shapes the terms that the contestation will take (not

compassionate? not a conservative?). However, since these current problems and practices fall outside the scope of Fine's book, it can hardly be faulted for not covering them. Indeed, one of the book's merits is that it invites just this sort of extension and speculation.

Fine's work exemplifies how biography provides us with a form of history, the individual standing in synecdochally for the period or sequence of events with which he or she is associated. Reputation, difficult or otherwise, gives us "a shorthand way of conceptualizing a person, and it is a powerful metaphor for thinking about a period or set of events" (7). Since indeed it is precisely the individual as characterized by reputation—not the irretrievable, unmediated individual—that is exhibited in our historical narratives, the first point is perhaps tautological, but the second is a useful reminder about the operation of historical tropes. In these pages we glimpse the power of visual images, anecdotes, poetry. For example, Fine quotes a poem by John Greenleaf Whittier on the occasion of John Brown's execution. This "beatific image" (105) of a violent man transformed by tenderness was apparently invented by an anti-slavery journalist and became part of Brown's legend:

John Brown of Osawatomie,
They led him out to die;
And lo!—a poor slave-mother
With her little child pressed nigh.
Then the bold blue eyes grew tender,
And the old harsh face grew mild,
As he stooped between the jeering
ranks
And kissed the negro's child! (105)

When reading this poem, I was reminded of e.e. cummings's eulogy to President Harding, another of Fine's subjects:

the first president to be loved by his
bitterest enemies" is dead

the only man woman or child who
wrote
a simple declarative sentence with
seven grammatical
errors "is dead"

(*Collected Poems*, 1926, no. 200)

Moving from substance to style, Fine's approach is somewhat vitiated by the problem of voice—an authorial "I," which is used frequently (though not throughout) and is most noticeable when theory or method is being discussed. Yet much of the book was composed collaboratively, so this singular voice leads to occasional uncertainty as to whose views are being represented. In his acknowledgments, Fine explains that five of the eight studies comprising the book were coauthored with former graduate students, and that in these five (two of which were master's theses), "the students are properly first authors" (ix). Although Fine is careful to give credit where it is due, we are left with a rhetorical problem that leads to a bit of a structural problem as well.

Given the multiple authorship, the volume might more usefully be evaluated as a collection of essays, were it not for that controlling voice. In his introduction Fine remarks that "the eight case studies do not by themselves make for an intellectually coherent argument; my task in this introduction is to sketch what a broader approach to the analysis of dif-

ficult reputations might entail." Here we have the essence of the problem. We would expect that these case studies, given their multiple authors, would not have such coherence, so why not turn an admitted shortcoming into an advantage by emphasizing rather than downplaying the variety of viewpoints? More diversity of voice—unedited and unrevised by Fine—would perhaps have given this volume more richness in its approaches to the subject of reputation.

Perhaps as a consequence of the multiple authorship, the book occasionally bogs down in what seems a repetitive discussion of theory and method—a discussion that could have been developed more thoroughly in the introduction and then referred to only briefly within the chapters. At the same time, several apologetic-seeming disclaimers might be eliminated. For instance, Fine disclaims the title of historian, explaining that as a sociologist he has other goals and standards: "To suggest that in five years I could write conscientious historical essays on eight different periods from the 1780s to the 1950s would be laughable. Instead, I must describe how I perceive the methodology" (23). The first of these sentences again raises the problem of voice, since we already know (if we have taken the time to read his acknowledgments) that he did not in fact author all eight essays. His words also point ahead to one aspect of the methodological problem. He proceeds to explain that most of the research in this book depends on secondary sources: "I did not feel it necessary to travel to dusty archives, although my coauthors and I spent much time reading the accounts of those who had. In essence literary, economic, cultural,

and political historians served as research assistants" (23). We may feel uneasy about the dismissal of those "dusty archives" and the reduction of other scholars to the functional status of "research assistants" (not to mention that ubiquitous "I") but surely there is a more intellectually defensible (and clearer) way to determine and justify the method. This book examines not a number of individuals who are hidden behind or beneath a layer of texts, but rather a number of very visible reputations that are constructed by and recorded in texts which cumulatively had wide enough circulation to shape public opinion. Thus the research logically would be directed toward those texts. If some of them are now housed in "dusty archives," then they must be sought there; otherwise not.

By expounding his theoretical approach at several points in the book, Fine not only weakens the coherence of the whole work but also sometimes foregrounds the discussion of general principles to an extent that the particulars of the individual case recede from view. Yet Fine's "cautious naturalism" does not seem in itself to warrant much discussion, indeed affording undesirable opportunities for semantic or conceptual slippage. The proof of its utility lies in the application, and his ideas find their best expression when he focuses on "the process by which reputations are made or unmade" (259). His close readings of reputation entertainingly support his concluding observation: "History is filled with stories and with storytellers" (259) and with a rich cast of characters—heroic, villainous, and ambiguously "difficult."

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