

REVIEW ARTICLE

KINSHIP: SOME RECENT BOOKS

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JANET CARSTEN (ed.), *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000. ix, 215 pp., Bibliography, Index, Figures. £35.00/£12.95//\$54.95/\$19.95.

JEANETTE EDWARDS, *Born and Bred: Idioms of Kinship and New Reproductive Technologies in England*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000. xiv, 264 pp., References, Index, Plates, Figures, Maps, Tables. £45.00.

PETER P. SCHWEIZER (ed.), *Dividends of Kinship: Meanings and Uses of Social Relatedness* (European Association of Social Anthropologists [series]), London and New York: Routledge 2000. x, 221 pp., Index. £15.99.

BOB SIMPSON, *Changing Families: An Ethnographic Approach to Divorce and Separation*, Oxford and New York: Berg 1998. xiii, 181 pp., Bibliography, Index. £39.99/£14.99.

DONNA BIRDWELL-PHEASANT and DENISE LAWRENCE-ZÚÑIGA (eds), *House Life: Space, Place and Family in Europe*, Oxford and New York: Berg 1999. xiii, 265 pp., Indexes, Plates, Figures. £39.99/£14.99//\$65.00/\$19.50.

It has become common of late to talk about a 'revival' of kinship in anthropology, even though for a few hardy souls it never really disappeared, despite the replacement of Claude Lévi-Strauss by David Schneider as the leading guru from the

1980s. As Adam Kuper was at one time fond of pointing out, despite the difficulty in, if not impossibility of, defining what kinship means cross-culturally, most anthropologists are still going to be faced with understanding it if they are to make sense of their field data. Up until the 1970s, at least, kinship was almost universally regarded as being both essential and difficult. This meant that making one's reputation without it could be problematic (think of Hocart's chequered career, despite his classic 1937 article), though later, at least, giving it lip service or no attention at all might not do one any harm. Then gender, personhood, the body, identity etc. became the accepted keys to its understanding. These were quickly followed by (or were associated with) a revival of Schneider's insistence on indigenous values and symbols, showing how these tended to be naturalized in any society, including the west, through biological metaphors. In many ways, this broadly cultural approach matched the reformulation of the study of religion by Schneider's contemporary Clifford Geertz (see especially his 1966). However, it was rapidly supplemented by a new focus on the development of what became known as the new reproductive technologies, which necessitated a recognition that biological innovations were in turn having an impact on ideologies of kinship.

These two trends are represented by the first two of the books discussed here. However, renewed attention has also been given recently to strategies in respect of kinship, as exemplified by the much more Bourdieuesque third book, edited by Peter P. Schweizer. If this represents the wheel turning full circle, then this takes the form of a revival not of structuralist or formal analyses, but of functionalism, though the teleology is certainly emic here. The fourth volume tackles divorce, a topic rather neglected in anthropology, at least in developed societies. The fifth builds on recent work (especially Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995) on space, buildings, and the family. The revival of kinship has therefore brought with it a whole new set of perspectives.

Cultures of Relatedness seems at first sight to be reviving older concerns about the meaning of kinship, as well as evincing a theoretical dependence on Schneiderian culturalism. However, Janet Carsten's excellent introduction to this collection, based on a panel at Edinburgh University's half-centennial celebrations, makes it very clear that both would be superficial views. Certainly an attempt to replace kinship by notions of relatedness that are less dependent on genealogy is nothing new, especially in Carsten's own general ethnographic area of lowland Southeast Asia (cf. Kemp 1983), but also in the work of authorities whom one would otherwise see as basically structuralist in approach (e.g. Peter Rivière, Anthony Good, David Hicks). I am thinking here of the once *de rigeur* but now redundant suggestion that kinship terminologies be called 'relationship terminologies', for the very similar reason that kinship equals genealogy and that not all relationships were a matter of genealogy rather than category (the way prescriptive systems worked, for example). This led to a certain *frisson* in the 1960s and 1970s at the very idea of mentioning genealogy at all in work on kinship: Carsten, on the

other hand—and rather more pragmatically, I think—recognizes genealogy as one possible mode of relatedness, though not the only one (cf. Parkin 1996). Certainly, and as Mary Bouquet argues in this volume, genealogy can be seen as an ideological construct as well as (or rather than) a neutral basis for analysis. But very many societies, not just western ones, appear to have some notion of ‘real’ kinship as opposed to what used to be called ‘fictive’ kinship (again as emically defined, of course; cf. Helen Lambert’s criticisms of the latter notion here); and the view of what is ‘real’ may well depend to a greater or lesser extent on some notion of genealogy. If there are societies—in lowland Southeast Asia, perhaps, or in the Pacific—that do not make the distinction, that is certainly ethnographically interesting, but not universal. Conversely, the fact that the distinction is not absent from the west should lead to the recognition that the basis of non-affinal kinship is not always biological: step-parents may be regarded as truer parents than biological parents, on the basis of behaviour, acceptance of nurturing responsibilities, etc.

Schneider’s decision, in *American Kinship* (1968, 1980), to study the kinship of his own society in cultural and symbolic terms was a deliberate one, taken to make the point that western notions of kinship were not neutral but culturally specific like any other, while at the same time stressing the significance of emic ideas of nature to them. He has therefore seemed like a pioneer to those concerned to stress emic perspectives and has provided a theoretical model to follow—as if these were entirely lacking from the considerations of earlier writers, however comparativist their inclinations. It is therefore interesting to see Carsten contextualizing Schneider’s work here with reference to its internal uncertainties over the precise significance of the ‘natural’ and the fact that, following Marilyn Strathern’s partly (and confessedly) neo-Schneiderian approach (especially 1992), ‘nature’ has itself become de-natured (or ‘de-stabilized’, in Carsten’s terms, p. 9).

Carsten also makes reference to Bruno Latour’s work on modernity and post-modernity (1993), since, in seeing in the former an antagonism to hybridity that never really occurred, Latour manages to shed further light on the complexities of the relationship between the natural and the cultural as regards kinship: new reproductive technologies tend towards the ‘proliferation of hybrids’, and it is claimed that Latour’s advocacy of the abandonment of the nature–culture distinction will allow a ‘new comparative anthropology’ which ‘compares nature–cultures’ (Carsten, p. 31, citing Latour). Carsten certainly accepts comparativism, and even rejects Schneider’s dismissal of it as impossible on grounds of cultural relativism. She also accepts the possibility of formalism, ‘even if we refuse some of the old definitions’ (p. 33), and claims to see signs of a rapprochement between the Needham–Dumont tendency on the one hand and the Schneiderians on the other. Her own approach and overall attitude seem precisely to embody this sense of rapprochement too, though her basic sympathies clearly lie with the delineation of indigenous perspectives and processes of making the natural ideological rather than the reduction of kinship to standard formulae. In particular, her view of

relatedness is premised on the removal of traditional, artificial distinctions between the natural and the social. At the same time, she recognizes, citing Ladislav Holy (in fact, his discussion (1996: 168) covers earlier work of her own), that this involves a temptation to expand 'relatedness' from genealogical kinship to relations that lie outside the domain of kinship altogether, with the accompanying danger of making it 'analytically vacuous' (p. 5, citing Holy *ibid.*). As a result, relatedness is not offered as a solution to comparative problems, but rather as a heuristic device enabling further questions to be asked.

Other contributors to this volume none the less use the term in just the sort of wide-ranging manner that Holy warned against. Thus for Charles Stafford, working on north-east China and Taiwan, relatedness 'refers to literally *any* kind of relation between persons' (p. 37, original emphasis): here, kinship, fictive kinship and friendship are all 'malleable' (p. 38) and should be taken together—or in other words, filiation and friendship, and even discipleship and co-residence, should be added to the traditional focus in China on patrilineality and affinity. He admits, however, that the areas of China he worked in are ones of lineage weakness (most of the traditional studies on Chinese kinship stressing the importance of the lineage were conducted with reference to the rather different circumstances of southern China, and many had to be historical, given the impossibility of doing fieldwork in Mao's China). Similarly, Sharon Hutchinson's chapter on the Nuer translates *maar* as 'relatedness' rather than as 'cognatic kinship', as Evans-Pritchard did, and the latter's focus on kinship as shared meanings is replaced by a representation of them as negotiated, even contested. There is also a stress on the impact of the civil war in Sudan on the status of substances in mediating relationships: for instance, while gun killings are divorced from traditional community relationships in a way that spear killings have not been, guns re-enter such relationships in so far as they are used as bridewealth.

At one point in her chapter on Rajasthan, Helen Lambert follows Roy Wagner in seeing 'relatedness' as a matter of establishing differences between objectively similar persons. However, links are also created: affines, at first non-relatives, become relatives in course of time (and therefore cannot be married). More generally, for this part of India, Lambert rejects traditional ideas of the separation of kinship and caste, and the limitation of the former by the latter. The notion of relatedness, rather than the traditional idea of 'fictive kinship', should be applied to extra-caste relationships too, since they involve 'locality, adoption, and nurturance' (p. 74); in-marrying women may be adopted by a non-related lineage in a non-affinal way within the conjugal villages to which they move on marriage. Yet there are differences: consanguinity, with its idiom of blood, can still be described as both obligatory and affective, and affinity as purely obligatory (both being within the caste), while extra-caste relationships are optative. Her account is thus confessedly 'substantialist' (p. 83), bucking the traditional tendency to emphasize the relational aspect of kinship in India, at least in the Dumontian tradition.

Rita Astuti's chapter on the Vezo of Madagascar highlights the transition from cognatic kinship in life to post-mortem patrilineality, as the dead enter the tombs of their patrilineal ancestors. The claim that the presence of tombs makes this shift necessary is hardly plausible: given the cognatic system, people might be given a choice of burial places, or cremation might be used. Nor are the implications that agnatic tendencies in cognatic systems have been missed earlier, and that descent systems have routinely been seen as one thing or the other, borne out in practice (e.g. Raymond Firth's early work among the Maori, summarized in Firth 1963: 30ff.). Karen Middleton's chapter on the Karambola of the same island is largely about the notion of motherhood as an idiom of the male control of some men over others, especially of mother's brothers over sister's sons. However, this is not seen as pure metaphor, since men 'make' their sister's sons symbolically: i.e. kinship is a creative act. Despite this, Karambola understand that women give birth biologically. Local idioms add to this rather than replace it. For Barbara Bodenhorn, similarly, working among the Iñupiat of northern Alaska, it is actions rather than biological givens that constitute kinship. Although biology is referred to indigenously, it is only one possible basis of being a relative, and biological relationships are optative like any other. 'Real' kinship is something that has to be worked at: it involves real labour. This may have something to do with notions of personal autonomy: even children are autonomous, right down to choosing where they should reside, and even when they should be born.

The final two chapters, one by Jeanette Edwards and Marilyn Strathern, the other by Mary Bouquet, concentrate on kinship in England and in anthropology. The former focuses on the place of idioms of ownership and belonging in English kinship; stresses (in a manner reminiscent of Lévi-Strauss in the context of classifications generally) the difference between kinship as limitless (the scientific view) and kinship as self-limiting; and reminds us of the importance of forgetting as well as remembering in the constitution of kinship, operationally as well as ideologically. Bouquet is concerned primarily with the origins of genealogy as a tool in kinship analysis. She links this with museology, both being examples of the essentialism that characterized early anthropology in its desire to institutionalize 'natives' as an object of study different from itself (and, of course, its own practitioners). The links between these two domains are actually closer, since both involve forms of visual representation. But also, museums, like kinship, used genealogy, in their case to make connections between whole peoples in historical time, and not just the individuals making up a people.

The second book under review is a monograph about the small Lancashire town of Bacup, where the author carried out two stints of fieldwork in the 1980s and 1990s. Jeanette Edwards focused in one of these on notions of place—which rapidly saw her taking kinship into account, despite her original intention not to—and in the other on local responses to the new reproductive technologies. At one point Edwards rails at the 'diet of arid, turgid, and unpeopled kinship systems' she

was force-fed as an undergraduate (p. 24)—a common enough feeling these days, evidently (cf. Rapport and Overing 2000: 217–29). One can easily guess at the sorts of people whose work she has in mind, and sympathize, up to a point. Certainly Edwards is striking out on to new ground, defining kinship as a matter of relating individuals to places and pasts as much as of relating them to one another (p. 27). One major theme here is therefore kinship and memory.

In practice, however, kinship in the conventional sense is certainly not abandoned here. Like Strathern, Carsten, etc., Edwards eschews the dichotomization of biology and symbolism in kinship, since there is no such distinction in the ideas of her informants. Throughout there is dichotomization of a different sort, between being born and being bred (in Bacup, that is), though since one needs both to be a true Bacupian, each implies the other. In other words, even residents who moved to the town as children remain incomers, though they can also be 'made' more Bacupian. However, the sense of place does not necessarily entail the ability to trace one's roots in the town back to the year dot: indeed, many if not most 'true' Bacupians are recognized as being descended from families who have come from elsewhere, especially the rural midlands and south, though also Ireland. There is another dichotomy here too, since 'Irish' families are often associated with trouble, which may undermine their status as 'true' Bacupians on occasion: but the fact that, these days, they are likely to be 'true' Bacupians rather than incomers, coupled with the town's longstanding reputation for toughness, means that this cannot be mapped on to any of the other dichotomies in any simple way.

The last part of the book concentrates on Edwards' later work on local responses to the new reproductive technologies. Many of the issues her informants raised seemed to have been less concerned with the fragmentation of roles under surrogacy etc.—given the high rate of divorce and remarriage, people were well used to this sort of thing anyway—than with who would nurture children born in this way, and the conditions under which sperm or egg donation might constitute incest. This makes the new reproductive technologies seem less like a technology-driven innovation than just another aspect of 'ordinary' kinship as defined locally. Theoretically, however, the fragmentation of roles through the new reproductive technologies underpins 'a central ambiguity with which this book is concerned: roots are both axiomatic (given) and require sustenance (develop)' (p. 228). Thus the process of 'making' a Bacupian out of an incomer is linked to that of 'making' a relative through the proper nurturing of someone whose biological links with oneself are ambiguous or unrecognized.

In his introduction to the third volume under review, which is based on a European Association of Social Anthropologists' conference workshop held at Barcelona in 1996, Peter P. Schweizer announces a shift back from meaning to functionalism, 'without ignoring the former' (p. 1). This is not to say that recent developments are set aside—far from it, since Schweizer discusses them at some length, even using the term 'relatedness' on occasion. Schweizer's functionalism is

more modest in its aims than the Malinowskian/Radcliffe-Brownian varieties, in that it is not seen as explaining kinship or as being the cause of social facts, but as delineating the 'tactical dimensions of individual strategies', an approach which 'refers to the material, symbolic and emotional gains that can be secured through cultural constructs of relatedness' (p. 2). As with Carsten, there is a desire to seek a rapprochement between different tendencies. Though not advocating a return to genealogical and biological approaches, Schweizer declares biology to be necessary but not sufficient in explaining kinship. As with Carsten too, there is a recognition that comparison is needed as much as ever more ethnography. None of this, however, is being put forward as a prescription for the 'proper treatment' of kinship (p. 17).

That said, the actual contributions to the volume differ considerably in the detail they provide on kinship, and also on the nature of the strategic goal in each case. In many chapters, the latter is broadly economic. Mark Nuttall prefaces his chapter on sharing and exchange in Greenland with an attempt to situate the 'Eskimo' system more firmly in its true ethnographic context, which is one of variation rather than of a close analogue with the English and other terminological systems. However, Nuttall also criticizes L. Guemple's focus on locality and negotiation in this area. Greenlandic kinship itself is not genealogical or biological, but flexible and choice-bound, though, in that it entails obligations too, not at all formless. People are indicated to be kin by using kin terms for them instead of names, suggesting that, far from there being no structure, there is a structure that is manipulated. Conversely, the cessation of kinship through a quarrel or by initiating sexual relations is signalled by shifting from terms to names. Some categories (parents, children, grandparents) are outside the range of optative kin, again indicating that this is not an 'anything goes' regime. Kinship is maintained through periodic gift exchange; continuous contact is not necessary. Nuttall is very clear on the relevance of new approaches to 'fictive kinship' (cf. Lambert in Carsten): if kinship is culturally defined by not using (only) biology, the category becomes an empty one. However, this does not rule out the very real possibility of a society distinguishing 'real kin' from pseudo kin through cultural, not universal biological or genealogical means.

Jenny White's chapter on working-class families in Istanbul is also largely about economics, in the context of small enterprises partially using family labour. Women especially emphasize kin relations with others, and ideas of their role within the family, to avoid giving the impression that they are involved in economic enterprises on their own account, in order not to embarrass the role of their husbands as the ideal breadwinners, while at the same time devaluing their own work. Similarly, there is misrecognition of family labour as family obligations. Interestingly, although the notion of fictive kinship is referred to, fictive kin are seen as 'near kin' or even 'actual kin' in terms of the roles they fulfil—a further recognition that kinship is what kinship does.

While these two articles stress the inclusiveness of kinship strategies, two other articles show how kinship may exclude. Gertraud Seiser shows how ultimogeniture in parts of Austria, with the younger son's wife having equal rights with her husband that his own siblings do not share in full (or at all if unmarried), may divert property away from the patriline, despite conflict with the modern law, which stipulates primogeniture (the norm in other parts of Austria). This also has an impact on genealogical memory, which is shallower with ultimogeniture, and on male control, which is greater with primogeniture: here ultimogeniture, combined with the wife's rights, leads more easily to bilateral inheritance in practice. Seiser stresses that her informants were much more aware of interests and strategies than of rules. Antónia Pedroso de Lima's chapter on elite families with their own firms in Portugal similarly shows them using both endogamy and the manipulation of complicated genealogies and naming practices to maintain their control of their firms, even while paying lip service to modern meritocratic ideals. In the 1980s, their success in this regard even extended to their recapturing their former family businesses, which had been nationalized away from them in the wake of the 1974 revolution.

The chapter by Elke Mader and Richard Gippelhauser on the Shuar and Achuar of the Amazon focuses more on political strategies, in yet another article on the area that is a ghost of Napoleon Chagnon's early work. The overall kinship system seems quite typical for the area, with bilateral cross-cousin marriage, significant affines (including labour co-operation), uxorilocal residence involving effective son exchange, and shallow genealogies. 'True' and distant categories of kin are recognized, and, like affines, are included in unnamed but identifiable kindreds, all of which are manipulable strategically (e.g. remote kin may be treated as affines and thus brought closer). In addition, the overlapping kin ties characteristic of systems of cross-cousin marriage ensure many different paths to choose from. Big men rely on relatives to support them in their projects (including feuding), but other people also claim kinship in order to become associated with them.

Perhaps the most interesting article in this collection is Christoff Brumann's comparative look at different Utopian communities, the main conclusion of which is that, despite their aim being to do away with kinship to a greater or lesser extent, it is precisely those that do allow some space to the nuclear family and monogamy (rather than group marriage etc.) that tend to survive longest. In his conclusion to the volume, Schweizer acknowledges the importance of 'kinship at home', but also warns against the focus on the new reproductive technologies, gay kinship, transnational adoption etc. reopening the gulf between 'the West and the rest' (p. 215).

How should anthropology approach divorce? This is one of the tasks addressed in Bob Simpson's *Changing Families*, based on more than a decade of research in the UK, often involving longitudinal studies of the fate of particular individuals in the process, and wake, of divorce. As he remarks, divorce is not actually a new topic in anthropology, but one which engaged a number of late

functionalists in Africa in the 1950s (especially Gluckman, Fortes, and Goody) in the context of the interaction (if any) between marriage payments and marriage stability (cf. Leach 1961: Ch. 5). In an ethnographic situation where marriage payments are hardly significant, though the division of property at divorce might be, Simpson is more concerned to identify other social patterns, such as the ways in which those getting divorced themselves view the event, and what happens to relationships subsequently. He also admits, towards the end of the book, that divorce is not a new problem in Britain, and that marriage has often suffered instability in the past. For the most part, however, the focus is on the contemporary trend reflected in figures that up to a third of all UK marriages now end in divorce.

In the proper manner of the best anthropology, Simpson continually seeks to penetrate behind the received wisdom on his chosen topic. One of the things that emerges most strongly here is a revision of the idea of divorce as constituting a clean break in relationships. Especially where there are children, the divorced generally find themselves having to continue their relationships with their 'exes' in another form in order to arrange their children's upbringing, conflictual though this experience might be. This continuance is belied by phrases like 'one-parent family', the customary emphasis being on their relative isolation, not to mention their alleged inadequacy and imperfections. Simpson skilfully identifies repeated patterns of mutual stereotyping between divorced parents, especially in a situation where low- or non-income mothers are left to bring up the children with less-than-generous financial help from their often better-off ex-husbands. In another break with received wisdom, Simpson argues that, while divorce certainly is often upsetting for the children of a failed marriage, especially if the non-custodial parent simply disappears from their lives thereafter, where this does not happen they often have an opportunity to increase their experience of domestic arrangements through their ability to spend time with the post-divorce families of both parents, this making them more flexible and socially adept than they might otherwise be. Finally, of course, divorce may be seen as liberating, although emotionally draining, involving the often forlorn hope of turning one's back on at least the more unpleasant, or dangerous (through violence, drunkenness etc.), aspects of living together. And today, not only does divorce lack stigma, in some communities it has become almost routine, even though the law has tried to back-pedal a bit recently over the ease with which divorces can be effected.

The argument is pursued with reference to some novel vocabulary. Post-divorce arrangements are repeatedly punned as 'unclear families' (not a Simpson original, we are told), and the term 'post-divorce kindred' is also introduced to describe them. Such relationships are also seen as being more negotiable and less fixed than those of marriage, perhaps debatably, given that marital relationships are certainly not free from variations in their internal dynamics, which may require negotiation; at the same time, as Simpson himself shows, post-divorce relationships are by no means lacking in expectations (especially over the non-custodial

parent's rights of access and duty to support, and not merely financially). None the less, such expectations obviously become more difficult to enforce after marital breakdown, and any flicker of Fortes's famous 'axiom of amity' is quickly extinguished in most cases. Simpson is therefore led to introduce Marilyn Strathern's adoption of McKim Marriot's notion of *dividuality* to explain the ways in which western individuals are still intertwined by their past histories and joint experiences, even after divorce—hence the difficulty of disentanglement, of knowing where, or when, the break should be made, and indeed whether it already has. This, of course, tends to make western society seem more like New Guinea or India, where anthropologists have long argued that persons are not individuals but the products of their relationships with others. But elsewhere in this book, divorce is also seen as another 'uncoupling' of a sort more typical, this time, of contemporary western society, alongside the relative separation of conjugal units from wider family groups, marriage from reproduction, and reproduction from intercourse.

Towards the end of his book, Simpson addresses Carsten's view of relatedness, pointing out, as others have, that 'if attention is switched from kinship to "relatedness" there is still the problem of its definition and how to make such a definition hold in context beyond the specific context under consideration' (i.e. Pulau Langkawi in Carsten's case; Simpson, p. 154). As he points out on the very next page, although English views of kinship do not shadow scientific understandings exactly, they are extensively based on them, and moreover are supported in this by both legal philosophy and welfare practices. Up to a point, therefore, relatedness cannot add much to indigenous English understandings of kinship in the narrower, more or less genealogical sense. Beyond that point, however, they become more useful. That point is, of course, divorce, an event following which relationships commonly have to be reworked on different assumptions, ones which rule out active kinship, as soon as they are broken. Given the increased popular acceptance of divorce, as well as its continuing problematization in public policy, this is obviously a timely volume, though perhaps appearing too early to be able to include the controversial Child Support Agency in its ethnographic approach, which would have made it even more rewarding.

In many ways the last of these volumes is also the most innovative of the five, despite its restriction ethnographically to Europe. Deriving, like the two other edited volumes, from a conference panel (in this case at the American Anthropological Association meeting in 1992), it brings together mostly anthropologists and architects to consider ways in which changes in the 'built environment' ('housing', in short) may have an impact on family organization and activity, but also vice versa, given that housing policy is ideological and cultural as much as physical. Although, clearly, such traditional anthropological topics as symbols and boundaries are involved, the articles are all historical or in some other sense dynamic representations of ethnography that are often very general in tone, when they do not consist simply of longitudinal studies of particular families. Although in their

introduction the editors problematize the analytical distinction between family and household (despite the acknowledged possibility of the first being dispersed), there is little reference to the sense of crisis in kinship dealt with at more or less length by the other books discussed here, and earlier work on the topic (principally by Lévi-Strauss and Carsten/Hugh-Jones, but also Henry Morgan) receives little more than a brief mention (although Joëlle Bahloul engages with Lévi-Strauss in her chapter on Algerian Jews in France). Throughout, houses are seen as helping to determine behaviour because of their physical form, even though that form is itself cultural and ideological, and even though, as is shown here, people react to modern housing by seeking ways to modify built space to allow some continuation of traditional activities (most graphically in Sally Booth's chapter on Sicily, discussed further below). The introduction also draws attention to the timelessness of the 'best' room in a house, those most usually open to visitors, since they often contain artefacts referring more or less explicitly to the identity of the occupying family.

One or two of the articles could easily have found a place in Schweizer's volume. Thus Caroline Brettell's chapter on northern Portugal shows, with reference to the history of one family, how holdings are consolidated through purchase, and by buying out and therefore excluding other family members, who none the less remain part of the family and may well live in the same vicinity. In Donna Birdwell-Pheasant's chapter on Ireland, conversely, the stress is less on unitary inheritance; there is no insistence on formal division through inheritance as in Portugal, and instead rights to property are left permanently open and contingent (cf. Robin Fox's earlier work on Tory Island, 1978). Susan Sutton's chapter on Greece shows how, instead of the solidity of tradition that one might expect (and which is encouraged by both local patrilineal and nationalist ideologues), the fluidity of Greek village structure, including its physical characteristics, has meant a 'shifting housing base', which historically has both reflected and facilitated great flexibility through migration.

Booth's chapter on Sicily shows how a change from old to new has led to a gendering of space, but also how people attempt to overcome this by exploiting space in ways the planners did not intend, even illegally (e.g. converting garages into second kitchens, which offers greater access to the street and to neighbouring families, as formerly). None the less, there has been a shift in emphasis towards the nuclear family, and although middle-class women can now freely work outside the home, under-skilled lower-class women are more likely to be confined to the home than previously, in many cases only being able to do piecework for local businesses in the isolation of their homes. (There are other chapters on southern Portugal, Belgrade, Chios in Greece, and Ireland.)

All five books show that kinship remains a lively topic in anthropology, and that it continues to attract innovation in both theory and ethnographic practice. While there may continue to be uncertainties over what constitutes kinship and the

extent to which it overlaps with or merges into other forms of relationship (or 'relatedness'), there is no doubt about its continued centrality to social organization and to social discourse about it. The five volumes discussed here will do much to strengthen our understanding of the variation that occurs in both.

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