experience is extraordinary, so much so in fact that I would have liked to see some better documentation of the experience of naven from those who actually participated. Silverman says that the men feel ashamed of their masculinity, but he offers no corroboration from informants for those feelings. Once one moves from the topic of cultural symbolism to the topic of personal experience, the actual accounts of informants become essential, and Silverman's book includes no accounts from Eastern Iatmul individuals about what it is actually like to perform naven. My suspicion is that an accurate account of the experiential dimension of naven would have to foreground a distinction between public drama and personal emotional expression. Naven as a public drama entails a cathartic reaction, and the intensity of the emotions expressed imply that the symbolic forms have a deep psychic resonance. But tears, even tears of shame, can be provoked in public drama without implying any deep personal significance. The tears may express an appreciation for the sheer beauty and poignancy of the dramatic performance without implying that one is actually ashamed of one's own masculinity. The proof would come from actual accounts by individuals.

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Naven—The Opera

Just like all tribes, anthropologists seem to find some stories good to think with. The *naven* rite of the Iatmul people of the Sepik River, Niugini, is one such yummy morsel, probably because, as your Aunt Fanny says, it is very, very naughty—full of transvestites, and lewd and lascivious behavior by the most unlikely of people, all right out in the open. In short it lets us all have a jolly good time while we're working.

The origin story of the first anthropological account of naven is itself quite naughty, and operatic, too. Once upon a time three anthropologists came together on the Sepik River, Margaret Mead, Gregory Bateson, and Reo Fortune. Out of this fortuitous meeting, fortunes were won and lost. One man was cuckolded, right in front of his eyes, apparently. Bateson gained a wife, as well as a book. The lady in question left one man for another—the stuff of Hollywood was here: sex, swamps, and crocodiles. Anthropological fortunes were made and lost too. Fortune had written *Sorcerers of Dobu* (1963) before this meeting but was seldom heard from writing about New Guinea again. And no wonder, one thinks, after that sad tale. The other two, of course, went on to illustrious careers. Bateson's study of naven could claim to be the pièce de résistance of that meeting of minds in the hys/tropics

of anthropology. Of the three characters involved in this ménage, Bateson was the most singular and distinctive thinker, and in *Naven* one sees that mind at work. To follow in his footsteps is, to the mind of this reviewer, an unenviable task, for his was such a brilliantly iconoclastic voice. Even a reviewer, like this one, intent on getting to her main task, a review of the book in question, keeps tripping on this history and this origin, and one cannot avoid paying attention to Bateson's story first.

It is necessary to give a brief description of the naven rite to understand something of its anthropological charisma. What caused all this fuss? There are many variations to naven (these variations have formed rich fodder for analyses that have succeeded Bateson's), but the core of the rite, as described by Bateson, is a transvestite reversal of gender roles, one in which male and female matrilineal kin of a young man dress in exaggerated and grotesque clothing of the opposite sex and behave in most unseemly ways toward that young man. This behavior occurs during precisely those ceremonies that are held to celebrate the man's masculine achievements. Bateson particularly emphasized the way in which the *wau*, the man acting in the role of a classificatory mother's brother, rubs the cleft of his buttocks down the length of his *laua*'s (sister's son), leg, an act which Silverman calls *nggariik*. Of course, the wau does this only if he can find his laua since, surprise, surprise, the young men run away and hide in an attempt to avoid the shame of this disgusting naughtiness being enacted on their bodies.

This is obviously, as it is doubtless intended to be, eye-catching behavior, and since Bateson (1958) first described naven it has certainly caught many an eye. Charles Ludlam, eat your heart out. So democratic are these grotesqueries that nobody is excluded—old women and men mix with the youthful, everyone in their right place, of course. Besides being eye-catching, this behavior has become a set piece of anthropological explanation. In a classic anthropological move, rather than emphasizing how weird this behavior was, Bateson came up with the in/famous term, schismogenesis, to suggest that the naven rite, was, both psychologically and sociologically, integrative of Iatmul society. Thus, in Bateson's explanation, all this apparent reversal of norms, where dignified dowagers strut in a mockery of masculine vanity and arrogance, authoritative men parody a widow's abjection, and both commit unspeakable acts, in fact, is a kind of social hygiene that prevents, at a number of levels, the disintegration of Iatmul society. Needless to say, all of this is much more complex than a short review synopsis allows.

Eric Silverman's 2001 version of this Ludlamesque extravaganza, *Masculinity, Motherhood, and Mockery: Psychoanalyzing Culture and the Iatmul Naven Rite in New Guinea*, based on Silverman's own field research, is the latest in a history of analyses since Bateson's first powerful one appeared in 1936. Since then most of these tend to compete with, as well as honor, his

explanation of naven. Bateson himself pointed out aspects of the naven behavior that did not conform to his account. He also simplified the components of the ceremony he chose to emphasize, and, in particular, he ignored the role of women in the rite. Silverman's material, as well as that of other analyses, picks up on these lacunae, particularly on the role of women. The achievements of young women are also, it turns out, celebrated in naven. What is it about the naven ceremony that continues to obsess anthropologists? Reviewing the course of this history demonstrates as much about anthropology, its fads and fashions, strengths and weaknesses, as it does about the rite itself. Naven has been a prism through which to view the way in which theories and methodologies have refracted on anthropological materials, and the study of the analyses of naven is as intriguing as the rite is eye-catching, a history of anthropology and a culture area in a microcosm. Reviewing this literature, the varying explanations put forward for the transvestite ritual tend to bifurcate around an ancient anthropological split, that between what might be called the sociological aspects of naven, which emphasize its relational structures, versus those that focus on psychological and symbolic facets. Silverman's book, based on psychoanalytic first principles, falls on the side of the psychological. This, of course, like everything one can say about naven, tends to oversimplify all these complex studies but is a helpful rubric to keep in mind when surveying a large amount of material. Each analysis, in its own way, also attempts to put this particular rift, between the social and psychological, individual and society, back together again.

Silverman's take on naven is both a critique of Bateson, although a gentle and courteous one, and a plea for a psychoanalytic analysis of the rite, contrary to Bateson's rejection of such explanations. In that sense Silverman ties himself to Bateson from the very beginning of his own analysis. He suggests that he did not set out to analyze naven but, after witnessing the ritual, felt that, in his words, the rites

> exhibited a different tone and drama than those reported by Bateson. These ceremonies did not appear to effect any psychological, emotional or sociological closure—just the opposite. The ritual seemed to intensify the paradoxes and conflicts of the culture. It especially confounded the standards of masculinity and motherhood. (4)

Each analysis of naven looks at it with a somewhat different lens. Silverman sets himself the task of explaining naven as an expressive part of the complex relationship between the masculinity of Iatmul men and, surprise, surprise, their mothers, or, to be more precise, the imaginary mother. To do this Silverman uses a fusion of the Bakhtin (1993) carnivalesque and general psychoanalytic principles, applied to his own field material. Within the

parameters that Silverman sets for himself, his analysis is complex and often moving, and his fieldwork forms a rich ethnographic basis for this narrative. In his introduction Silverman lays out the guidelines for his analysis, the most interesting of which, for this reviewer, was his adoption of the notion of dialogics:

> My goal is to analyze the relationship between masculinity and motherhood by focusing on two countervailing images of the body that the great literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin dubbed the "moral" and the "grotesque". Eastern Iatmul men idealize an image of motherhood that is nurturing, sheltering, cleansing, fertile and chaste, in a word, moral. But men also fear an equally compelling image of motherhood that is defiling, dangerous, orificial, aggressive and carnal, hence, grotesque ... masculinity in Tambunum is a rejoinder to these contrary images of motherhood. (2)

Silverman's analysis of masculinity also uses four psychodynamic processes as first principles with which to explain naven. First, in Tambunum, as elsewhere, there is an abundant amount of evidence that men have ambivalent desires to at once reject and, at the same time, to return to Mother, or, to be precise, to the imaginary mother. Silverman suggests, inter alia, that analyses of New Guinea masculinity have overemphasized the desire for separation and ignored its corollary, the desire to return. The other three processes invoked by Silverman are the centrality of the preoedipal mother/child bond in the cultural imagination of men and, to a lesser extent, women; the fact that men in Tambunum define themselves through oedipal desires and anxieties, but with an emphasis on the mother rather than the punitive father; and, finally, the male envy of female parturition and fertility. In essence Silverman considers naven to be a central expressive event that intertwines the dynamics of these four processes (10). The dialogics of these processes can also be seen in kinship structures, cosmology, architectural symbolism, and bodily metaphors. These topics form the content of his chapters, along with one that focuses on naven itself.

For this reviewer the most interesting aspect of Silverman's analysis is its emphasis on the fact that naven does not in any way represent closure, balance or an integration of social forces, but is rather a carnivalesque expression of ambivalent dynamics of psychosexual forces. Contrary to Bateson's contention, it does not therefore work to integrate society. The rite not only expresses ambivalence but is also part of its construction. Silverman bases much of his rejection of Bateson's thesis on nggariik behavior that is the climax of the rite: the act in which a senior man or woman rubs the cleft of their buttocks down the leg of the person for whom the rite takes place. As Silverman states:

> The sudden appearance of nggariik in a ritual that seemingly celebrates the mastery of manhood and the moral renewal of society seems truly misplaced. Coming at the climax of naven, nggariik should enable the mother's brother to honor his sister's son: but it fails. Both uncles and nephew are shamed. (172)

Silverman's most interesting observations about naven and masculinity are summed up in the following extension of these observations:

> Nggariik is a misplaced gesture only when viewed through functionalist, teleological and structuralist frameworks. We cannot understand nggariik if we assume that the primary task of ritual is to construct society and personhood and to solve the riddle of culture. Rather, from a dialogical and psychoanalytic perspective, naven is revealed for what it really is: a ritual that plays on desire and teases taboo in order to effect emotional and semiotic ambivalence rather than social and moral rejuvenation. (172)

To this reviewer by far the most interesting aspect of Silverman's analysis stems from this observation, which frames naven as an expressive dialogic form. On the other hand the author's reliance on a set of worn-out psychoanalytic principles of masculine psychosexual development is not so much wrong as banal and ho-hum. How many times do we need to have it repeated that men love and hate their mothers and, by extension, all women? Or that women, in public and private, denigrate men, especially those they have cared for as children? How many times do we have to hear that men envy female fertility? It is not so much that these are wrong, as that, especially by now, they are banal observations, even if the behavior one is analyzing does involve exciting, disgusting, transvestite behavior and is a bit scintillating. Frankly, not even transvestites could make these observations interesting. Using such principles is a bit like using a meat cleaver to cut a diamond. Such tenets simply do not explain the particular exaggerated, grotesque, theatrical form that naven takes but are, rather, just-so stories.

Once one adopts these psychoanalytic first principles, one leaves oneself open to an old, but still relevant, question: Why, if such principles are so universal, do they take this particular form in this society and not others? This, an old problem, still has to be addressed, particularly in any analysis that uses such worn-out tenets about the human condition. This is especially true here since the author himself makes a point of critiquing the teleological aspects of functional and sociological arguments, particularly those of Bateson. Any argument that resorts to psychodynamic first principles such as these has its own teleological problems to worry about. Silverman could

have argued more effectively for the continued relevance of this argument from psychodynamic first principles; however, in order to do this he would need to position his own choice of this particular approach within a complex history of psychoanalysis and anthropology, which he does not do. Although Lacan, and Kristeva, for example, are mentioned in passing, their own departures from Freud are not broached. Silverman's is a kind of generic Freud, and the old sad, tragic man, at that.

Masculinity, Motherhood, and Mockery is a psychosexual myth narrative, a seamless story, often eloquently written, but this reviewer still prefers the first story better, not simply because Bateson rejected psychoanalysis, but rather because his own approach to the ritual was, as Houseman and Severi (1998, 9) point out, sensitive to the nature of the complex relationship between observation and interpretation. I still read *Naven* with interest today because in it Bateson lets the reader see the way in which his own mind operated on the puzzle of naven. His approach openly presented the gaps and seams in his own analysis. One catches a glimpse of Bateson catching a glimpse of something interesting, puzzling, grotesque, and hilarious, and one watches him as he tries to tame the beast. No one has done it better because Bateson seemed to have respect for the minotaur—he knew he never could completely tame the beast. Silverman's book is of a different kind. It is excellently detailed, knows its literature and field material very well, and is eloquently written. It provides much greater ethnographic depth than did Bateson's account, but this achievement is flawed by its failure to interrogate and deepen the central psychodynamic processes on which it relies for its explanation.

A final point regarding all the analyses of naven to date; the reader will have undoubtedly noted my occasionally tacky and jesting remarks about this rite. These were not intended in any way to denigrate the practice but to draw attention to aspects of the rite that tend to get lost in the momentous seriousness of most analyses—the exaggerated, hilarious, ribald, and entertaining form that this rite takes. This reviewer would like to see an account of naven that not only explained the rite but that also embodied and evoked its particular nature. Could we have a naven opera, or a naven burlesque? In these the audience would ponder the eternal mysteries, not of the male psyche, but of hysterical laughter.

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Reviewe: PAUL ROSCOE
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Masculine Dilemmas

Silverman offers this synthesis of psychoanalytic theory and cultural dialogics, applied to a Sepik River society, as a conceptual and ethnographic tool to advance our understanding of the meanings and misfortunes of masculinity and, more profoundly, of what—if anything—masculinity is (2, 177). Certainly, this erudite and fluid work, which parallels Lipset's (1997) approach to masculinity among the Murik, near the Sepik mouth, provides a coherent and innovative angle from which to view Sepik River social and ritual life. It makes a lot of sense, for example, out of the ubiquitous appropriation by lowland New Guinea male cults of female—especially, maternal—procreative qualities and powers. And Silverman's analysis of naven is especially valuable, since it shows a Bakhtinian interpretative framework to be *at least* as successful in understanding this refractory rite as the several earlier analyses that have been attempted since Bateson's initial attack on the problem.

To be sure, Silverman's general analytical framework provokes perennial questions of validation that face all psychodynamic analyses: Why should we prefer this particular analysis to others? Like any binomial framework, a Bakhtinian analysis seems especially absorbent of any and all ethnographic detail. If humans entertain two images of the body, the moral and the grotesque, if Iatmul male culture is dialectically generated by idealized images of motherhood as nurturing, sheltering, cleansing, fertile, and chaste and as defiling, dangerous, orificial, aggressive, and carnal, then virtually any statement or behavior can be analytically parsed as reflecting one aspect or the other of the resultant emotional ambivalence, existential contradiction, or normative behaviors that bespeak chaotic primary processes. Of course,