

brought up to date with an account of current conflicts, particularly attempts by European states to regulate the movement and settlement of Gypsies, the disruption caused by the collapse of communist regimes, and with reference to the largely unsuccessful attempts by Gypsies to create a pan-European political movement.

The book does not deal in much depth with Gypsy culture. Economic life and social behaviour, for example, are given a rather superficial treatment. Fraser's study is essentially a detailed survey of Gypsies in different parts of Europe, one which is very effective in conveying the diversity of the Gypsy population and the similarities in their relationships with the dominant society. Fraser is clearly very knowledgeable, particularly in regard to Gypsy dialects and linguistics generally, but he makes no use of the many ethnographies which convey the distinctiveness of Gypsy world-views. The text has a range of good illustrations, including mediaeval manuscripts and Fred Shaw's remarkable photographs of Kalderash Gypsies in Wandsworth in 1911.

The Gypsies is a valuable source of information on a European minority which will complement localized ethnographic research. As a history of racism, persecution, and survival, this book is an important addition to the literature on identity and difference, and it should be read by cultural theorists as well as by those with a more particular interest in the fate of Gypsies in Europe.

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Human ecology: fragments of anti-fragmentary views of the world. Edited by Dieter Steiner and Markus Nauser. London: Routledge. 1993. 384 pp. £65.00 cloth. ISBN 0 415 06777 4.

This book has its origins in a conference by the 'Theory and integrative approaches' study group of the Swiss Geographers Association in 1989, with the title 'Person-society-environment'. Although there are representatives of other disciplines, the vast majority of the twenty-two chapters are by geographers, most of them Swiss. I get the feeling that many of the original papers were written in German, and have lost much of their finer nuances in translation – when they become a little anodyne and unrevealing – like the translated title of the study group itself. The chapters are arranged in four sections: 'Human ecology', 'The implicit and the explicit', 'Structuration', and 'The regional dimension'. These sections are introduced by overview essays which are thoughtfully constructed.

The chapters are mostly well written, within the limits of translation where that has happened. But nearly all of them are methodological introductions, many of them treating the same or similar ground – and if one wanted ten different two-page summaries of Giddens's theory of structuration this is where one would find them. After all the overtures, one is left feeling it would have been better to have the opera develop a storyline and let fly a few good arias.

Much of the material is inevitably stressing the need for transdisciplinarity, for antidualism, for wholeness, etc., and sometimes doing so in novel ways. There are moments of illumination and, for me, fresh insight – but not enough to make the overall book a stimulating read. Of the three points of the triangle – which are not, of course, as many writers stress, actually three points which can be considered independently or even as pairs, perhaps the individual is examined most, society next and

environment last. Only in two papers is there any concern for empirical understanding: Pillet uses a semi-mystical science (Odum-like 'monergy' and 'eMergy' (embodied energy) to look at different examples of farming systems, while Gould considers the diffusion of AIDS in the USA. Though an insightful and valuable paper, stressing barriers to and pathways of diffusion (in a sense, whether these are social or physical barriers is not relevant) at first sight Gould's paper seems out of place in company with the others. At second sight it addresses something the others do not, and throws it into stark relief. So much in-depth theorizing about society in the majority of the chapters stresses the philosophical problems inherent in the contemplation of society – which are real – but fails to acknowledge nevertheless that society is not a simple construct – that there are many layers and levels of society, combining and recombining (in the mathematical sense, cover sets defined as subsets of power sets of many levels), relating to each other in equally complex relationships. All of this means that each society has its own finely textured structure, which has to be acknowledged if something practical is to be said about it.

Perhaps to say something about society is, however, to get it wrong – to accept a duality, of the subject-object relationship – whether it be of observer and society or author and audience. The zaniest paper in the book is by Reichert – 'Subjection objected'. It begins strongly: 'can man's destruction of the environment be reduced as long as we define ourselves as the other of nature . . . ?' The problem from then on is to realize which bits of pasted quotation on which bits of which page are to be read next, sampled next, tasted, or thought about, and whether any of the small amount of Reichart randomly pasted is supposed to help or hinder the navigation. The quotations are from Foucault, Shakespeare, Hegel, Heidegger, and Freud – not exactly an original collection. A footnote explains: 'Hence I experiment with writing techniques taken from literary traditions such as stream of consciousness writing, intertextual writing and surrealist writing and emphasize the metonymic movement.' There is some fun and no harm in having one such chapter in the book.

This is a book which is *almost* properly subtitled. But rather than 'Fragments of anti-fragmentary views of the world' it should be 'Fragments of anti-fragmentary philosophies for conceptualizing the world'.

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An anthropological critique of development – the growth of ignorance. Edited by N. Hobart. London: Routledge. 1993. xi + 235 pp. £13.99 paper. ISBN 0 415 07959 4.

It has long been a truism in the social sciences that 'things aren't always what they seem to be', but the title of this book presses this to extremes. *An anthropological critique of development* brings together a group of ten papers that were first presented to a workshop on 'Local knowledge and systems of ignorance' that was held at the London School of Oriental and African Studies in December 1986. Seven years later the papers saw the light of day, fronted by an editorial introduction that seeks to bridge the missing years by ruminating more generally on the situatedness of