van Gennep, Arnold: Los semisabios. Prefacio e introducción de Rodney Needham. Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 2005. 134 pp. ISBN 950-23-1488-3. Precio: $ 16.00

Arnold van Gennep nació en Alemania, en 1873. Sus biógrafos no logran acordar quiénes fueron sus padres. Sí saben, en cambio, que se ganó la vida en Polonia enseñando francés y en Francia traduciendo para el Ministerio de Agricultura; que asistía con Marcel Mauss y Henri Hubert a las clases del mítico Sylvain Lévi; que estudió egiptología, lingüística y religiones comparadas y se doctoró en la Sorbona; que era un apasionado del folklore y la numismática; que, salvo un breve período en la universidad de Neuchâtel, jamás pudo acceder a un cargo académico estable; que participó de encendidas polémicas sobre las controversias antropológicas típicas de principios de siglo XX – el totemismo, el tabú, el origen de la religión –; que dejó un libro inconcluso sobre el nacionalismo y murió en Francia, en 1957, a los ochenta y cuatro años. Solon Kimball cree que el impacto de las doctrinas de van Gennep en la psicología y las ciencias sociales norteamericanas ha sido, en el mejor de los casos, escaso. Más extraño aún es su encuadre ambiguo en el seno de las ciencias sociales francesas. Evans-Pritchard atribuye esta posición de *outsider* a las virulentas críticas de van Gennep a la teoría durkheimiana del totemismo. Rodney Needham conjetura que bien pudo haber, también, una causa social: van Gennep fue literalmente un bastardo, fruto de un matrimonio ilegítimo – una condición poco envidiable en los círculos burgueses y profesionales de fines de siglo XIX y principios del XX. Con el paso del tiempo, parece haberse logrado una percepción más equilibrada de los méritos de una obra tan fecunda como original. Así, Nicole Belmont sostiene que las ideas de van Gennep constituyen una auténtica bisagra entre los folkloristas del siglo XIX y los modernos. Sin embargo, lo cierto es que todavía subsiste algo de esa ambivalencia a la que parece destinada inexorablemente la obra de van Gennep, al menos bajo la forma de esa metonimia trágica que con frecuencia encadena un nombre a un solo título y a una sola idea – para la gran mayoría de los antropólogos, en efecto, van Gennep sólo fue, es y será conocido como el autor de "Les rites de passage".

La flamante traducción al castellano de "Les Démi-Savants", de 1911, acaso contribuya a remediar ese estado de cosas. En la tradición de las sátiras académicas de Andrew Lang y Bertrand Russell, las historias contenidas en el volumen – profesores que viven de los hallazgos de su cohorte de ayudantes; científicos empeñados en la elaboración de taxonomías absolutamente inútiles; estudiantes perdidos en un mundo de digresiones; académicos absorbidos por la tentación de la bibliografía definitiva, infinita; eruditos que apelan a malabares inverosímiles para develar "misterios" perfectamente corrientes; luminarias pedagógicas enfrascadas en discusiones bizantinas sobre el tamaño apropiado de las jarras de leche; lingüistas obsesionados por las técnicas al punto de que olvidan interpretar el significado – constituyen un juego de variaciones sobre un mismo tema: el egocentrismo, la insensatez, la falta de escrúpulos, la pomposidad absurda y la pedantería estéril que suelen afectar a los académicos atrincherados en posiciones encumbradas. Se trata, en definitiva, de una denuncia irónica de la traición a los valores que deben guiar la investigación científica. Escribe el propio van Gennep: "No me gustaría que estas historias fuesen tomadas por lo que no son, es decir, críticas al conocimiento o a los métodos científicos o a los verdaderos académicos. Estos últimos saben muy bien que cada ciencia y cada método tiene sus límites y que hay que tener cuidado en no ir demasiado lejos para no caer en el absurdo. Mis personajes son *semisabios* porque cada uno de ellos ha tomado posesión de un cierto grupo de hechos, tiene una teoría y maneja un método científico, o una cantidad de tales métodos, pero los aplica fuera de sus límites normales. Los casos estudiados tienen que ver, por lo tanto, con lo que podría llamarse lógica patológica. Pero mis héroes no están enfermos ni son anormales en el sentido aceptado. Sus prototipos, o por lo menos algunos de ellos, han vivido o todavía viven en sociedad, sin levantar sospechas. Muchos obtuvieron una importante consideración moral en la ciencia internacional o en sus especialidades, y más aún, algunos lo han conseguido en posiciones muy bien remuneradas. A nadie se le ha ocurrido tratarlos como si fueran locos" (27 s.). Aunque empañan la calidad de la edición, algunos pocos errores tipográficos ("van Gannep", p. 6 y 18; "lingüísta", p. 44; "podìa", p. 104) no obstaculizan la comprensión inmediata de la moraleja: la imaginación activa pero disciplinada, la independencia de criterio y el sano escepticismo deben, o deberían regir, la lógica de la investigación científica. Diego Villar

Vickers, Adrian: Journeys of Desire. A Study of the Balinese Text Malat. Leiden: KITLV Press, 2005. 385 pp. ISBN 90-6718-137-4. (Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, 217) Price: € 35.00

What is the Balinese "Malat"? The simple answer is a palm-leaf narrative text or texts in a metrical poetic form called Kidung written in Old Javanese between the 16th and 19th centuries. The Malat is about the romantic, military, and courtly life of prince Panji during his search for his beloved Rangkesari and his conflict with neighboring kingdoms in ancient Java. The not so simple answer, developed in Adrian Vickers's new work "Journeys of Desire," is that Malat is far more than a single text. Rather, Malat is a complex of media that focus on the courtly romance and martial violence enacted by the characters of the Panji cycle. In Bali, these other media include Gambuh dance performance, shadow puppet performance, and paintings, all of which are designated by Balinese literati, dancers, and musicians as Malat. Indeed, through scrutiny of these other forms together with texts, Vickers seeks to uncover Malat's cultural logic (ch. 1). In this endeavor, he is interested ultimately in Malat's historical importance within Balinese courts in contrast to the contemporary marginalization of Malat in all of its forms.

"Journeys of Desire" develops an unconventional approach to the study of ancient palm-leaf texts. Rather

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than the approach typical of philology which focuses on compilation of comprehensive editions, Vickers undertakes a preliminary step he suggests should precede any editing process. This work concentrates on the production, meanings, and uses of Malat at different points in Bali history. For example, Vickers seeks to understand local meanings of and reasons for Balinese scribes persistent copying of single or several episodes rather than the entirety of the cycle of Panji stories, a practice disparaged by previous philologists as a scribal laziness that produced mere "fragments" or "variants" of an original precursor manuscript assumed to have been corrupted over time.

Vickers finds that this "fragmentary" quality is intentional, tied to the episodic quality of Malat stories as they are told, performed, and painted in Bali. Through juxtaposition and comparison of oral retellings and textual, performative, and painting contents (ch. 2 and 3), Vickers discovers that rather than viewed as one long tale, the Panji cycle is broken into scenes with specific names and/or central events such as the stabbing of Panji's horse. At the same time, he describes a pattern of artistic influence that goes against the grain of Western preconceptions that privilege textual authority and primacy. In Malat, Vickers argues, there is a dynamic and dialogic process in which different narrative media simultaneously and mutually influence one another.

In addition to asking "what is the Malat?", Vickers questions why the Malat, once so popular, has all but disappeared? Whereas in the 18th and 19th centuries Balinese palaces had special pavilions for the enactment of *gambuh* performances of Malat using casts, quite literally, of thousands, in contemporary Bali *gambuh* is rarely performed, the stories of Malat mostly forgotten. He suggests the past popularity and current irrelevance of the Malat can be explained with reference to Balinese history and politics (ch. 4 and 5). The Malat tells the story of Majapahit courtly splendor, romance, and martial dominance. During the period when Majapahit ruled Bali, then, the Malat was the artistic representation of a Balinese reality of subjugation to a foreign court.

When Majapahit power ended and multiple small, competing Balinese kingdoms emerged, Malat had the capacity to tell a different kind of story, one in which the kings and princes of each small kingdom could aspire to the preeminence of Panji by vanquishing their enemies in battle and wooing and ravishing the royal daughters of their competitors. Vickers argues that while the Malat, with its complex stories of noble war and intermarriage, was amenable to the political exigencies of the small, competing courts that emerged in the wake of Majapahit's disintegration, it could not be made to comment so easily on the royal courts dismantling undertaken during Dutch colonization or the modernizing projects of the Indonesian state which left no role for the traditional power and splendor of princes and kings, their arts and courts, and their commoner followers.

The one major disappointment that emerges, for this reader, has to do not with Vickers's scholarship but presumably with decisions made by KITLV Press regarding the quality of photographs, which is simply terrible. The images are small, blurry, faded, indistinct. Indeed, though the paintings Vickers discusses are reproduced for the viewer they may as well not have been as the aspects Vickers calls attention to in his analysis are indiscernible. Many of the images mentioned in the text are not included at all. Fortunately, Vickers's description is sufficiently rich that this inadequacy does not harm the points he seeks to make. High quality photographs, however, could have added significantly to the readers apprehension of the relationships between Malat forms upon which Vickers concentrates.

"Journeys of Desire" is a welcome addition to the admirable corpus of works on Bali that have been published over the years by KITLV Press and complicates our understanding of the narrative landscape in Bali and Java, raising questions salient for scholars of other textual genres as well as the performing and visual arts. The engaging writing style of "Journeys of Desire" make this work accessible to a broad audience of students and scholars interested in Indonesian textual, visual, and performing arts and the ways they are informed by, and in turn inform, political and social life. Vickers's interweaving of theoretical and methodological challenges to the assumptions of philology, which contain lessons for other disciplines similarly constrained, along with his exhaustive consideration of the multiple links between Malat and Balinese culture, politics, and history will perhaps be most appreciated, however, by an audience of specialists reasonably well-acquainted with Balinese textual genres, musical principles, religion, and political history.

Laura J. Bellows

West, Mark D.: Law in Everyday Japan. Sex, Sumo, Suicide, and Statutes. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005. 279 pp. ISBN 0-226-89403-7. Price: $ 19.95

Author Mark D. West serves as the Nippon Life Professor of Law and Director of the Center for Japanese Studies at the University of Michigan. He begins his book by observing that legal studies in Japan focus mostly on "big topics," such as corporate law and large-scale litigation. While these phenomena deserve attention, they portray an inaccurate picture of ordinary life in Japan. Consequently, West decided to investigate how law, traditional cultural norms, and economic and political forces interact to affect people's behavior in "everyday life." To achieve this end, West studied seven areas of Japanese life: lost and found, sumo wrestling, karaoke, condominiums, love hotels, working hours, and debt suicide. He states that his methodology was based on rational choice theory and his assumptions that "rules of the games" or institutions matter and that empirical data amenable to statistical analysis are especially useful. West accesses a wide range of information sources: legal codes, court cases, published analytical and descriptive studies (in both English and Japanese), personal observations, interviews with participants (business owners and managers, private citizens, police, etc.), and, in one case, his

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