

be seen as men also is problematic. Nonetheless, I would highly recommend this book, perhaps in conjunction with John Wood's *When Men Are Women: Manhood Among the Gabra Nomads of East Africa* (1999), for use in any gender class. They provide such clear illustrations of the ways that gender, and in many ways sexuality, are cultural and social categories first and foremost.

Young's primary argument is that this institution is a social response to local economic and cultural conditions, rather than the result of individual choices. The most important cultural factor she cites is the upholding of family honor. The primary reasons for a girl to take the oath of virginity are to avoid an arranged marriage, provide a male heir and to avenge a brother's death. In all three cases, whether the family decides to raise the girl as a boy or she decides for herself that this is required of her, the "sworn virgin" gains access to all the privileges, rights and responsibilities of a man, including owning homes, arranging marriages and avenging the family's honor in a blood feud.

What is perhaps most interesting about this book for this audience is that the "virgins" must remain just that for their entire lives. This is an oath for life, which means no sexual contact with men or women, forever. Young takes great pains to illustrate that this institution says absolutely nothing about the sexuality of the "virgins," except that they have none. While Western audiences might see this material (and the photos of the "sworn virgins") and understand it as lesbianism, this concept is an alien one both to the "virgins" themselves and to most Albanians. Indeed, since they have taken on the masculine role in their households and communities, and are accepted as such by everyone, Albanian custom dictates that they show no interest in women or sex. While this may be seen as a hardship by many of us, for the Albanian "sworn virgin," the privileges of masculinity in an extremely patriarchal, patrilocal, patrilineal and patricentric society more than make up for the denial of sexuality. Indeed, upon completing the book I wondered why any girl in northern Albania would agree to live as a woman (as her father's and then her husband's property) when such an alternative exists!

Here's hoping my students enjoy the book and its placement in the course alongside Kate Bornstein's *My Gender Workbook*; Sherry Ortner's *Making Gender*; Cynthia Enloe's *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*; a selection of essays from Esther Newton's *Margaret Mead Made Me Gay*; and a variety of other books, articles, films and personal reflections.

I hope you all have a happy and safe winter holiday.

Please send your comments, new column ideas or other information to Barb West at bwest@uop.edu. To sign up for the SOLGA listserv, send a message to listserv@american.edu with "subscribe solga-1" in the body of the message.

Society for Linguistic Anthropology

JAMES STANLAW AND RICHARD SENGHAS,
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

This month we present excerpts from an interview with Mary Bucholtz and Elizabeth Keating, the new editors of the *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*. More of this interview can be found in the Knowledge Exchange section of this issue, and the complete text can be found under *Anthropology News* at <http://lilt.ilstu.edu/soa>.

Jim Stanlaw (JS): I'm going to start by asking what do you see [in the future] for the *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*?

Elizabeth Keating (EK): First of all, we definitely want to continue the wonderful tradition that's been established through the previous editors of the journal. And we have a very diverse and interesting and exciting field of scholars [working with us on the editorial board].

Mary Bucholtz (MB): Yes, we are trying to build on the very strong foundation that has already been established. We would want to continue in that tradition of allowing a lot of different kinds of forums to be available for people to present their work. One of the ideas we have been talking about is to have an article that will be made available for people to respond to, by people whose work relates in some ways to the article. This is not necessarily the traditional response; we're trying to contextualize what the work is doing with regard to what each of the commentators have done in their own field of expertise.

JS: Do you mean something like what *Current Anthropology* does?

EK: We wanted to do something different than that. More like a dialogue among scholars, responding to a broad theme or a broad idea that has been a focus of linguistic anthropology and that interests many people. We thought we would present different people's research on a particular theme because oftentimes in a journal issue you get very different articles on different subjects, and different methodologies, and we wanted to try to bring some articles together that have some resonance with each other, and also would be in some sort of dialogue with each other. But the idea is more to present, I guess, a broader sense of an issue. . . . Well, maybe the thing to do would be to give you some examples. We were thinking of doing things with visual anthropology and how that relates to work in linguistic anthropology, because, of course, there are other semiotic systems besides language that are very important. Another idea was to do something on youth culture.

MB: We are also interested in making sure we have representation from all areas of the readership. We are also talking of developing topics in cognitive anthropology, for example. So we want to make sure that we are addressing everyone at some point. So some of these things will proba-

bly take shape as we go, and as we encounter new work that is being done.

JS: Sure, it sounds like you are trying to really broaden the field . . . [to] include things like visual semiotics, and different kinds of populations.

EK: That would be a good way to say it. And also some issues like ethics are important.

MB: Yes, we have been talking about framing that in terms of a dialogue where people are each offering their own perspective rather than talking from a research-article perspective—thinking in terms of the theories, methods and politics they confront when they do their work.

JS: Well, do you have any pieces of advice for people who would be interested in contributing to the journal?

EK: I would just encourage people to submit their manuscripts, and to bear in mind that we are trying to represent a diverse group of people working on language and culture.

MB: I would like to see people thinking that "JLA is the first place I am going to send this article." We really do want to be as inclusive as we can be. And we will read anything that has something to say about language and culture; we will certainly give it our fullest attention.

Please send your comments, contributions, news and announcements to Richard Senghas (richard.senghas@sonoma.edu) or Jim Stanlaw (stanlaw@ilstu.edu).

Society for Medical Anthropology

ANN MILES AND FRED BLOOM, CO-CONTRIBUTING
EDITORS

Hospital Work

By Elisa Sobo (*Children's Hospital, San Diego*)

Two years back, I wrote about my experiences as an anthropologist in a medical school. I am now even further from the anthropological epicenter: although still university-affiliated, I work for a hospital.

The fact that a hospital post was open to an anthropologist has to do with the attention that terms such as "culture" and "ethnography" now receive in biomedicine. This is good news, but we should not be deceived: there still is no real understanding about what these terms mean, or what anthropologists like me, who specialize in qualitative research, actually do.

So what *do* I do? My research directly affects hospital operations and thus child health outcomes. Sometimes I am called to help departments improve performance. My own interests drive other projects. But all my work must be justified to top management as adding to the bottom line.

Let me give you three examples. My research on how MDs decide if a parent is a "good" parent is allowable because my findings can be used to help MDs avoid expensive "social" admissions (non-medical admissions made when parents or