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Sherry B. Ortner. *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1996. x + 262 pp. $25.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8070-4632-6.

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Making Gender is both retrospective and forward-looking, an anthology that functions as theoretical compendium, ethnographical exploration, and intellectual autobiography. The seven essays contained in the collection span twenty five years of scholarship by Sherry Ortner, a founder of feminist anthropology. By gathering these disparate works in one volume, Ortner chronicles her own intellectual development as well as the direction of anthropology in recent years. Ortner and her colleagues (such as Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere) have mined feminism, Marxism, and postmodern cultural theory in order to enrich the field of anthropology. The results have been imaginative and thought-provoking for many scholars of culture outside anthropology as well.

In the opening essay, "Making Gender" (1996) Ortner contextualizes her own work as part of a struggle with structuralism and universalism. She identifies her overall project as an investigation of agency: "looking at and listening to real people doing real things in a given historical moment, past or present, and trying to figure out what they are doing or have done will or will not reconfigure the world they live in" (p. 2). This historicized agenda explains Ortner's deep engagement with "practice history." Her special challenge has been to integrate practice theory with feminism. Her main analytical questions involve the relationship between gender and power; she turns to subaltern theories to help ask what role female/subaltern agency plays, and how such agency may be constructed and enacted. The model she suggests is that of "serious games," culturally organized social episodes in which players retain some degree of agency; as Ortner explains, "actors play with skill, intention, wit, knowledge, intelligence" (p. 12).

The second offering, Ortner's 1972 (now classic) "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" takes up the question of "the universality of female subordination." Ortner rejects biological determinism as the basic explanation for women's "pan-cultural" subordination. She theorizes that it is women's social association with child nurturance and the domestic that places them closer to "nature" than men are. As a result, woman comes to represent a cultural intermediary, while men signify culture itself in its highest sense. In a similar vein, the essay "The Virgin and the State" links the emergence of the state with the development of female purity as an ideological prerequisite for family honor and status.

The next two essays exemplify Ortner's attempts at practice theory. "Rank and Gender" studies Polynesian cultures in an effort to uncover the subtle connections between prestige and gender, status and sexuality. "The Problem of 'Women' as an Analytical Category" explores different cultural narratives surrounding the founding of a Sherpa monastery and a Sherpa nunnery. In the moment of their creation as institutions, the monastery supposedly represented the culmination of public concerns, and the nunnery the embodiment of domestic ones. Ortner employs this case study to question the usefulness of sharp heuristic divisions between public and private, male and female. Her reading of Sherpa institutions reveals gender as a construct that not only emphasizes differences between men and women but also obscures differences among elite men and non-elite men. The final two essays, "Gender Hegemonies" and "Borderland Politics and Erotics," revisit Ortner's earlier work regarding the universalism of male dominance. Ortner directly addresses criticisms of her initial essay, using the concept of cultural hegemony to look for internal contradictions within gender systems.

Given Ortner's emphasis on theory and cross-cultural comparisons, it is surprising that she does not cite the expanding literature in gender history. Her tantalizing reference to E.P. Thompson's *Making of the English Working Class* is not followed by any references to cultural history or women's history–fields that have developed alongside feminist anthropology over the last generation of scholarship, but with which they apparently have not yet effected a meaningful exchange. This is a shame, especially

considering that these scholars have a great deal in common, in both the relational projects they map and in the theoretical problems they face. Ortner notes the general "waning of a historical perspective in the social sciences" (p. 144); she herself is moving towards a Weberian "historical dynamism," but without engaging the historiography of gender and culture itself. Maybe Ortner's "serious games" will influence historians today just as her teacher Clifford Geertz's concept of "deep play" did in its turn. Better still, perhaps women's history and cultural history will contribute more visibly to the further development of Ortner's intellectual trajectory. Certainly Ortner's own body of scholarship encompasses theoretical insights that have proven valuable to social scientists and gender scholars. *Making Gender* extracts the marrow from these past explorations and points us in fruitful directions for future study.

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