INDONESIA

WEBB, KEANE. *Signs of Recognition: Powers and Hazards of Representation in an Indonesian Society.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. xxix + 297 pages. Maps, illustrations, bibliography, index. Cloth US$50.00 (outside US £40.00); ISBN 0-520-20475-3. Paper US$20.00 (outside US £15.95); ISBN 0-520-20475-1.

Quite early in the book, Keane refers to the *The Great Gatsby:* "I began to feel a bit like the narrator of *The Great Gatsby,* privy to the secret griefs of wild, unknown men" (29). His reference is fortuitous since a recurrent theme in *The Great Gatsby,* which we might call "signs of recognition," is relevant to understanding Keane's attempt in the book. The vivid description of the first encounter of the "narrator" with Gatsby is impressive as well as full of significance for understanding the theme.

> It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it, that you may come across four or five times in life. It faced—or seemed to face—the whole eternal world for an instant, and then concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favour. It understood you just so far as you wanted to be understood, believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself, and assured you that it had precisely the impression of you that, at your best, you hoped to convey.

Again and again, the novel refers to facial expressions, sometimes "recognizable," sometimes "unrecognizable." In one passage, for example, the narrator states that "an indefinable expression, at once definitely unfamiliar and vaguely recognizable, as if I had only heard it described in words, passed over Gatsby's face."

Sometimes we see the other represented in the other's expression; sometimes we see ourselves represented there; and sometimes we fail to recognize the very expression. Through the failure, though, we may learn more. The three theoretical keywords used throughout the

book, "representation," "recognition," and "hazard" are introduced and explained fully in the first chapter: "Introduction: Representation, Recognition, and Hazard." People try to represent themselves symbolically and/or politically (that is, with a political intent), by, for example, performing a ritual action and reciting ritual chant. For their efforts to be efficacious, however, the "representation" needs to be "recognized" as such. On the third keyword, "hazard," which implies a failure of representation and/or recognition thereof, Keane says: "representations, I suggest, do not only include reflections of the actions they serve, they also hint at the nature and the sources of potential failure as well" (9). "In Anakalang, representational practices are subject to the hazards of semiotic difficulty, economic weakness, political conflict, and ancestral ire" (23). His emphasis on the hazard of representational practices, rather than their efficacy, provides him with a way to integrate two kinds of analyses of representation ordinarily treated separately: symbolic and political.

After showing his theoretical concerns, the author then goes on in Chapter 2 ("Geography, History, and Sociality") to give historical and ethnographical background as is pertinent to the discussion in the book. In this chapter, the theme of "hazard" is reintroduced with more concrete ethnographic details. Anakalangese often emphasize the agonistic character of affinal relations (between *ngaba wini* and *yera*), though the actual relationship concerned is, almost always, firm and long-standing. In this sense, the "distance" is not "just there" but "constructed" culturally. This constructed agonistic quality between affines is important in that it can trigger "hazard" at any moment of a formal encounter of affines, a theme recurrent throughout the book, and analyzed in detail, especially in Chapter 6.

In the introductory chapter, quoting C. S. Pierce, Keane declares his focus to be on representation's real causal connection with its object. In a sense, the "material aspect," in addition to the symbolic aspect, of a representation is emphasized throughout the text. Thus, Chapter 3, "Things of Value," describes material objects (such as *mamuli*, "ornaments") used in formal exchange (as *dati*) as well as in more practical contexts such as maintaining/reproducing households. The analysis focuses on how goods are valued (say, in terms of iconism) in relation to their semiotic-cum-political implications.

In Chapter 4, "Loaded Terms," the author minutely analyzes ritual speech (*yaiwo*), not only formally/linguistically but also in terms of Anakalangese ideology concerning speech, specifically, and language generally. His unique way of analysis is better shown in contrast with other kinds of linguistic analyses of ritual speech. He says, in the preface of the book:

> Where a linguistic anthropologist might ask, for example, what are the verbal devices that reproduce authority, I ask what the use of these devices tells us about the nature of authority. In the process, I hope that the insights won from the close analysis of language can be brought back to illuminate certain problems of society and culture. (xiv–xv)

These "textual" analyses of speech are followed by "contextual" analyses in Chapter 5, "Text, Context, and Displacement." In this chapter, as in the previous one, Keane pays special attention to how authority is derived from ritual speech both semiotically (authority from ancestors) and sociopolitically (authority effecting upon the audience).

On most ceremonial occasions, however, speech (as is analyzed in Chapters 4 and 5) and objects (described in Chapter 3) enter into the scene at the same time. Chapter 6, "Voices, Agents, and Interlocutors," depicts the performance structure of ritual events encompassing speech and objects. The agonistic quality between affines (described in Chapter 2) comes to the fore in this kind of encounter, realized on a ceremonial occasion. Keane's analysis shows how that quality is expressed in the formal scenario of ceremonial exchange (as in the three roles discernible in speech events), showing again the usefulness of the analytical concept of

"hazard."

Chapter 7, "Formality and the Economy of Signs," and Chapter 8, "Subjects and the Vicissitudes of Objects," approaching the concluding part of the book, become more theoretical, though not losing touch with the ethnographical details. The theoretical subject of both chapters is "action." Chapter 7 concerns mainly the question of what it is to "follow a rule." Despite its abstract philosophical theme, the chapter consists of lucid arguments with reference to ethnographic details, especially marriage negotiations. This chapter is a good example of how ethnography should deal with philosophical arguments—along the lines set by J. L. Austin, who I think is a great ethnographer as well as a great philosopher. Chapter 8 deals with the way Anakalangese conceptualize the concept "hazard."

Keane concludes the book (Chapter 9: "Conclusion") by briefly stating the theoretical implications of the concepts and the ways of analysis he has employed extensively in the book. Having shown, I hope, the book's theoretical richness and ethnographical virtues, I wish to add, at this last stage of the review, that the book is full of specific personal names and dates from the field that made reading it a pleasant experience for me.

NAKAGAWA Satoshi
Osaka University
Osaka, Japan