

“The Subjective Narrative” singularly deals with the problems of isolation. In the novels chosen for analysis and illustration, there is an expression of dissatisfaction with the present. Focus is upon Armah’s earlier work and the novels of Wole Soyinka.

The distinction that Gikandi makes in the political novels is their concern with “community, character and consciousness” in works by Sembene Ousmane, Alex La Guma, and Ngugi Wa Thiong’o. The first author’s *God’s Bits of Wood* deals with the anti-colonial fight: in La Guma’s work, *In the Fog of the Season’s End*, the focus is upon the anti-apartheid struggle, and the last, *Petals of Blood*, centers on Kenyan neo-colonialism. These works have parallelisms: they are fictions of crisis and the characters are placed in an ideological framework dealing with the future of communities. The authors would appear to have written their novels with patterns for changing “African reality.”

Finally, the last chapter examines the importance of myth, both traditional and contemporary. Chinua Achebe’s *Arrow of God* and Elechi Amadi’s *The Concubine* provide the works for Gikandi’s analyses.

In summation, Gikandi’s work is an absolute must for study for those interested in the African novel. Because of the ground it breaks, it may well serve as germinal for needed critical works on this fiction.

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**Howard L. Harrod. *Renewing the World*. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1987) xiv, 214 pp., \$22.50.**

Howard Harrod’s work provides an interpretation of the religious and moral world of the Arapaho, Crow, Cheyenne and Blackfeet tribes of the Northwestern Plains. Well aware that the material he is utilizing represents interpretations by early ethnographers, he transcends this hermeneutical problem to provide an idealized reconstruction of this world guided by the theories of Schutz and Geertz and the work of Joseph Brown.

His goal is to represent and provide a deeper understanding of the rich religious and moral heritage of these peoples. In this he succeeds well. He covers encounters with the sacred based in individual vision seeking, the significance of cosmologies, manipulation of key symbols such as bundles, and renewals effected through focal rituals such as the Crow Tobacco Society and the Sun Dance. In his most striking chapter, the

theme and insights of which pervade the book, he analyzes the significance of kinship and the implications of extending the kinship metaphor to all beings.

While carefully tracing the interrelation of religion and morality of these peoples, he does skirt one important institution, war. It is clear from the ethnographic record that war was a spiritual act linked intimately to the ritual, vision, kinship and morality of these Plains tribes. Harrod, however, excuses this crucial behavior as ultimately defensive.

Harrod could also have more fully integrated historical data into his project. While he considers the migrations of these tribes to their locations in the 1850s, the vast changes taking place in Indian life and culture and their effects on religion and morality are reduced to brief comments in Chapter One and its footnotes. Introduction of the horse, gun, and European trade items occurred before the era examined (1850-1900), as did contact with whites, widespread epidemics, and the florescence of the fur trade. Events during this period, including contact with Christian thought, the disappearance of the buffalo, the ghost dance, and the final restrictions of Indian migrations and warfare, clearly affected religious and moral beliefs.

I do not suggest that either Harrod or the authors from whom he works are ignorant of or insensitive to this history, nor that this work should be a purely historical analysis of transformations. However, Harrod could have strengthened his analysis by reincorporating historical data to more fully explicate both the nature and production of these ethnographic texts and the effect of history on religious thought, action and morality. Since the period of study is from 1850 to 1900 rather than a hypothetical *in illo tempore*, a fuller attempt to integrate the significance of this material is essential.

Harrod utilizes Geertz's model of religion as models "for" and "of" society. As a model *for* society, his representation and analysis are provocative, one he rightfully advises others to heed. As a model *of* society, religion cannot be properly understood except in its historical context. Bracketing history, even when drawing an interpretive, idealized representation, risks portraying religion (and culture itself) as immutable, monolithic, and ultimately unreal. This work does provide valuable insights into the religious world of these peoples but at the cost of decontextualizing this world from the forces of history.

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