



A 'weekend' artist, Ed provided the illustrations for the Bengali first year reader; such as the one above and the two on the following page.

Trustees from 1986 to his death. He advised the Ford Foundation, the Peace Corps, the US Dept. of Education, the SSRC. He raised money; he gave away money. He put Bengali on the map of American higher education.

During those years, he and his wife, Loraine, and their five children commuted between Chicago and India; in either of their two homes, the one on Dorchester Avenue in Hyde Park, the other (aka the headquarters of the AIIS) on Swinhoe Street in Calcutta, some things always seemed to be in boxes, waiting either to be unpacked or to be packed. They were always in transit; the phone in Chicago rang constantly with calls from Calcutta, and vice versa, and people from Chicago kept dropping by in Calcutta, and vice versa. The Dimocks served as den mothers for over a quarter century to Americans in India. Younger scholars would sleep on their floor or on spare couches or chairs when they missed their trains. The Dimocks fed them when their grant checks didn't arrive and they had nothing to eat. They were absolutely the home base for a half-century of American studies in India. Ed knew everyone in the worlds of government, scholarship, the arts and journalism - everyone. He introduced Americans to the people they needed to know to do their work and to thrive in India. This world, and

the grace, humor, and, above all, love, with which he approached India and the people of India, was vividly and often self-mockingly evoked in his 1998 book of essays, *Mr. Dimock Explores the Mysteries of the East*.

The tremendous services that Professor Dimock rendered to his various communities - the United States (particularly the University of Chicago) and India (particularly Bengal, more particularly Calcutta) were recognized over the years by various honors and tributes, such as his Honorary Fellowship in the National Academy of Letters, in New Delhi. But an equally lasting legacy is embodied in his books, which revolutionized the ways in which European and American scholars approached the study of India. From his first book, a charming rendition of Bengali folk tales (*The Thief of Love*, in 1963), to his final magnum opus, the biography of the Bengali saint Caitanya (*The Caitanya-Caritamrta of Krsnadasa Kaviraja*, 2000), Dimock wrote books that honored poetry, art and religious feeling without for a moment neglecting rigorous translation, meticulous scholarship, and thick description. These have become canonical, and will evoke him vividly - in all of his wit, humor, generosity, intelligence, sensitivity, emotional complexity and deep learning - for generations of young American scholars who were not privileged, as we were, to know the man himself.

When Ed became ill with cancer he moved back to Cape Cod, where his family had had a home for many years. Just about then, I, too, started spending my summers on the Cape, and hung out once again with the Dimock family, now with their grandchildren, and different dogs, but the same old ambiance of relaxed chaos. So I started calling him Cam again. And now all three of him are gone, and I miss them all, in so many ways, and cherish them in grateful and occasionally hilarious memory.

Clinton Seely:

I don't actually recall our very first meeting, though I know it included an incredibly firm handshake, for he always, always, whether ill or well, shook hands that way. That firmness was one of his ways of conveying to you that he was interested in you, which he truly was. People could sense that concern in him and, whether for that reason or for some other, gravitated to him. He had what we call charisma.

My first meeting with him occurred in June of 1963, at the beginning of my three-month Peace Corps training in preparation for going to what was then East Pakistan. The training took place here at the University of Chicago because Ed was here. Though T. W. Clark of SOAS (London) had from time to time been a visiting professor at University of Pennsylvania and had offered Bengali there, Chicago was the first American university to teach

কৃত আর্ষদ-দে-মেগস-স্ব-শ্রী-মর্দেদা-গ-জ-র-তী-অ-শ্রে-অ-হিন

this language on a regular basis, all due to Ed. During that summer of 1963, the Bengali language textbook he had been working on - in collaboration with Somdev Bhattacharji, then a PhD student in geology at the U of C and with Suhas Chatterjee, a linguistics professor from Calcutta - was still in cyclostyled format, not yet published. The accompanying language tapes had Ed's soft, low-register, confident, Boston-accented voice speaking the English and Muzaffar Ahmad, an economics PhD student here speaking much of the Bengali. Those tapes, that book, and his various other publications, particularly those that dealt with Vaisnava theology and practice, a subject dear to his heart, have served to introduce several generations of Americans, some scholars, others not, to the Bengali-speaking region of South Asia.

Ed's extra-academic interests were varied, but one could be said to predominate: boats. He even built a dinghy, a good Bengali word that gets borrowed into English. The building started off upstairs in his house on Dorchester Avenue, and I had images of the boat ending up there - too big to fit through the door. Not so, of course. It was completed in the backyard and saw service on the Cape, in the lake in Centerville on which his and Loraine's house fronted. Boats were his passion. His portrait, taken by his professional photographer son Chris and hanging on the wall in the South Asian Language and Civilizations departmental seminar room, shows Ed standing in front of a brick wall in the dining room of his house. Behind him are two plaques



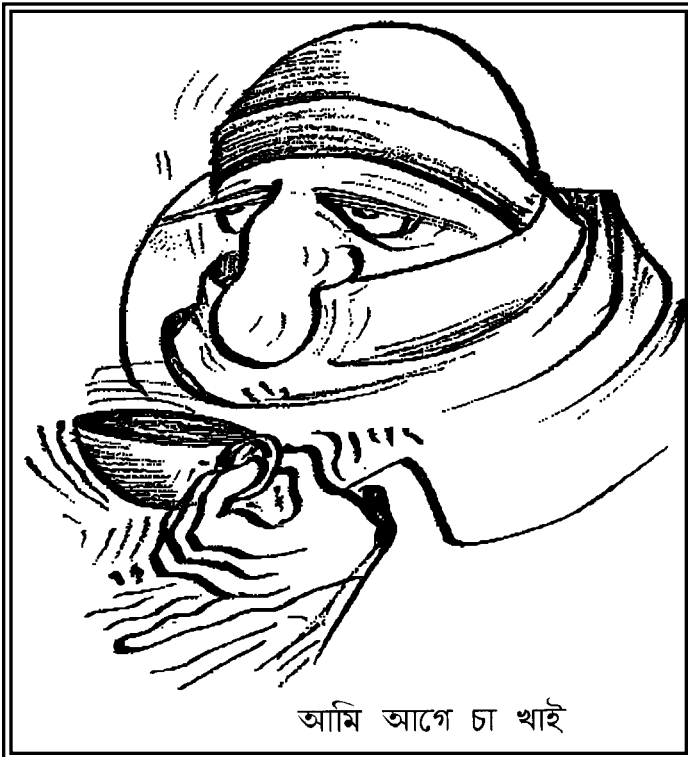
শাম পান খায় আর গান গায়।

Syam eats pan and sings songs.

displaying sailing vessels, one three masted, the other two. Both plaques are sculpted entirely out of wood, sails and all, and appropriately so. He loved wood boats, even subscribed to a wood boat magazine. He loved working with wood, the feel of it, the very idea of it.

When he was recovering from chemotherapy and my wife Gwen and I would visit him in the U of C hospital, our conversation often turned to the boat he was going to buy once he fought his way through the recuperation and got back on his feet. A boat, even the thought of a boat, seemed to be excellent therapy. And soon after leaving the hospital Ed did indeed purchase a used one, which he kept in a boat yard south of the city. I went there only once, to be shown around and inside of what was clearly his pride and joy. Gwen and I talked with him about sailing the boat back to the Cape, where he was planning to retire eventually. It would have been an ambitious project, of course, crossing Lakes Michigan, Huron, and Erie, then navigating the entire length of the Erie Canal, sailing down the Hudson River, and finally working his way up the coast to the Cape. It would have been arduous, but it was a wonderful sailor's pipe dream, and he relished it. He even used to talk of going in with his good friend Jyotirmoy Datta in Calcutta and buying a country boat there and sailing the waters of the Bengal delta.

Sail on, Ed.



আমি আগে চা খাই

Before I drink my tea.

মিঃ এডওয়ার্ড অরুণাচল রাজস্থানী ভৈরবী ইন্ডিয়ান

...more NEWS....

Preservation of Manuscripts

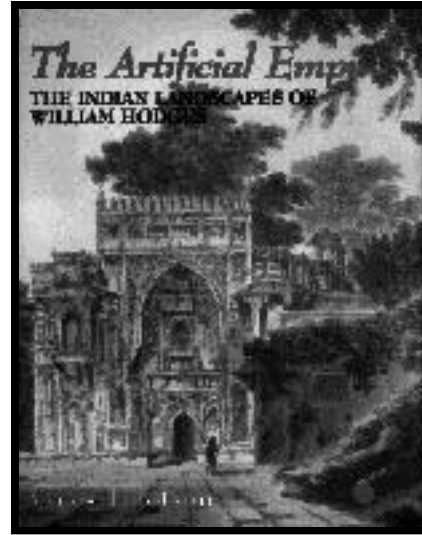
The passing of the Maharaja of Benaras (Dec. 25, 2000) has put in doubt the future of the royal library in Ramnagar Fort, with its rich collection of Sanskrit and medieval Hindi manuscripts. US and European scholars are exploring ways of ensuring its preservation. Interested parties should contact s-pollock@uchicago.edu.

In Memoriam

Donald F. Lach, a professor of history at the University of Chicago since 1948, and the nation's preeminent expert on the impact of Asia on the history and development of Europe from 1500 to 1800, died on October 26, 2000 at the age of 83 in Northwestern Memorial Hospital. He received his AB in 1937 from West Virginia University and his PhD from the University of Chicago in 1941. Lach was the author of the much acclaimed *Asia in the Making of Europe*. The first volume (2 books, 1965), *The Century of Discovery*, surveyed the actual contacts between Europeans and Asia during the sixteenth century. The second volume (1970), *A Century of Wonder*, explored the influence of the new information about Asia on European culture in the same century. Volume Three, *A Century of Advance*, (4 books, 1993, co-authored with Edwin Van Kley) dealt with spread of the new information on Asia to Europe in the seventeenth century. Lach had varied interests, including botany, geography, philosophy, zoology and more.

Manning Nash, a professor in Anthropology at the University of Chicago and a specialist on modernization of developing nations in Latin America and Asia, died on December 12 in the University of Chicago Hospital at the age of 76. Nash received a BA from Temple University and his PhD from the University of Chicago. His field research brought him to several countries including Mexico, Burma and Malaysia. Nash was a member of the University's Committee on the Comparative Study of New Nations, which looked at the emergence of new countries in the wake of the fall of colonialism, and served as the editor of *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, a major journal on emerging nations published by the University of Chicago Press.

SALC's **Edward Dimock**, one of the most influential scholars of Indian studies in North America, died in his home in Centerville, Mass. on January 11, 2001. He was 71. His scholarly publications include *The Sound of Silent Guns and Other Essays*, *The Place of the Hidden Moon: Erotic Mysticism in the Vaisnava-Sahajija Cult of Bengal* and *In Praise of Krishna: Songs from the Bengali* (with Denise Levertov). He was also the author of a widely used introductory Bengali language textbook, several volumes of essays, a humorous autobiographical account of his travels through India and a biography of the saint Caitanya. Among his many awards and honors was the *Desikottama*, awarded by the Indian government in honor of his work in Bengali literature. Please see the special tribute to him in this issue.



The Artificial Empire: The Indian Landscapes of William Hodges.
by Giles Tillotson.
Curzon Press, 2000.

Tillotson's study of the late-eighteenth century British artist William Hodges

combines an in-depth art-historical analysis of Hodges' paintings with a broader social-historical examination of the man, his intellectual work, and his times. Hodges spent the early 1780s making several trips across the region between Calcutta and Delhi under the patronage of Warren Hastings, Britain's first governor general in India. The resulting paintings of landscapes and historical buildings that he produced along with written travel records were instrumental in shaping early British perceptions of India's scenery, architecture and traditions.

Central to any understanding of Hodges' Indian landscapes is the picturesque aesthetic which his training as a painter had equipped him with and which was the dominant mode in English landscape painting for over a century. Tillotson spends a great many pages in carefully laying out the distinguishing characteristics of the picturesque as formal artistic theory and practice. These include a preference for varied and irregular form, roughness of finish, and a preoccupation with formal compositional principles that ignores any moral or political values. The book reproduces a large number of paintings and aquatints that make up Hodges' fascinating artistic output--covering locations such as the Taj Mahal and the tombs of Akbar and Sher Shah as well as lesser-known mosques, temples, palaces and other monuments--and a number of works by other artists by way of comparison. The picturesque schema makes itself felt in all of these by way of "an attachment to ruins," "sparsely animated landscapes," and the blending of architectural forms into surrounding topography and obscuring foliage.

Tillotson also quotes extensively from Hodges' *Travels in India* (1794) and commentaries from collections of prints that he published during his career. These make it clear that Hodges saw himself as part of the Enlightenment project of exploration and knowledge. In keeping with the intellectual climate of the time, he proclaimed his intention to provide "faithful and authentic accounts" and to contribute towards the

collection of “scientific information” about India’s topography and architecture. True to his intentions, he provides many detailed, empirical descriptions of buildings that he encountered. However when we compare his writings with his visual representations it is hard to miss the discrepancies that routinely crop up and which signal that “the quest for accuracy might be in tension with the role of an artist.”

To be more specific, Tillotson points out two ways in which the picturesque aesthetic made it especially difficult for Hodges (and other eighteenth-century British landscape artists who followed him to India) to provide exact and truthful renderings of their subject matter. Firstly, in this way of observing and representing nature, priority is accorded to the principles of composition which make up a view. The truth that is sought lies in these formalist, universal ideals which can be applied to any locale with a little bit of rearrangement. Hence the artificiality that the title refers to is a central property which supplies coherence to these artistic images.

Secondly, the limitations of a particularly English aesthetic become apparent when it is transferred to a completely different set of locations, where it serves “rather to restrain than to reveal their exotic nature.” This conflict is especially acute when the subject of the artists’ work is buildings designed with a distinctly different aesthetic system in mind, as Tillotson suggests is true in the case of both Islamic and Hindu architecture in India. The formal symmetry, isolated grandeur, smooth contours and intricate ornamentation of these buildings were largely incompatible with the picturesque. However with the use of devices like oblique angles, disrupted lines and scale, blurred surface detail and addition of fictitious touches it was possible to render the objects familiar to the English way of seeing. Indeed, by appearing to closely approximate the naturalness of actual visual experience, these artists’ images were widely praised by English critics for their authenticity. Tillotson offers a brief look at alternative views of similar objects by some Indian artists and finds those pictorial representations to be in much closer harmony with the meaning and function of Indian architectural design.

This close examination of William Hodges as a case study convincingly shows that a visual object derives its meaning as much from its formal properties and stylistic conventions as from the historical and political context of its production. No doubt Hodges was situated squarely within the process of military expansion and assertion of British colonial interests in India. His writings express stereotypical views about the native population and, along with his images, suggest a justification for British rule by assigning Indian glory to a vanished past. However the aesthetic tradition of which Hodges was a part served as an important mediating influence in his representation of Indian subjects. By making this theoretical claim Tillotson wishes to take on the Saidian-Orientalist paradigm favored in postcolonial cultural

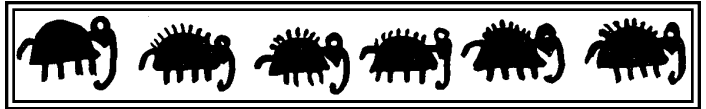
studies and its application to the domain of visual arts. At stake here is the allegedly seamless fit between the extension of colonial power and the reflection of legitimating ideologies in the cultural representations which accompany it. And, as we are painstakingly reminded more than once, “the picturesque itself is not Orientalist.” To mistake an image as a transparent sign of underlying ideologies ignores the complex process by which cultural objects get created, and this is a valuable lesson to take away from Tillotson’s critique.

A further intriguing distinction is drawn between the acts of representation and perception, which would let one claim that Hodges’ (and similar eighteenth century) landscapes can very well be understood to have an Orientalist significance. Tillotson suggests that contemporary audiences involved in the circumstances of British rule in India would have had the capacity to associate Orientalist readings with the depictions of subjects selected for these paintings. But it is unclear to what extent would the picturesque aesthetic have also come into play in this process, considering that those very same conventions were included amongst the cultural resources available to both the producers and receivers of these images.

Similarly we are tantalizingly informed that despite a dismal commercial performance, Hodges’ work was rated highly among the artistic and intellectual establishment in Britain. But we are left to wonder whether it was his mastery of the picturesque technique that was being admired or the very fact that he was a pioneer in portraying scenes from a region that had recently acquired a special resonance in the English mind.

Faiza Mushtaq

Northwestern University



Democratic Politics and Economic Reform in India. by Rob Jenkins.

Cambridge University Press, 1999.

From around the time of its Independence in 1947 through 1980, India adopted what came to be known as the Nehruvian socialist model of economic development. In 1991, a Congress party Indian government led by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao embarked on a liberalization program. The drive towards openness has continued through the decade even though there have been changes in government both at the national and regional levels. Both the Leftist parties and the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party are in principle opposed to economic liberalization. Still, reforms have continued under both a center left United Front coalition government from 1996 to 1998 as well as the current government of the Bharatiya Janata Party-led coalition. In a well researched and thought provoking book, Jenkins, who currently teaches in the Department of

Politics and Sociology at Birkbeck College, University of London, attempts to address the question of how economic reform has been sustained in India through the 1990s despite the formidable political obstacles facing it. The book is thus the latest addition to the existing literature on the politics of economic reform. Briefly, Jenkins' answer is that yes, democratic processes did help keep the reform process going in India. However, what is most interesting about the Indian case is the manner in which they did so – stealthily.

Jenkins begins by briefly outlining what he describes as the “two variants of conventional wisdom on the relationship between democracy and the promotion of policy reform.” According to the first variant, policy reform would be difficult to sustain in democracies in developing countries since opponents of reform have strong connections with electoral constituencies which they could mobilize against the reform. According to the second variant, advanced by aid agencies and supported by mainstream academic research in the literature, a democratic framework could help sustain policy reform by making it possible for those in power to ‘sell’ the benefits of reform to both their constituencies as well as the broader public. Jenkins explicitly rejects both variants, arguing that “democracies are less constrained by unholy interest group coalitions than was previously thought, but neither are they paragons of consensus building.” It would be more realistic to accept, instead that “democratically elected governments operate in a complicated world in which obfuscation and betrayal are routinely used to achieve political ends. Arguably democracy makes such tactics both necessary and possible.”

The analytic framework used is partly based on rational approaches to political behavior, and emphasizes the role of political incentives, political institutions and political skills in sustaining economic reforms. According to the author, Indian politicians have two incentives to continue reform - it provides them with opportunities to exploit new sources and means to earn illegal income and maintain political support while preserving many of the older sources. The second incentive to continue with reform is the fluidity of the interest group structure of political alliances.

Formal political institutions help reduce the strain on the central government to reverse the reform process in several ways and make it possible for the central government to adopt a strategy by which it delegates authority to manage reforms to state level politicians while simultaneously shifting responsibility for the consequences of the reforms. Informal institutions, like ‘porous’ parties which blur party lines and networks, lead politicians to alliances with a wider range of groups and thus makes policy changes less risky to them than to politicians in other developing democracies. Finally, politicians respond to political incentives by manipulating political institutions with the help of political skills, including obfuscation, ambiguity and exploitation. The result is that change in policy is

disguised as continuity and reform takes place by stealth.

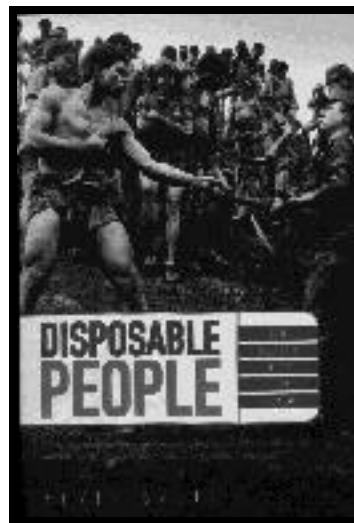
The book is based on field research conducted by the author from 1992 to 1999, consisting of formal interviews with various actors in the policy arena and informal conversations with observers of the Indian political scene. Information from the interviews is combined with press reports and reviews of the relevant academic literature. Jenkins selects four states for a within case comparison of India - Maharashtra, West Bengal, Karnataka and Rajasthan. The selection is a good one since, as the author points out, it captures variations in region, levels of economic development and political ideology of governments. Detailed accounts of how reformed policies were implemented in various states are provided throughout the book. One shortcoming of the book, however, is that although it is a political economic analysis of Indian policy reform in the 1990s, it does not explicitly address the issue of the economic impact of policy reform and its effect on political incentives and institutions in the system.

In the final analysis, this is a well-researched book which provides a fresh perspective on democratic politics in India by using an analytical framework that combines rational choice approaches with empirical evidence. The book would certainly be a valuable addition to the reading list of scholars of Indian politics and economics in particular and comparative political economists in general.

Ira Parnerkar

University of Chicago

Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy.
by Kevin Bales.
University of California Press, 1999.



Kevin Bales' new exposition of slavery deserves to be widely read both in academic circles and by the many sleepy consumers and investors that feed the global market for low-priced goods and services. *Disposable People* employs in-depth case studies of contemporary

slavery in five countries -Thailand, Mauritania, Brazil, Pakistan and India - in order to bring out the characteristics of slavery in today's global economy. Relying on personal observations, interviews with slaves and slaveholders and statistical data gathered by other sociologists and activist groups, Bales confronts the reader with the continued existence of slave labor.

Because the term 'slavery' carries such strong connotations from its most visible form in the capture,

bondage and exploitation of Africans in the 1800s, much of Bales' exposition is devoted to clarifying the differences between what he terms 'old slavery' and 'new slavery'. The former exhibits several distinct features: recognized legal ownership, high purchase cost with (relatively) low profit, a long-term relationship between masters and slaves, and a relative scarcity of slaves. The latter, new slavery, exhibits features that are nearly the opposite: short term relationship between masters and slaves with little or no investment in their physical care, high profits from low purchase cost, no asserted legal ownership, and a surplus of potential slaves.

Because Bales defines slavery as "the total control of one person by another for the purpose of economic exploitation," the focus of his analysis is the convergence of economic factors that make the new slavery possible. Two are preeminent: the increasing number of the world's poor that will accept sustenance at the price of their freedom and the global momentum to derive the greatest profits from the cheapest economic inputs. Political, religious and other cultural factors, including racial differences, are analyzed secondarily based on their tendency to enable or oppose the economic system that keeps slavery in place.

Part of the difficulty of studying slavery, as Bales frequently admits, is that the subject matter is elusive, if not cleverly hidden, and so much of his statistical work is based on estimates and extrapolations. He makes a conservative estimate that there are currently 27 million slaves in the world. The vast majority of these are held under some form of debt bondage: enslavement to pay off a specified monetary loan. These debts almost inevitably grow, and the period of enslavement therefore becomes indefinite, because of fraudulent accounting on the part of the slaveholder.

Among the clearest and most disturbing of the book's analyses are those that focus on the direct and indirect causes of slavery. Two direct causes of slavery continually appear in each of the case studies: unenforced laws and corrupt law enforcement officers. To this point, Bales suggests that wide-scale support for international groups such as Anti-Slavery International and Amnesty International, along with local non-governmental organizations that document and monitor slaveholder activities, is the only effective direct means for stopping slavery. Bales' constructive proposals for individuals focus on the indirect causes: economic consumption and investment. International organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, he suggests, could use their lending power to withhold funding from developing nations that do not implement policies or enforce laws that oppose slavery, and governments could implement economic sanctions against these countries for human rights violations. Bales suggests that individuals should consciously steer their consumption away from goods that are likely to have been made by slave labor and to monitor their investment decisions so that they do not indirectly

support companies that profit from slave labor.

While praise is due for Bales' insightful and courageous project, it should not conceal two of the study's serious shortcomings. First, in each of the countries that Bales studies, he goes to some length to indict the local religions for their complicity with, if not their outright legal support of, slavery. Thai Buddhism, Islam in Pakistan and Mauritania and certain forms of Hinduism in India all come under fire as quaint traditional practices that unwittingly foster attitudes of disrespect for women, children and poor men. The positive contributions of these religions to the legal and ethical development of these countries are underemphasized and respect for religion, as a domain of human life apart from its social utility, is entirely ignored.

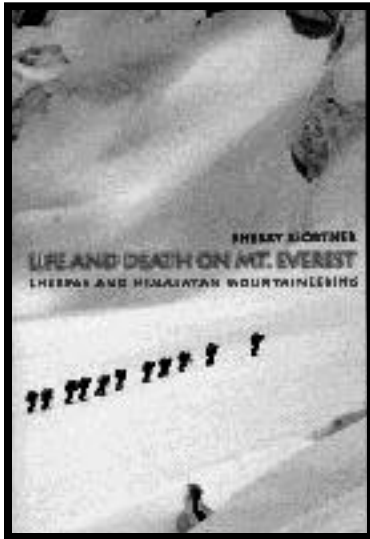
Second, although Bales opens his book with an account of the enslavement of a domestic servant in Paris, the reality of slavery in the United States and the European countries is mentioned but not studied in depth. While Bales' chosen research methodology dictated that he focus on the countries where the greatest number of people are enslaved, while also looking at the diversity of forms that the new slavery takes, more emphasis on active slavery in western nations would have given the book the more balanced flavor that his own reports suggest.

For those specializing in the cultural study of the countries of South and Southeast Asia, this book draws some important links between the cultural traditions of these countries (specifically India, Pakistan and Thailand) and the enslavement of many of their people as they are increasingly confronted with the advance of a global economy. For those specializing in religious studies, particularly the legal and ethical aspects of religious traditions, this book should be read as a call to examine all religions for the resources they offer in the fight against those who would devalue life. *Disposable People* is clear and engaging, and recommended as background reading for both undergraduate and graduate students. It is important to know that a reality many think of as historical is reemerging on a larger scale and in a form more intricate and concealed than before.

David Clairmont

University of Chicago





Ortner brings together two organizing structures to the world of elite climbing: a look at the changes in mountaineering cultures over the last 100 years and a focus on the various interest groups that have had a role to play in the arena of interaction. *Life and Death* begins with a very compact section that succeeds in introducing even the most novice

reader to both the geographical and intellectual context in which the book is situated. This is one of the great strengths of Ortner's book; keeping the work relevant to both the expert and the casual reader. She then proceeds to introduce the two major character groups in her text: the sahibs and the Sherpas. The former term is used historically rather than ironically to track the many people, mainly Westerners, who come to the Everest region for varying reasons and are differently positioned in different eras, a relationship molded by expectations of both the visitors and the Sherpas. In the Sherpa section, a similar dynamic occurs, but this is made even more complex by confusing Sherpa as a description of both as a profession and an 'ethnic' group. None of this is particularly novel and in fact, Ortner seems to struggle by seeking to complicate descriptive categories while herself using generalizations about groups and time periods.

What Ortner brings to the topic is new connections, bringing key moments in the history of the Nepali nation-state together with changes in mountaineering culture and the economic status of the Sherpa peoples. In addition, because of her knowledge of many aspects of the Sherpa community, she is able to bring to the fore neglected issues in the study of mountaineering, including the changing role of the monastic community and the social perception of carrying loads in different eras. This is what makes this book far more than just an analysis of Sherpas in the western imagination and power relations between the West and the Rest. Ortner exploits her knowledge of Sherpa religion to show how the changing economics brought about by mountaineering and other factors both impact and are impacted by changes in religious practice. She also brings her interest in gender to bear upon the subject, paying particular attention to the culture of machismo in climbing and the impact of women, both Western and Sherpa, as they enter into the mountain climbing community. These two themes play into a larger narrative of *Life and Death*; the historically changing valence with which mountain climbing is experienced, in eras of romanticism, to

militarism, to countercultural exploration.

The topic of Nepal and the West has been of particular fascination of late, but in *Life and Death on Mt. Everest*, Sherry Ortner brings her own particular interests to the matter and has again proven herself to be a vital voice in Himalayan studies. She steadfastly and unapologetically adheres to her belief in conventional modes of ethnography and often chides her colleagues for their deconstructionist positions. Nonetheless, she demonstrates herself as a key voice of the field and for anyone interested in mountaineering or the Sherpa people her work proves her a keen observer with the historical insight born of a career invested in grappling rigorously with her subject.

Heather Hindman

University of Chicago

Violent Cartographies: Mapping Cultures of War. by Michael J. Shapiro. Minnesota Univ. Press, 1997.

Map making has long been a project stained with the blood of conquest and genocide, playing midwife to the knavery of aggressive states. Moreover, those of us who study South Asia are all too familiar with the mischief engendered by drawing lines of exclusion in the sand. Alongside the growing body of critique of the nation-state, there has been a spate of recent scholarship on power, partitions, and cartographic violence, most notably Martin Lewis and Karen Wigen's *Myth of the Continents: A Critique of Metageography*. At first glance, it would appear that Michael J. Shapiro's *Violent Cartographies: Mapping Cultures of War* is another such study. However, unlike Lewis and Wigen's serious social historical meditation on the genealogy of modern cartographic sensibility, Shapiro doesn't seem too interested in maps, boundaries, the nation-state, or much anything else beyond the ontological hang-ups of a specifically American postmodern media culture.



The book seems concerned with conceptualizing the "ontological dimension of warfare" in a never fully articulated modernity, and how, ultimately, to conceive an ethics of encounter with the Other. Scoffing at the statecentric, geostrategic thinking of the academic political science establishment, Shapiro takes us down a rabbit hole, meandering among the most fashionable denizens of literary criticism. We are informed that "[w]ith the development of the modern state...the ontological dimension of warfare becomes dissimulated by a web of practical and discursive relations...It is necessary, therefore, to overcome the dissimulating

कृत आर्षद्वय-मेषा-सु-श्री-मर्दना-उ-ज-र-ती-अ-त्रे-हिन

political discourse of the modern state with an ethnographic one that will show the ways in which individual and collective modern bodies constitute themselves through war." But Shapiro's ethnographic discourse consists mainly of occasional glosses of Huron cannibalism, Angkor cosmology or the militarized ritual culture of Mexican Aztecs - much of which is fascinating, but is rarely topical, and by no means treated systematically - leading to the conclusion that, thanks to television and the machine gun, "war...no longer functions within traditional geostrategies."

Then, trying perhaps to out-Zizek Zizek, Shapiro wastes page after page analyzing films with little or no relevance to "violent cartographies," the nation state, or even his favorite subject, the American invasion of Iraq. He tries, for example, to convince us that the American Gulf war-ontology is an exact analogue to the narrative structure of Louis Bunuel's *That Obscure Object of Desire*. Though this may be a clever reading of Bunuel, it doesn't suffice as an analysis of the motivations underlying a commodity-inspired, neo-colonial intervention by the United States in a local conflict over a disputed border and the legitimacy of OPEC oil quotas (for that, I highly recommend Douglas Kellner's *Persian Gulf TV War*). Part of the problem, of course, is that the author has so distanced himself from the standard thinking of political science that he cannot in good faith talk about such mundane trifles as the US arming of Iraq throughout the 1980s, and so on. Content to assess the conflict as "derealized" and "dematerialized," the book presents not a single shred of insight into the violence incurred by the Iraqi people or even the American soldiers once the ground invasion finally commenced. What about the ironies of so-called "friendly fire" deaths, or the now infamous Gulf War Syndrome? What about the status of sanctions as a tool of "war by other means?" Even if one forgets the title of the book and its professed aims, and considers this a mere meditation on the place of the Gulf War in history - ontological or otherwise - these are mystifying omissions.

Even more troubling is Shapiro's ultimate ethical conclusions. He identifies the modern war-ontology in Hegelian (then Lacanian, then back to Hegelian) dialectical terminology, requiring a negation and subsequent synthesis with the Other. This is an understandably troubling ethical standard, involving as it does the subject (whether individual or collective) in a system whereby the Other must be confronted (violently) in order to maintain stable subjectivity (or, as the case may be, national unity). But Shapiro's alternative is not much better. Relying heavily on what amounts to a Derridean reading of Levinas, he suggests that the only ethical encounter with the Other is one which preserves "radical alterity," that is to say, "a non-violent relationship to the other as infinitely other." But what happens when violence is involved, as is the case with Colonialism? This is a standard to which Levinas himself could not fully adhere (as, for example, in his writings on

the relationship between the State of Israel and its neighboring Other). Citing the novel *American Blues*, Shapiro insists that "within a Levinasian ethical perspective, one would, for example, accept Ward Just's perpetually enigmatic Vietnam rather than endorse Norman Schwarzkopf's domesticated version." As we all know, however, it was just such a stance, holding the Other to be "perpetually enigmatic," that led in British India to the "rule of colonial difference," a precept which justified a whole host of violent interventions.

I am perfectly willing to admit that my own reading of Levinas is not authoritative, and is therefore somewhat harsh on Shapiro. And yet, so few of the difficulties in applying such an ethical standard in the real world are actually flushed out in *Violent Cartographies* that one is left groping for Mr. Shapiro's ultimate point. How would "infinite responsibility to alterity" work, for example, to resolve tensions between India and Pakistan, or Israel and the Palestinians? These tangible cartographies are beyond the scope of this work, and as for "mapping cultures of war," Shapiro is too prone to see the occasional nugget of American popular culture - for example, Clint Eastwood's film *Heartbreak Ridge* - as demonstrable evidence of "war-ontology." This, in the end, is what makes *Violent Cartographies* so disappointing. The author clearly has the skill to deal intelligently with an eye-popping range of material. Too bad for his readers he chose to pour that skill into a mulligan stew of cocktail party abstraction.

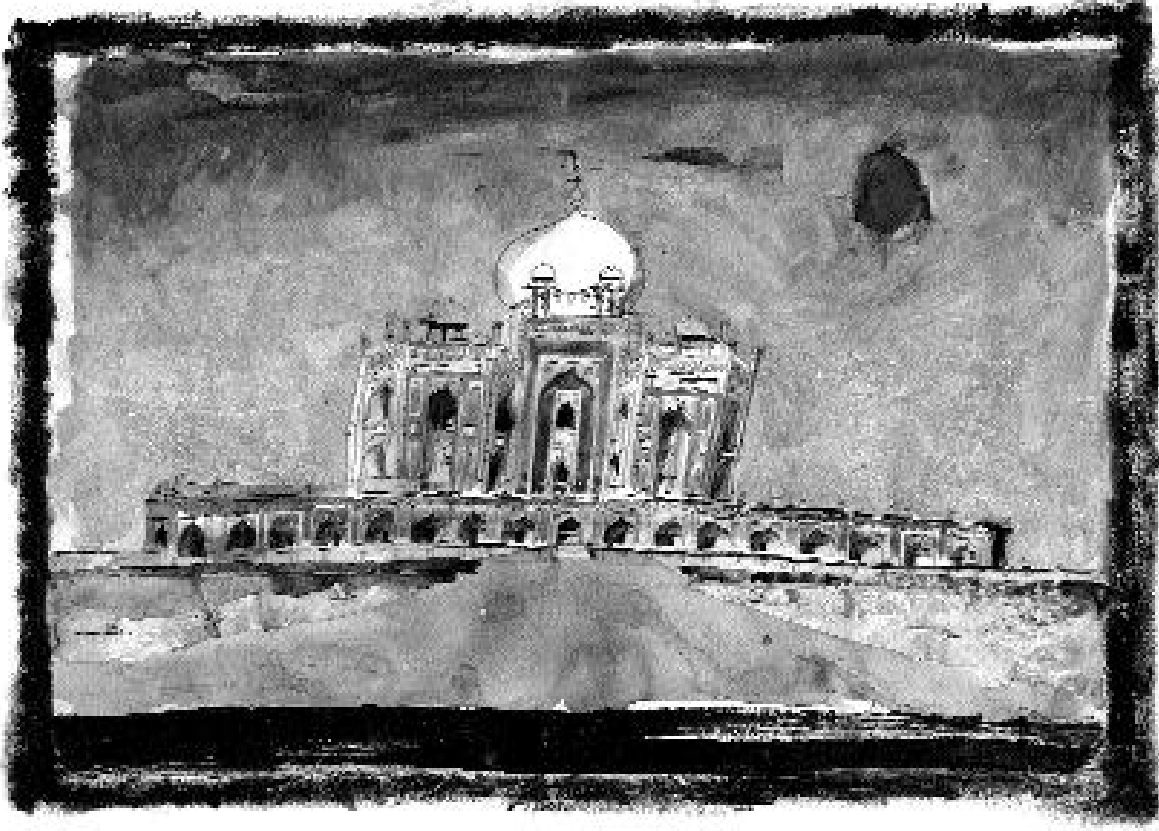
Rajeev Kinra

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Fresh Tea, Kathmandu by Mat Barber Kennedy

Mat Barber Kennedy, whose work is featured above and on the last page, studied architecture at Sheffield University and at the Royal College of Art where he began to explore the subject and process of design through painting. He has traveled extensively to make the drawings and paintings which are the source of his studio work in Chicago. He has gone to Rajasthan, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Nepal on painting expeditions. His work reflects an understanding and passion for the stuff of architecture: bricks, mortar, plaster, concrete and steel. You can contact Mat at 312-432-9032 or mbkri@matbarberkennedy.com or visit his web site at www.matbarberkennedy.com.



Humayun's Tomb by Mat Barber Kennedy

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