

CORRESPONDENCE

'GERTRUDE'

Dear Editors,

Congratulations on translating 'GERTRUDE', (JASO IX:2) from a long-standing owaip (appreciator of wife-acknowledgement in prefaces). One solution to GERTRUDE'S research problems would be to extend their study into the prefaces of academics who are neither Africanists nor anthropologists. A comparable harvest awaits them. However, my favourite example of waip is by an Africanist, William Welmers, in African Language Structures, University of California Press, 1973. He says,

It would be impossible to acknowledge individually all of my colleagues, students, language informants, and friends ... In worldly prestige, they range from distinguished university professors to barefooted children; ... I could not forgive myself, however, if I did not express my unique indebtedness to my wife Beatrice. She has followed me into the most improbable adventures listened patiently to my efforts to formulate structural statements concerning whatever linguistic data I happened to be working on, become a respectable practical linguist in her own right, successfully accomplished research and teaching tasks for which I had opportunity but no time, learned a substantial amount of at least eight African languages, proven herself an inspired language teacher, been an equal collaborator in major publications, and through it all remained a relaxed and gracious companion and hostess, and my most loyal fan (viii, ix).

This passage I believe encapsulates all the themes analysed by GERTRUDE, but in addition we can see from it that the husband-wife relationship can include the dimension of patron-client, which is itself shown to be in the last analysis transcendental: 'He for God only, she for God in him'.

Yours truly,

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'Reality and Representation': A Correction

Dear Editors,

I am writing to correct a misconstruction of my views which appeared on p.37 of your Hilary term issue of this year (IX:1). In reference to a seminar paper of mine given at the Institute of Social Anthropology in Oxford last December, Malcolm Chapman wrote:

Arguments like the Berlin and Kay hypothesis (1969), that colour categories were determined by structural universality rather than being subject only to the relativistic self-determination of their

own arbitrary classificatory structure, were ill-received where relativism had become an attitude of mind. Roy Willis, in a seminar given in Oxford in 1977, told how personal a threat such determinisms were to his view of the world -- determinisms that did, as it were, make him fear for the freedom of man.

Now apart from making me appear rather silly, this statement imputes to me a view which happens to be directly contrary to the one I was seeking to put forward in that seminar paper. Far from shrinking in horror from the implication of genetic (i.e. 'natural') foundations for our colour classifications, as proposed in Berlin and Kay's Basic Color Terms and as extended and developed by their colleagues and disciples, I urged that we joyfully accept this evidence (which I consider it to be) of extra-social and extra-cultural determination of our various 'views of the world'. The house we inhabit was, it would seem, built before we came on the scene, but the style we choose to live in it is still our own. Relativism No! Freedom Yes!

Yours sincerely

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The Editors invite letters of criticism, commentary, or response concerning work published in the Journal.