

not as “sa quatrième partie.”

As pointed out above, the book under review is basically a study of technical terms. I regret to say that in this respect its conclusions are not always felicitous. At the same time, the book is also a comprehensive study of the contents of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, correcting many interpretations and setting things in their proper perspective. In this connection I may refer to Bansat-Boudon’s treatment of the so-called *lāsyāṅga* as mini-scenes, or the preliminaries, as a theatrical spectacle in their own right.

Moreover, as a rare contribution to our understanding of the actual performance of Sanskrit plays, the book has the great merit of placing for the first time the *sāmānyābhinaya* at the center of our attention. Even if one need not agree with every aspect of the author’s interpretation of it—her relegation of the definition given in the *Nāṭakalakṣaṇakośa* to a mere note is, as far as I can see, a missed opportunity, as is her forced interpretation of the term *bhāvikā*—the importance of this all-encompassing mode of acting to the performance is made abundantly clear.

HERMAN TIEKEN
University of Leiden

EICHINGER FERRO-LUZZI, GABRIELLA. *The Taste of Laughter: Aspects of Tamil Humor*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992. xx + 218 pages. Illustrations, bibliography, index, glossary. Paper DM76.00; ISBN 3-447-03195-6.

Gabriella Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi’s work is more than just a taste of Tamil humor: it is a many-course meal, the appreciation of which cannot be determined simply by the number of dishes offered. A great variety of humorous works in the southern Indian Tamil language have been considered and aspects of Tamil humor minutely categorized. Jokes have been differentiated in terms of their relationship with language, reason, and the subject matter. They are further broken into many subcategories, ranging in subject from double-meaning word-play to phonological jokes, from logic to absurdities of reason, and from food to cinema. Similarly, humorous works of Tamil literature are divided according to authors and themes, and are discussed under many subdivisions, reflecting the wide variety of themes and perspectives. Tamil folk humor is also discussed under comparable categories of language and subject matter, and under the unique category of “didactic intent.”

The author set out a threefold objective for the work: 1) to give an “ethnographic” study; 2) to establish a “polythetic-prototype” approach in opposition to essentialist theories of humor; 3) to offer a comparative study of Western and Tamil humor, and of Tamil folk and non-folk humor.

The author has fulfilled her first aim by documenting numerous jokes, tales, and other materials and by categorizing each one. However, as the author feared, the Introduction to the book and lengthy explanations did reduce the comic potential of the jokes. Innumerable instances are cited and explained, and yet the larger context of their genesis and existence remains unspecified. There is, for example, no way in which a reader can understand how popular the cited humorous works of literature are, or to what section of society they communicate with best, or even what makes them pleasurable for those who read and write them.

Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi is thorough in her discussion of the theories of humor and in elaborating her approach. Her obsessive involvement with theoretical formulation, however, reduces the material to a sheer elaboration of postulates. Instances are cited not to lead to fur-

ther understanding of the subject of research but as proofs in support of, or in opposition to, arguments. In the end hypotheses are (predictably) proven and justified without any reference to the validity or acceptance of these in the cultural context to which the research material belongs.

As for the two types of comparisons, between Western and Tamil humor, and between folk and non-folk Tamil humor, the former runs throughout the book, while the latter is discussed in one separate section. The writer admits that the comparison between Tamil and Western humor can only be "impressionistic," especially because the Western materials are not the subject of the work. Comparisons are, however, drawn at every level with reference to "Western" humor without citing any instance of it, and with the assumption that the nuances of it (Western humor) are homogeneous, defined, and universally known. The readers are told again and again which particular instances of Tamil humor would or would not be appreciated by "Westerners." The direct subject of research seems to have a secondary status to this undefined "Western humor" and makes a direct and independent conception of Tamil humor impossible. It is noteworthy that instances of Tamil humor regarding Westerners or the Westernization of Indians, are almost completely absent. The factor of historical time in the concept of humor (i.e., how the concept of humor changes over time) has been completely ignored, except when the absence of certain types of jokes in Western society, like jokes about mothers-in-law (46-47), is explained in terms of their subject matter having lost their importance in contemporary Western society (176). By inference, Tamil society seems to represent the "Western past" or to be "backward in time."

In regard to the comparisons of Tamil folk and non-folk humor, they are too sketchy and based on insufficient sources of folk humor. Differences are cited while no comparisons are drawn. For example, it is stated that among the Tamil rural folk, gurus are the butt of jokes, while among the urban and literate the school teacher and college lecturer are laughed at (175). However, the reader has no way of knowing whether this difference also extends to a difference in attitude towards the institution of "teacher" between the rural and the urban populace. The equation of folk with rural and of literate with urban is questionable, even within the Indian context, and is bound to disturb some folklorists.

Gabriella Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi's work is largely descriptive, with few insights into the aspects of Tamil humor.

Sadhana NAITHANI
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi

HANDOO, LALITA. *Structural Analysis of Kashmiri Folktales*. CIIL Silver Jubilee Publication Series. Mysore: Central Institute of Indian Languages, 1994. xiii + 230 pages. Map, tables, bibliography. Rs. 82.00; ISBN 81-7342-007-6.

The aim of *Structural Analysis of Kashmiri Folktales* is to test V. J. Propp's morphological-structural approach by applying it to Kashmiri folktales. The author bases the study on J. Hinten Knowles's work *The Folk-Tales of Kashmir* (London, 1893), which can be used to apply Propp's theory as it contains every kind of narrative type. In applying Propp's theory the author limits the study to the framework of the forms of the tales. The author's conclusion is that Kashmiri folktales are highly structured and that there is a morphological oicotypization evident in them.