

permanent transition in their lives" (p. 68), more important even than perestroika or the collapse of the Soviet Union. To her credit, she does much to support her claim, examining the issues such a shift in policy heralds not only for fashion, but also the collapse of old institutional and social structures and the implications for the students. The students themselves are aware of this, as some of them discuss the ways in which dress allows social distinctions officially elided under socialism to be drawn in sharper relief. Others, however, simply see this as a change in what can now be worn to school.

This particular example points out one weakness in Markowitz's work. For all her emphasis on change, the portraits of the students are locked in the ethnographic present of the mid-1990s. This may be unavoidable, but one cannot but wonder how the students will view the relative importance of such moments in their lives five or ten years from now.

Markowitz interviewed a total of 103 students at a number of different kinds of educational institutions in three different localities, Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Dzerzhinsk, an industrial city west of Nizhny Novgorod. While such a range can not tell us, for example, about adolescence in an eastern Siberian village, Markowitz does manage to present the reader with a wide range of urban educational experiences and the reasons students ended up where they did. This includes the experience of students in the equivalents of high schools, vocational schools and what she terms "ethno-national schools," schools geared toward inculcating a certain identity in terms of nationality or heritage (p. 95).

Along the way we are introduced to Russian adolescents and their world in an eminently readable work. Unlike too many works of anthropology, in addition to an informative and well-grounded ethnography, Markowitz was able write a book that was interesting to read as well. This is a tribute not only to her avoidance of excessive jargon, but to the eloquence and thoughtfulness of the adolescents she spent time with, as well as Markowitz's skill in enabling these voices to be heard.

But *Coming of Age in post-Soviet Russia* is more than just a good read. Through it we are introduced to some of the implications and potentialities of perestroika and its aftermath, such as the forced acknowledgement of issues (alcohol abuse, crime, and ethnicity) downplayed or denied during Soviet rule. We learn how youths, growing up with the background of constant change, understand and exploit its implications for their own lives. This is explored through the students' own recollections of growing up and going to school and through more focused examinations and analysis of issues such as gender and "being Russian." Throughout these narratives, the changes of the 1990s are an ever present ground, sometimes more and sometimes less conspicuous, but always there.

The central part of the book, both physically and conceptually, is the narratives of the adolescents themselves. Markowitz deems part 2 of the book, dealing with growing up and going to school, "descriptive," and part 3, which looks at a number of particular topics, as "more analytical in its

approach" (p. 35). Yet this division strikes me as somewhat misleading. While part 3 does deal with more abstract or analytical topics (politics and religion, among others), it is largely in part 2 that we get to know the voices of the students themselves. In narrating their experiences, part 2 gives us a clear indication of how the adolescents encounter and construct meaning in schools which, while designed and run for children, "are not places of children" (p. 75). The not-so-simple act of going to school necessitates continued negotiation with official and unofficial adult sensibilities and expectations, and through these encounters we gain a better understanding of what it means to be an adolescent in post-Soviet Russia. While the analysis may be less explicit in the section, it is also the most revealing.

This is not to say part 3 is unimportant or uninteresting. In part 3, we partly move outside the strictures of school and look in a more focused manner at how and why students conceive of themselves as they do, how they spend their leisure time, and their hopes and fears for the future. It was intriguing to learn in this section that while the adolescents seem to handle the constancy of change quite well, they also look for stability, at least in the explicitly political realm (p. 175). This raises an important point. Although Markowitz has done a good job of discussing how Russian adolescents have been able to adapt to and take advantage of change, it should not be assumed that this means all has been rosy for them. It also suggests that the adolescents have not been quite as sanguine about coping with change as Markowitz thinks. They are well aware of, and regret, the negative effects of change, whether in terms of homeless, increasing crime, or "loss of communal spirit" (p. 173).

All in all, this is a fine ethnography, and one whose reach extends far beyond a study of adolescents in post-Soviet Russia. Anyone interested in societies in transition, identity, or looking for an example of solid ethnography would be well rewarded for the time spent with this book.

Taking a Stand in a Postfeminist World: Toward an Engaged Cultural Criticism Frances E. Mascia-Lees and Patricia Sharpe. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001. 241 pp.

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What we have here is the result of a fertile—indeed fecund—collaboration between Frances Mascia-Lees and Patricia Sharpe, two feminist scholars who have been shaking up the unruly and undisciplined disciplines of cultural anthropology and women's studies for more than a decade. The book under review covers a great range of intellectual territory—film, anthropology, cultural studies, academia, and the consumerist sensibility of the contemporary American mall—yet there is a surprisingly instructive message to be taken from this collection of one dozen reprinted and revised

essays. It might be stated as: Disciplines, like assumptions, are best broken.

The book is arranged in four parts, but the quartered structure is less consequential than the individual essays, some of which created a stir when originally published. Take, for example, chapter 2, a reworked version of the justly famous 1989 article that the authors published with Colleen Ballerino-Cohen. A staple of many women's studies curricula, "The Postmodernist Turn in Anthropology: Cautions from a Feminist Perspective" is the piece in this book that I think plays to the authors' strength most successfully. In it, the authors argue against a binary construction of difference. In the process, they take on, and take to task, Marcus and Fisher—specifically their "Anthropology as Cultural Critique"—arguing that the critique shortchanges feminism's contribution to postmodern theory. The style of the authors' analysis is refreshingly direct without being combative, a quality retained in the other, less groundbreaking essays as well.

Throughout the book, Mascia-Lees and Sharpe proved themselves to be both ideologically engaged and intellectually engaging; they are at once advocates and analysts, seeing the anthropologist's position as one who must, out of necessity, fuse scholarship with politics so as to serve up a counterattack "against the forces of oppression" (p. 42).

Less theoretically significant, but no less eloquent than "Postmodernist Turn," is the last essay in the book's second section, an engaging ethnographic study of Jane Campion's marvelous film *The Piano*. In that analysis the authors focus a Benjaminian lens, and the notion of an optical unconscious, to broad issues of filmic and anthropological representations. The questions they pose in this piece, as well as the other three essays on film, are intended to illuminate "the complex ways in which we are positioned as viewers both in our seats and in the larger culture, so that we are not left in the dark" (p. 13).

The lively interrogative sensibility of the authors is carried into the third and fourth sections of the book, which are devoted to what might be called the contexts, contents, and contests of the female body, although that is my shorthand, not theirs. The authors specifically focus on issues of mall culture, the mass marketing of arts and crafts, and critiques of the discourse surrounding sexual harassment. Even here, the writers engage and challenge their subject, their reader, and themselves in a manner that is refreshingly inclusionary. The collaboration extends beyond the links of the two writers to include all those who pick up this book. In a world of increasingly fractious and discordant rhetoric, that implicit communion of writer and reader, running through these 12 separate pieces, is a welcome one. In this book, Masclia-lees and Sharpe propose a message that is direct and practical: "to respect the truths on all sides, even when they are contradictory, and still struggle to find a way to act." (p. 202). Of the many truths, hidden or not, they register in this collection, that struggle seems to constitute the truth they value greatly.

Prayer Has Spoiled Everything: Possession, Power and Identity in an Islamic Town of Niger. Adeline Masquelier. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001. 352 pp.

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This intriguingly titled book is a rich ethnography and analysis of *bori*—a term that refers to the spirit beings that inhabit the world of the Mawri people and the possession practices surrounding them. In Masquelier's own words, "this book is an account of how they intervene—sometimes subtly, sometimes dramatically—in human lives to provide a constantly renewed source of meaning for Mawri peasants confronted with cultural contradictions and socioeconomic marginalization" (p. 4). The work is based on field research in Dougoudoutchi, a Mawri community in the Hausa-speaking Arewa region of southern Niger. In addition to being a richly detailed ethnography of possession and an almost biographical account of some of the interesting spirits who possess the Mawri people, Masquelier's book has a number of important aims. Most generally, she seeks to explain *bori* and the *yan bori*—the *bori* practitioners—within their specific political, social, and historical context; she writes that while the devotees themselves may claim that the spirits and their possession practices are unchanging, *bori* is actually an important way of accommodating cultural change and articulating resulting ambiguities. She locates this specifically in the context of recent widespread conversion to Islam in the region and a transition to market-based economy that leaves some Mawri in a state of severe financial hardship.

The most striking aspect of Masquelier's book is the lushness of her ethnography—particularly in her descriptions of the spirits themselves and the possession-related ceremonial activity. This is particularly evident in her fourth chapter, in which she builds on the work of Lambek and Boddy (among others) and argues that possession and the world of spirits must be considered within the events of everyday life, as well as in ceremonial contexts: "Bori does not just have an effect of Mawri reality, it is a constitutive feature of that reality" (p. 123). Through ethnographic vignettes, she sketches an vivid picture of the daily life of the *bori* mediums and their relationship with their spirit inhabitants (interestingly called "the spirit who is on her [the medium's] head" [p. 144]) and the wider *yan bori* community. She explains that a devotee's relationship with other mediums is guided by the relationship of their spirits to one another. For example, a medium inhabited by Maria, the vivacious, young prostitute spirit, is able to tease an older man "with total impunity" if he himself is inhabited by the spirit of Maria's grandmother: "This man she might avoid looking at, and speaking to, in normal circumstances can now treat her as if she were his granddaughter" (p. 144).

In later chapters, Masquelier shifts her focus to "concentrate on specific spirits whose particular histories and identities highlight the *bori*'s capacity to simultaneously mediate