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Obituary

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ailment). The overarching theme running throughout most papers and workshops was the importance of experiential engagement in the understanding of shamanic praxis.

Given this thematic context, the general mood of the conference was marked by a call for the re-evaluation of rationalist epistemological frameworks invariable called upon by academics in their encounters with the otherworldly. Specifically, the notion that the spirit world maintained an experiential existence beyond the scope of scientific-reductivist tropes was advocated in numerous papers and workshops. This was perhaps most strongly underscored by neurochemist Elaine Perry, who bravely offered an alternative view of the neuroscientific perspective, suggesting that the neurological effects produced by psychotropic plants may in fact facilitate genuine experiences of the otherworldly. Perry presented a number of anomalous cases drawn from the medical and psychiatric literature to support this view. Notably, the numbers of academics present who were already involved in some form of shamanic practice suggests that a shift towards a more totalizing approach to magico-religious phenomenon is well under way within the academic sphere.

Michael York and Natalie Tobert shared the view that western perspectives were too deeply embedded in a psychopathology which marginalized those suffering from psychic disorders. Tobert subsequently argued that it might be more meaningful and beneficial to approach ailments such as schizophrenia and multiple personality disorder as incursions of the otherworldly, rather than compartmentalize them as forms of mental illness. Likewise, Alan Bleakley reconsidered Freud's classic 'ratman' and

'wolfman' analyses in the light of the shamanic idiom of the 'power animal', suggesting that similar cases would reach a more positive resolution if viewed not as the symptoms of sexual neurosis, but as visionary, initiatory experiences.

Both Robert Wallis and Piers Vitebsky were, however, careful to problematize contemporary western shamanisms, critiquing the co-option and decontextualization of indigenous shamanic praxis by New Age shamans, and the resultant neo-colonialist overtures apparent in the privileging of western concepts of spirituality over those of indigenous peoples. This point was aptly underscored by the fact that a number of delegates were perturbed by an instance in Mihaly Hoppal's film presentation, depicting the sacrifice of a horse as part of a Tungusic shamanic ceremony. As an alternative to the co-option of traditional shamanisms, Daniel Noel suggested that the Jungian tradition should be looked to as the 'indigenous' shamanism of the west. However, during a panel discussion focusing on his recent book *The Soul of Shamanism*, Noel was criticized for over-emphasizing the literary origins of western neo-shamanism in the works of Eliade and Casteneda. The panel suggested that contemporary neo-shamanism was a more dynamic, grass-roots phenomenon that had arisen out of the dialogue between indigenous shamanisms and western practitioners. Many papers considered contemporary western shamanisms in relation to their roots within indigenous praxis, yet, given the conference's title, surprisingly few papers explicitly examined the practical role of shamanic states of consciousness in everyday life in a modern, urban context. This issue was, however,

explored experientially in most of the workshops (which was perhaps more appropriate, given the experiential focus of the conference).

The conference evidenced a distinct postmodernist flavour, most notably in its focus upon the authority of individual experience. As a consequence, I felt that the general thrust of the debate was sometimes in danger of accentuating experiential narratives over a more objective methodology, mirroring what seemed to me to be an implicit assumption that scientific-rationalist epistemologies were of limited application to this subject area. However, this apparent asymmetry articulated a much needed deconstruction and re-evaluation of the tendency within the social sciences to marginalize 'shamanic' states of consciousness through a focus upon structural and socio-political contexts. In this respect, the conference also successfully avoided the academic elitism often visible in more traditional conference agendas, where scholastic/theoretical discourses are frequently privileged over and above the voices and experience of practitioners.

Furthermore, the inclusion of experiential workshops added a welcome participatory dimension to the proceedings, circumventing the dryness sometimes encountered in similar academic contexts. I left the conference feeling that it had been an enlightening and informative experience; but above all else, it had been fun.

A selection of the papers presented will appear in a volume with the provision title *Shamanism in Contemporary Society*, which is to be published in 1999. □

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obituary

CARLOS CASTANEDA

Carlos Cesar Arana Castaneda, the self-proclaimed 'sorcerer' and best selling author, died of liver cancer on 27 April 1998 at his home in Westwood, California – apparently aged 72. 'Apparently' because Castaneda was an inveterate and unrepentant liar about the statistical details of his life; even his given name is in some doubt. According to Deborah Drooz, a friend and executor of the estate, Castaneda didn't like attention, making certain not to have his picture taken or his voice recorded. He died, as he lived, secretly and mysteriously: no funeral or public service was held and his cremated ashes were apparently spirited away to Mexico.

Despite, or perhaps because, of his cultivation of mystery, Castaneda's tales of

drug-induced mental adventures with a Yaqui Indian shaman named Don Juan once fascinated the world and his ten books continue to sell in 17 languages. The book which launched his reputation with a strange mixture of anthropology, allegory, parapsychology, ethnography, Buddhism and perhaps fiction, was *The Teachings of Don Juan*, based upon a master's thesis written as an anthropology graduate student at UCLA. He said he stopped in an Arizona border town where he met an old Yaqui Indian from Sonora, Mexico, named Juan Matus, a *brujo* – a sorcerer or shaman – who used powerful hallucinogens to initiate the student.

Under Don Juan's strenuous tutelage, which lasted several years, Castaneda

experimented with peyote, jimson weed and dried mushrooms, undergoing moments of ecstasy and panic, all in an effort to achieve varying states of nonordinary reality. Castaneda said he saw giant insects, learnt to fly, grew a beak, became a crow and ultimately reached a plateau of higher consciousness, a hard-won wisdom that made him a 'man of knowledge' like Don Juan.

Although Castaneda's death certificate lists him as never married, he was married from 1960-1973 to Margaret Runyan Castaneda of Charleston, West Virginia. (Source: *Anthropology Newsletter* 39:6) □

FLOYD LOUNSBURY

Floyd Glenn Lounsbury, Sterling Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at Yale, died of a heart condition and other complications aged 84 on 14 May 1998 in Branford, Connecticut.

Although majoring in mathematics (BA, 1941) at the University of Wisconsin, his anthropological career began there when his teacher, Morris Swadesh, asked him to conduct the WPA-funded Oneida Language and Folklore Project in Green Bay, Wisconsin (1939-40). From this experience and an additional 6 months of linguistic and ethnographic fieldwork, Lounsbury gained a command of Oneida which led to his theses in anthropology at Madison (Ma, 1946) and at Yale (PhD, 1949). He began teaching at Yale in 1947 and retired in 1979.

Lounsbury earned international scholarly

recognition for his outstanding publications and research on structural linguistics, semantic systems, American Indian languages, psychology of language, social organization and systems of kinship, and the ancient writing of Middle America. He made a succession of seminal contributions to each. Lounsbury became the founder and leader of 20th-century descriptive and comparative Iroquoian linguistics, was a principal innovator in the formal analysis of kinship terminologies and structural semantics, and played a major role in the decipherment of Maya hieroglyphic texts and the study of Maya numeration, computation and calendric astronomy.

He was elected to the National Academy of Sciences (1969), and honoured by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences

(1976) and the American Philosophical Society (1987). He received the Wilbur Cross Medal from Yale Graduate School (1983), an honorary Doctor of Laws from the University of Pennsylvania (1987) and the Tatiana Proskouriakoff Award from Harvard for distinction in Mesoamerican research (1993). He was Distinguished Lecturer at the 86th AAA Annual Meeting in 1990.

Lounsbury is remembered fondly by his Oneida friends and their descendants and would have been pleased and honoured to know that his passing was noted in *News from Indian Country* (Hayward, WI). He is survived by his wife Masako Yokoyama Lounsbury and daughter Ruth Ozeki Lounsbury. (Source *Anthropology Newsletter* 39:6) □

letters

Why did the Nazis kill?

In his account of Reserve Police Battalion 101, Christopher Browning cites the testimony of a police battalion member, identified as being at the time a 35 year old metal worker from Bremerhaven. Commenting on his role in the killings, he said:

I made the effort, and it was possible for me, to shoot only children. It so happened that the mothers led the children by the hand. My neighbour then shot the mother and I shot the child that belonged to her because, I reasoned with myself that after all without its mother the child could not live any longer. It was supposed to be, so to speak, soothing to my conscience to release [*erlosen*, 'redeem' or 'save'] children unable to live without their mothers (Browning: 73).

This is obviously some verification of what Alex Hinton ('Why did the Nazis kill?', A.T., October 1998) describes as 'the importance of symbolic processes and of alternative cultural models that facilitate genocide' (p.15) but whether one wishes to exact some kind of retribution on this perpetrator or submit his evidence to anthropological analysis depends on one's situation. Hinton's discussion of Goldhagen's simplifications results from his interest in using details of the Holocaust to further his arguments about genocide in Cambodia. He loses sight of the question why did the Nazis kill [the Jews] with his explanation of 'psychosocial dissonance', a symptom rather than a causal factor (p.13).

When Gitta Sereny asked Franz Stangl, the second commandant of Treblinka, what was the Nazis' motivation for mass murder of the Jews, he twice gave the same reply. 'They wanted their money ... Have you any idea of the fantastic sums that were involved? That's how the steel was bought in Sweden' (Sereny: 101). In her report on Treblinka written in 1945, Rachel Auerbach described the Holocaust as '... a crime of robbery with murder' (Donat: 68). Raul Hilberg detailed how the trains that shipped the Jews to the death camps were paid for with money taken from those killed (Donat: 11). They were hired from the German Ministry of Transport at special one-day charter excursion fares with children under ten going at half fare and children under four going free. Trains with a normal capacity of one thousand passengers were filled with two to five thousand. In *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Zygmunt Bauman discusses complex social and economic issues of victims and perpetrators, such as instances when Polish Ghetto rich would buy expensive food to feast the German administration, under the illusion that this sociability would save them, when the food could have been used to feed the starving of the Ghetto (148).

Hinton's article is another example of 'anthropological theories' being used to reduce complex historical facts into generalizations of limited practical application. It is part of a tendency whereby

anthropologists argue that they can explain anything – psychoanalysis, incest, famine, corrupt government, the culture of capitalism etc. – rather than some carefully delineated aspect of the phenomena.

The 'black milk' of Paul Celan's 'Death Fugue' remains:

... death is a master from Germany his eyes
are blue
he strikes you with leaden bullets his aim is true
a man lives in your house your golden hair
Margarete
he sets his pack on us he grants us a grave in the
air
he plays with serpents and day dreams death is a
master from Germany

your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamith. □

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