

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Some of our readers may wonder why a journal devoted to concerns about Human Movement Studies would publish two articles about Aboriginal singing. The articles by Sutton and von Sturmer about songs are relevant to us because in Aboriginal Australia, singing and dancing are so intertwined that it is virtually impossible to separate them without distorting the actual relationship which exists between them, but there are other reasons as well. In this short introduction, it is impossible to enumerate even a few of the elements of social organization, hierarchy and power relations in Cape York Aboriginal societies which justify such an assertion, but readers may get some idea of the complexity of the relations between singing and dancing from von Sturmer's contribution and anyone who is familiar with the literature from this part of the world knows the hazards involved. It is not unusual to hear people in Cape York (and elsewhere in Australia) talking of "singing a dance" and "dancing a song".

It is because of this that Sutton's comments about anomalous texts and a lack of fit between current realities and past histories of some of these people is so important. He tells us that he has

... suggested that one must resist the temptation to represent neatly matching or aligned cultural forms as 'the system' and thus treat anomalous relations between such forms as 'exceptions', and that ... while it is true that a song, its language medium, and its site and totemic referents, are often very neatly matched with the language, owned sites and totemic affiliations of the song's various owners/singers, there are plenty of examples where they are not (see infra, p. 42-43).

Sutton's work emphasizes the importance of "ceremonial and mythical orders": they are like living libraries -- archives of ideas, thought and belief which in a rapidly changing world provide testimony of a continuity of values which often transcends the more importunate demands of short-term, more materialistic considerations. Records of who one is, where one belongs and how it is that one came to exist are not easily displaced by the flux of ongoing, everyday events.

von Sturmer, on the other hand, is preoccupied with the status of song and discourse and how it relates to other non-discursive practices, notably, the dance. He tells us that

... the maintenance of dances was always more problematic than the maintenance of songs, though of course we would need to build the technical difficulty of the songs into our analysis ... Songs were more stable than dances, or, at least, the frequency and continuity of their performance would present the illusion of stability. Dance performances, being more infrequent and performed in highly restricted contexts, were a more marked form than song performances ... (see infra p. 15).

In fact, von Sturmer's paper is an appeal for a more holistic view of performances, instead of 'dances' or 'songs' by themselves. "All performances," he says, "embody statements about being-in-the-world; and ritual performances are the most determinative of 'discourses'. Here the body speaks -- directly, and in its totality. It is an essential task to develop a methodology for examining performances in themselves ..." (see *infra* p. 16), but why go on with this? Both authors are more than capable of speaking for themselves, and both essays are rich in meaning and import, especially for the serious student of human movement, regardless of what type of movement or action it is.

Drid Williams

THE VISIBLE AND THE INVISIBLE:
EXPLORATIONS IN MEANING AND HUMAN ACTION

The editors would also like to take the opportunity to inform readers of the above panel on the anthropology of human movement to be convened at the invitation of the Society for Visual Anthropology as part of the American Anthropological Association meetings to be held in Phoenix, Arizona, November 17-20, 1988. Papers to be given are as follows:

- Brenda Farnell: Where 'mind' is a verb; Sign Talk of the Plains Revisited.
- Lee Ellen Friedland: Social commentary in Afro-American Movement Performance.
- Adrienne Kaepler: Visible and Invisible in Hawaiian Dance.
- Adem Kendon: Sociality, Social Interaction and Sign Language in Aboriginal Australia.
- Gaynor Macdonald: Where Words Harm and Blows Heal.
- John von Sturmer: Truth Claims, Truth Production and the Empirical Imperative: Two Australian Cases.
- Drid Williams: Space, Intersubjectivity and the Conceptual Imperative: Three Ethnographic Cases.
- Bonnie Urcuioli: Discussant.

THE EDITORS