

women' was a Marquesan cultural trait'' (xi). Von den Steinen's collection does not bear out this negative assessment of Marquesan personality as evidenced by mythological and legendary characters. True, as in much Oceanic folklore, main characters can be threatening and at times cruel, but it is difficult to assign such antisocial behavior to any one sex. To present-day scholars seeking insight into Marquesan personality through their oral traditions I would strongly recommend that they use Von den Steinen's work as their starting point. His *Die Marquesaner und ihre Kunst* is very much in print (Hacker Art Books, New York, 1969); his "Reise nach den Marquesas-Inseln" is as near as any university inter-library loan desk. And of course, there is the present translation-reprint here under review. I highly recommend it.

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SOUTH AMERICA

BASSO, ELLEN B. *In Favor of Deceit. A Study of Tricksters in an Amazonian Society*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1987. xx+376 pages. Photographs, bibliography, index of stories, general index. Clothbound US\$40.00; ISBN 0-8165-1022-9.

With this impressive volume Ellen Basso provides a significant addition to her growing set of volumes on the Carib-speaking Kalapalo community. After her 1969 dissertation, Basso provided a deft outline of the community (1973). And 1985 marked the appearance of her award-winning tome, *A Musical View of the Universe*. *In Favor of Deceit* continues her commitment to close examinations of language and context, a

direction fundamental to anthropological research since the time of Malinowski, but often better honored in the breach than in the practice. Basso deliberately brackets (or, at least, pushes below the surface of the text) general theory concerning trickster material (e.g., from Carl Jung, Karl Kerényi, Paul Radin, Robert Pelton), by claiming that predetermining concepts about psychological structure overstress the marginal and bizarre aspects of the "Trickster." Far better to scrutinize the daily contexts in which these stories are told. When viewed as part of the biography of oral artists and their communities, new patterns of awareness and action become keys to their interpretation. The relationship between mythological characters and day-to-day understanding is crucial. "In the seemingly picayune details of living in a particular way in a certain time and place, . . . tricksters have the greatest interest and importance" (6). In this light, trickster tales reveal the fundamental motives for creativity and unveil the shifting emotional texture of communal life: melancholy, irony, beauty, conflict, harmony, elegance, loss, and grace. This position of Basso's is, of course, a strong general sort of claim, but it begs important questions. It would be more satisfying if Basso saw that her own claims actually fall into the realm of general theory. Then she might address general theory more directly than she does. Perhaps her future publications will deal with questions of general structure, comparison, and thematic elements, for these are important even to the fate of her own work. What, for instance, should be made of her work by those who do not know Carib language and history? The very existence of her own excellent books raises pressing theoretical questions concerning the value of such studies as the trickster materials when they are set *outside of their day-to-day context*. Basso's book lies outside of that context. Are we to simply read and accept what she has written (what would "accept" mean here?); or are we to read and think about her presentation in some valid ways. What are the constraints on such thinking? How would one properly use her conclusions and materials? Such questions do not go away if one sets out to do culture-specific study. On the contrary, if the study is well done, the questions return with new force.

The book is a treasure. Not only does it provide a wealth of mythological materials, it contextualizes them in a way that is truly rare. We follow the doings of Kwatingi, the creator, and his grandson Taugi, who is the master trickster and creator of humankind. Other tricksters receive their due also: Afasa, the failure whose obsessions with procedural detail screen out insight until it is too late; and the sundry Disgusting Dawn People whose overly stimulated emotions leave them in ridiculous fixes.

Basso's genius lies in her ability to bring forward the very process of storytelling as the element integral to the trickster dynamic. At every moment and level, in contrast to the social disruption, violence, and unbridled subjectivity illustrated in the tale, there shines the *ifutisu*, the controlled manner of speaking and moving displayed in the teller's performance. And so the reader comes to know not only the mythological characters but the verbal artists: the mournful and withdrawn Ulutsi and his fast-talking rival in Aife, the nervous old man Kambe; arthritic Kakaku, formerly of Dy-agami, and his son-in-law Aipatsi; Kudyu, the gifted and dramatic Kuikuro speaker whose stage presence drew crowds; shy Muluku, awkward son of the great master Mugika; Kwatagi, the lively shaman; and Agakuni, a caustic mime whose vocal impressions and gestures could stir up excitement.

With this cast in place, Basso argues that concealment and illusion are a necessary part of individual growth and cultural creativity, as evidenced in the tale, in its telling, and in its social context. "The Kalapalo understand deception to be a fundamental mode of insight and understanding in human thought" (351). Through the stories

and the dynamics that unfold in their telling, one gains insight into how one can (or ought) to feel in a given situation and how one can (or ought) to evaluate and respond to such feelings. The tales aid in the examination of motives, decisions to act, and consequences of action. They help one evaluate appearances, pretense, and illusions by piercing beyond them without eschewing the value of the guises or guile required to negotiate and comprehend differences in points of view and of experience or even differences between what people say and what they really feel. Healthy skepticism is cultivated through an artistic appreciation of paradox and contradiction as well as through a demonstration that absolute truths are reversible. In this way, the Kalapalo encourage the capacity to imagine more than a single kind of relationship with other people, and foster multiple, pragmatic views about one's own powers as a cultural agent. Basso and the Kalapalo work together to undo those tempted to approach the study of culture or personality with fixed models of invariate structure.

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