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Women, Anthropology, Tourism, and the Southwest

The articles in this special section commemorate and analyze the lives of five women for whom the Southwest was a special place in the first half of the twentieth century. Three — Elsie Clews Parsons, Ruth Benedict, and Gladys Reichard — were professional anthropologists whose primary field research was conducted in Navajo or Pueblo cultural settings. The other two — Mary Colter and Erna Fergusson — were women who had a lasting impact on the creation of tourism in the Southwest, a process that involved bringing Anglo outsiders into contact with both Navajo and Pueblo cultures, first through the railroad and later by automobile travel.

In publishing these essays, we want to recognize, appreciate, and reevaluate the lives of women whose contributions have often been ignored and silenced. We also want to place the work of these women in a historical context that recognizes their role in a neocolonial situation.¹ Their race, class, and gender located them in a position in the Southwest very different from that of the Native American women and men whose cultures they studied or presented to an American (largely white, middle-class) public. From positions of relative power and privilege, these women participated in a system that shaped the way Pueblo and Navajo peoples (living on economically and politically dependent reservations) were interpreted by the dominant American society. This system of representation often silenced the voices of Native Americans, constrained the way Pueblo and Navajo people were depicted in written texts, and molded their interactions with Anglo tourists.

Although we want to recognize the participation of educated Anglo women in a system of power relations from which they benefited, we see

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these essays as moving us beyond simple dichotomies of male and female, colonizers and colonized, to a richer sense of the complexities both of Anglo women within male-dominated professions and institutions and of the interaction between Anglo women and Native Americans between 1900 and 1950.

Anthropology and tourism were implicated in colonialism, as they both emerged after an area had been pacified and made safe for members of the colonizing nation. Both enterprises entailed the construction of native peoples as “Other” — as different and unlike those who were part of the hegemonic culture. In the Southwest, native peoples were subjugated during the Spanish and Mexican colonial periods (between 1540 and 1848) and after the area was incorporated into the United States (1848–1890). Reservations became internal colonies that provided natural resources for the rest of the U.S. population and made Native Americans politically and economically dependent on the larger society.² Both the Navajo and the Pueblo peoples were able to retain a great deal of their language, their social organization, and their ceremonial structure, particularly in the period between 1900 and 1950. The maintenance of Native American cultural forms has enriched anthropology and tourism alike. Some of the best descriptions of Pueblo and Navajo culture come from this era, as do a number of life histories recounted in the words of Native American women and men.³ In addition, tourism flourished partly because there were intact Native American cultures to visit.

Both sets of women analyzed in these articles worked in male-dominated, largely white contexts. Parsons, Benedict, and Reichard forged their work lives in a discipline in which the major theorists and ethnographers were men, whereas Colter and Fergusson worked for a large corporation, the Harvey Company, in which most of the major decisionmakers were male. In the Southwest, gender and race intersected so that many of these women’s important relationships were with Native Americans, both men and women, as well as with white males. This intersection occurred in two contrasting contexts: first in anthropology, a field at the crossroads between a science and a humanistic discipline, dedicated to the study and understanding of other cultures on their own terms; second in tourism, dedicated to shaping the leisure time of visitors who travel to a distant place for recreational purposes. Science and objectivity, even if tempered by humanism, set the dimensions of the anthropologist-native relationship. The commodification of cultural items produced by natives lay behind the interactions forged through tourism.

ANTHROPOLOGY, COLONIALISM, AND GENDER

The anthropology of Franz Boas and his students (including Elsie Clews Parsons, Ruth Benedict, and Gladys Reichard) constituted an enormous step forward in rejecting the white supremacy of evolutionary anthropology that dominated the discipline in the late nineteenth century. In arguing against typologies that placed primitive cultures on the bottom of a hierarchy and civilization at the top, Boas replaced evolutionism with an appreciation for the variety of human cultures and marshaled evidence against theories of innate racial characteristics.

As Mina Caulfield has persuasively argued, "The attack on race prejudice and ethnocentrism, however, never led to an all-out attack on exploitation of subject peoples, to an interest in the modes of oppression and their cultural consequences, or even to scholarly acknowledgment of the fact of exploitation. In fact, the Boas school never showed any real interest in studying the *situation* of conquest and exploitation as such."⁴ There was a recognition that American Indian cultures were being rapidly transformed by the U.S. reservation system and that "salvage ethnography" was needed to preserve cultural knowledge before it was lost, yet Boasian anthropologists tended to reconstruct American Indian cultures as "uncontaminated" or even to see contact and subordination as issues of "the diffusion of cultural elements" or "acculturation." This was the intellectual context in which Parsons, Benedict, and Reichard worked. To be fair, Parsons was sensitive to the key role that the Spanish conquest played in transforming Pueblo culture, and Reichard was quite outspoken about government policies she felt damaged Navajo lives, and supportive of other policy efforts that she felt would give Indian cultures more autonomy. However, the anthropology of the 1920s and 1930s was unreflexive when it came to addressing the system of domination and power that shaped the lives of Native Americans and the position of anthropology within that system.

Since 1967 anthropology has tried to come to terms with its colonial heritage. Ever since Kathleen Gough's essay "Anthropology: Child of Imperialism"⁵ appeared, anthropologists have been engaged in self-criticism, attempting to understand the colonial roots of the discipline, to critique both theoretical approaches and ethnographic practices, and to reorient the priorities of the field.⁶ Many of these critiques have been addressed, especially those that argued we have not paid enough attention to the study of imperialism, the uses of power, and the alternatives to capitalism. We now have a number of good studies of the spread of capitalism and its impact on native peoples, several important analyses of colonial empires, and a host of studies of countries engaged

in noncapitalist alternatives.⁷ We have also critiqued the notion of the “objective” scientific outsider, replacing it with less detached observation and a greater commitment to presenting a number of different views of reality, including the voices of numerous informants and consultants. Most recently, critical attention has turned to the way ethnographies are written and to the possibility of feminist ethnography.⁸

With hindsight we can see that each of these women succeeded (according to our “modern-day” standards) in some ways and failed in others. Parsons often worked in secret with informants outside the villages she was studying, yet her texts not only reveal her interest in women’s issues but allow us to hear the voices of her Pueblo informants.⁹ Benedict can be accused of overgeneralizing about Pueblo culture, missing the significant amount of hierarchy, conflict, and gossip that others have described. Yet her poetic approach to descriptions and her focus on what we now call root metaphors and master tropes, make her the precursor, as Barbara A. Babcock convincingly argues, of much present-day interpretivist anthropology. Pueblo voices may not be heard, but Pueblo ideas are treated on a par with Western philosophical notions. Although Reichard has been accused of “matronization” (i.e., assuming a dominant relationship with female informants while at the same time gathering data to educate Anglos about Navajo culture),¹⁰ in both her more personalistic *Spider Woman* (an ethnographic study of weaving) and her novel *Dezba*, she experimented with three very different textual strategies for describing Navajo women’s daily lives. In teaching literacy to Navajos during her 1934 summer “hogan school,” she anticipated much of the philosophy and technique of modern bilingual, bicultural education.

In relocating Parsons, Benedict, and Reichard within anthropology, these essays do three things. First, they examine the personal struggles each woman faced as she became an anthropologist and worked out her place within the discipline. This is particularly clear in the essays on Parsons and Benedict. Deacon and Babcock explore the different paths by which Parsons and Benedict came to anthropology and the contrasting strategies they used to deal with their personal dilemmas as women and their professional lives as anthropologists.

Second, these papers examine the relationships with male mentors and colleagues. All three found a sympathetic, if demanding, mentor and teacher in Boas, whereas Parsons and Benedict formed close relationships with Alfred Kroeber and Edward Sapir among their contemporaries. With other men they often had difficult relationships. For example, Ralph Linton, appointed chair of Columbia’s Department of Anthropology because, Benedict, as a woman, was unacceptable to the adminis-

tration, became antagonistic toward her after he discovered she had not supported his candidacy. Gladys Reichard and Clyde Kluckhohn became intellectual adversaries because of their disputing views on interpreting data on Navajo religion. Benedict and Reichard often disagreed with their male colleagues in print, and they objected to a male-dominated discipline that did not always accord their work a significant place.

Third, these articles formulate an appreciation for each woman's work. Parsons, in finding a solution that combined her family commitments and her professional goals, created a blend of fieldwork and ethnographic writing that often left the voices of Native American women intact and kept her own position visible. Benedict's poetic approach to ethnographic description and her sensitivity to textuality prefigure much that is current in poststructural analyses of ethnography. And Reichard's attention to Navajo categories and her sense of the complex relationship between the ideas embedded in Navajo religion prefigure both ethnosience (a 1960s approach that proposed a method for studying the structure of native classification systems) and more interpretivist approaches to religion and symbol.

TOURISM, COMMODIFICATION, AND GENDER

Marta Weigle's essay examines the construction of the Southwest as a type of world's fair, a place tourists could visit and gaze at both its natural wonders and native peoples. Even though tourists traveled to the real Grand Canyon (rather than a display at a world's fair), both the scenery and Native Americans were packaged and presented to visitors, first through what Weigle calls "staged authenticity" and then later through "performed authenticity."

The Santa Fe Railway and the Harvey Company, which began to focus on a tourist market in response to a decline in the number of passengers and fear of bankruptcy in the 1890s, were in large part responsible for the creation of the Southwest as a tourist mecca. Weigle's essay focuses on two women — Mary Colter and Erna Fergusson — who were instrumental in creating the milieu in which tourists encountered Native Americans. Colter was largely responsible for the interior design of many of the Harvey Houses and created a number of settings in which Indian women and men were "on view" to tourists — making pots, weaving rugs, or creating silver and turquoise jewelry. With the advent of the automobile, the Santa Fe Railway and the Harvey Company adapted to this new form of more open transportation by taking over

Fergusson's ideas about motorized tours through Pueblo villages.

The advertising brochures and other travel literature throughout this period are full of fascinating images and rhetorical devices, as illustrated by the figures that accompany Weigle's article. Brochures are saturated with references to "primitive Americans" who possess "ancient lore," live in low little rooms "cleanly as a Dutch oven," or work at a "primitive loom of logs." Images depict Native American women as exotic, "colorful Others." In addition to the construction of Navajo and Pueblo peoples as "primitive" as opposed to the "civilized" tourists, travel literature presented what the tourist was to see as "authentic" — the "real thing." As Weigle points out, this authenticity was itself constructed. For Colter, it was "staged." Whole buildings, particularly the Hopi House and the Watchtower at the Grand Canyon, were put together to display craft products and also the native women engaged in weaving or making pottery. Indian culture was presented as if "under glass" for onlookers to admire and watch before they purchased a rug or pot to take home.

Fergusson, in creating her own Koshare Tours and later in training female couriers, or guides, for the Harvey-owned Indian Detours, utilized "performed authenticity." Performances occurred on two levels. Because the tours visited actual Pueblo and Hispanic villages, tourists saw genuine performances — ranging from Pueblo feast-day dances to the making of bread, meal preparation, or weaving — that the Pueblo or Navajo women carried out for the occupants of the Harvey car. In addition, couriers performed for tourists. They were educated Anglo women who wore elements of Navajo clothing, spoke Spanish, and interpreted the Native American and Spanish performances. Visitors learned to view the Southwest as it was packaged by the couriers and the Harvey Company.

Although tourism is more clearly enmeshed in creating modified sets of relationships between Americans and native peoples, there was and continues to be a link between anthropology and the selling and promoting of native arts. For example, Reichard went to live with Miguelito's family during her second field experience among the Navajo. Miguelito, his wife, and their daughters had worked for Fred Harvey's Indian Department. The women demonstrated weaving for tourists, and Miguelito was one of the Navajo singers who participated in the dedication of El Navajo Hotel, which was decorated with sandpaintings, some of which had been reproduced by Miguelito for an Anglo trader and later acquired by the Harvey Company. More recently, Helen Cordero, the granddaughter of Santiago Quintana, a Cochiti storyteller who worked with a number of anthropologists (including

Benedict), has memorialized her grandfather's art with the creation of "storyteller" pottery dolls, which have become one of the best-selling Pueblo art objects of the 1980s and 1990s.

NOTES

1. The papers by Barbara A. Babcock, Louise Lamphere, and Marta Weigle were originally written for a conference on "Daughters of the Desert" sponsored by the Wenner-Gren Foundation and held at Oracle, Arizona, during March 1986. Lamphere would particularly like to thank Ann Nihlen, Jane Slaughter, Betsy Jameson, Virginia Scharff, and Ruth Salvaggio and other members of the Frontiers Editorial Collective for their help in preparing this introduction and reviewing the papers for this section.
2. Louise Lamphere, "The Internal Colonization of the Navajo People," *Southwest Economy and Society* 1, 1 (Spring 1976): 6-14.
3. For example, Ruth Underhill, *Papago Woman* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1979); Walter Dyk, ed., *Son of Old Man Hat* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1938), an autobiography by Left Handed, a Navajo Indian; and Leo Simmons, ed., *Son Chief* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), the autobiography of Don C. Talayeva, a Hopi Indian.
4. Mina Caulfield, "Culture and Imperialism: Proposing a New Dialectic," in Dell Hymes, ed., *Reinventing Anthropology* (New York: Random House, 1969), pp. 182-212.
5. Kathleen Gough, "Anthropology: Child of Imperialism," *Monthly Review* 11 (1967), pp. 12-27, also published as "New Proposals for Anthropologists," *Current Anthropology* 9, 5: 404-407.
6. Other critiques include Diane Lewis, "Anthropology and Colonialism," *Current Anthropology* 14, 5: 581-591; Talal Asad, ed., *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (London: Ithaca Press, 1975); and a number of articles in Hymes, *Reinventing Anthropology*.
7. See *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Control and Visions of Rule*, special issue of *American Ethnologist* 26, 4 (November 1989), particularly Ann L. Stoler, "Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th-Century Colonial Cultures," pp. 634-660.
8. Marilyn Strathern, "An Awkward Relationship: The Case of Feminism and Anthropology," *Signs* 12, 2 (1987): 276-292; Judith Stacey, "Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?" *Women's Studies International Forum* 11, 1 (1988): 21-27; Frances E. Mascia-Lees, Patricia Sharpe, and Colleen Ballerino Cohen, "The Postmodernist Turn in Anthropology: Cautions from a Feminist Perspective," *Signs* 15, 1 (1989): 7-33.
9. Two recent reappraisals of Parsons's work are Louise Lamphere, "Feminist Anthropology: the Legacy of Elsie Clews Parsons," *American Ethnologist* 16, 3 (1989): 518-533; and Barbara A. Babcock, "Elsie Clews Parsons and the Pueblo Construction of Gender," in Barbara A. Babcock, ed., *Pueblo Mothers and Children: Essays by Elsie Clews Parsons, 1915-1924* (Santa Fe: Ancient City Press, 1991).
10. Deborah Gordon, "Among Women: Gender and Ethnographic Authority of the Southwest, 1930-1980," paper prepared for Nancy Parezo, ed., *Daughters of the Desert*, forthcoming.



Elsie Clews Parsons. *Courtesy of the American Philosophical Society.*