

that should stimulate further research, Brison demonstrates that analysis of narratives in conflict must consider the emergent meaning that results from the interactions of the intention of the speaker, the interpretations of primary and secondary audiences, and the text itself in relation to previous and concurrent texts.

Just Talk is more than just ethnography. It makes valuable theoretical contributions that will be appreciated in a number of subdisciplines, including those concerned with politics, law, and communication.

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Between Culture and Fantasy: A New Guinea Highlands Mythology, by Gillian Gillison. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993. ISBN 0-226-29380-7 cloth, ISBN 0-226-29381-5 paper, xxi + 392pp, illustrations, appendix, glossary, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, US\$60.00; paper, US\$22.50.

This book is a remarkable portrait of the symbolic themes underlying myth, ritual, and exchange among the Gimi of the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea. Through a dense and sometimes breathtaking explication of rites of death, birth, marriage, initiation, and curing, Gillian Gillison makes a definitive case for putting procreation beliefs at the heart of studies of Highlands exchange. But hers is not the well-worn point that we need to see Gimi transactions in terms of

their underlying ideas of being—far from it. Instead, Gillison sees Gimi procreation beliefs as an idiom for expressing the most basic psychosexual conflicts, so that Gimi life-cycle events, which inevitably bring up “fantasied dilemmas that threaten [a person’s] development” (22), offer an ideal medium for enacting (and defending against) primordial sexual fantasies of incest and intrigue. Thus, “the conflictual, mythological basis of Gimi society is rooted in the overriding idea that exchange has a profoundly sexual origin and meaning” (xv). For the Gimi, these themes get played out in a hidden debate over women’s role in the mythical origins of social life and, by extension, their role as objects of transactions among men.

Gillison began her field study looking for “some kind of female protest or counterculture” (4), but found that women seemed to have no interest in undercutting men’s world. However, on a second trip she discovered that women did have myths of their own, told after dark in women’s houses, and these offered counter visions of the origins of social life. Women’s stories, it seemed, allowed a “clandestine debate” with the men’s world, while men and women themselves continued avoiding each other in much of their daily lives (xv). Gillison further found that both sexes’ myths effaced important structural elements that appeared overtly in the symbolism of life-cycle rituals. Throughout the book, with intriguing but not always convincing interpretive artistry, Gillison shows that the complex articulation of myth and ritual exchange, framed in a dia-

logue of men's and women's stories, reveals the central "dilemmas" of Gimi sociality and sexuality.

A simple but central example shows how this works. In competing myths of the origin of menstruation, men and women blame the other sex for the crime of killing the firstborn child (Gimi interpret first menstruation as the death of a fetus). Men's origin myth blames women by depicting the first woman luring her young brother with haunting music from a flute. When he steals it and tries to blow into it, he finds that she's closed the hole with a plug of her pubic hair, his futile efforts causing his sister to menstruate for the first time. By contrast, the women's story has a sleeping man's huge lustful penis wandering through the village and biting a hole in a virgin's vulva, awakening her and prompting her to cut his penis down to size. The blood of the giant penis head is the blood of first menses. Gillison argues that while these myths seem to argue over who caused the first crime, the real culprit is obscured in both. He appears only when ritual is also taken into account.

When a woman marries, her father secretly places a plug of meat in a flute and the bride unwittingly carries this treasure in her net bag to her affines. It is said that were she to discover this plug, she would smash open the flute and devour the meat, never producing children. If all goes well, her affines will take the meat and feed it to her themselves, beginning a series of "head" payments to the woman's line that continues for years as her children grow. When viewed in the context of the myth, the father's plug implicates

him in the original crime. Gillison argues he can also be seen as the wandering penis, acting independently of the first man and woman. He is like the Moon, who in a Gimi idiom causes menstruation by sending his penis out of the sky every month to make women bleed. Thus, the ritual marriage payment reveals the central role of a father who is present but obscured in the myths.

Gillison argues that marriage exchanges do two things to supplement the competing origin myths. First, since the father's plug implicates him in the death of the firstborn, the marriage payments act as *accusations*, symbolically reenacting the father's crime, thus warning him against using his (real life) power to curse his daughters' children. Second, the exchange grants priority to men's view, denying women an active role in the creation scenario; instead, women remain conduits for relations between men and cannot repeat the castrating initiative they are granted in women's stories. Gillison offers a compelling rethinking of the role of marriage payments that goes well beyond the standard view of them as compensations for the loss of a woman.

Later chapters on other life-cycle events build on this foundation. Each time, Gillison's exegesis shows the exchange nullifying a potential destructive or antisocial proclivity in women (such as cannibalizing corpses), all the while building a more and more complicated vision of the conditions that produce and sustain life. The "intrauterine scenario," which begins with the simple premise that semen produces all of the child, gets complicated by layer

upon layer of meaning, first by the implied presence of the woman's father, and in the end by lurid implications of homosexual incest between father and son. By the end of the book, the flute with its plug has come to embody a dizzying array of ideas, encapsulating "complicated scenarios of intrauterine life, combining relations among generations, parricide and filicide, copulation and death, gestation and birth, etc., as if they were simultaneous and the same" (349).

The sheer complexity of the analysis raises questions about its salience for actual Gimi lives, especially when these ideas supposedly have such deep psychological roots. Gillison is not always clear about which interpretations come from informants and which from her own intuitions. I found myself grasping tightly to those bits of exegesis that clearly did come from the Gimi themselves, and feeling more and more uneasy about the rest. Gillison's description of her confirmation techniques didn't help. She knew she was on the right track when, after she suggested a possible interpretation to an informant, the informant did not change the subject but offered another story on the same theme "without discussing or analyzing it directly" (14). Nevertheless, Gillison's interpretive talents are formidable, and the accumulated weight of the rich material she brings to light leaves a sense of a truly impressive achievement.

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Language Shift and Cultural Reproduction: Socialization, Self, and Syncretism in a Papua New Guinean Village, by Don Kulick. Studies in the Social and Cultural Foundations of Language 14. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. ISBN 0-521-414849, xvi + 317 pp, illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. US\$59.95.

This book is the fourteenth volume in the series titled Studies in the Social and Cultural Foundations of Language. Its focus is the demise of a small language called Taiap, spoken by fewer than 100 persons of Gapun village in an isolated part of the Sepik region of Papua New Guinea. Kulick seeks to explain why villagers are abandoning their vernacular language in favor of Tok Pisin, an English-based pidgin/creole and the most widely spoken lingua franca in Papua New Guinea. In 1987 no village child under ten actively used Taiap. They either already spoke or were acquiring Tok Pisin.

Although we are fortunate to have a few detailed studies of language shift in Europe (eg, Nancy Dorian, *Language Death*, 1981; Susan Gal, *Language Shift*, 1979), this book is the first to systematically describe the process in Papua New Guinea, a country with unrivaled linguistic diversity containing some 850 languages. Many of these are spoken by small numbers of people and their future is by no means secure. Kulick's study is also the first to concentrate on the language socialization of the first generation of children who are growing up without their vernacu-