

# Reviews

## Archaeology and material culture

DELLE, JAMES A., MARK W. HAUSER & DOUGLAS V. ARMSTRONG (eds). *Out of many, one people: the historical archaeology of colonial Jamaica.* x, 332 pp., maps, figs, tables, illus., bibliogr. Tuscaloosa: Univ. Alabama Press, 2011. \$27.50 (paper)

This outstanding collection of papers documents the quality and quantity of historical archaeology research conducted on the island of Jamaica over the past thirty years. Jamaica offers a significant location for the investigation of the colonial enterprise in the Americas. Beginning with Spanish explorations and conquest in the sixteenth century, followed by British accession in 1655, the island provides the opportunity to investigate the different strategies of European metropoles and the majority population who arrived there against their will. Moreover, because Jamaica remained a British colony until it achieved independence in 1948, it reflects very different experiences from its North American and many Caribbean counterparts that were transformed by European expansionism. From a comparative perspective, Jamaican history is comprised of multivalent landscapes.

All of the chapters recognize that historical investigations must proceed at multiple 'effective' scales. Matthew Reeves (chap. 10) provides the most specific discussion of this scalar perspective in which he identifies global, regional, community, and household levels of analysis. It is refreshing to read a chapter that discusses the integration of different scales with

regard to the sufficient parameters that link them. Although Reeves is the most explicit regarding methodology, all of the chapters recognize cultural, spatial, and temporal scales as reticulate and hierarchical units of analysis. Moreover, they all adopt a perspective in which material remains are given equal footing to historical documents. The chapters embody the synergism of archaeology and history.

Introductory and concluding chapters (chap. 1 and epilogue) situate Jamaican history and archaeological research. Three chapters examine the early colonial period. Spanish influences on Jamaica and other British colonies have often been neglected. A detailed account of the early sixteenth-century Spanish sugar industry offers a counterpoint that employs very specific archaeological observations to illuminate the tension between feudalism and agrarian capitalism (chap. 2). Jamaica was the proving ground for underwater archaeology during excavations of Port Royal undertaken by Donny Hamilton and his students at Texas A&M between 1981 and 1990. (Known as 'the wickedest city on Earth', Port Royal collapsed into the sea during a catastrophic earthquake in 1692.) Chapter 3 targets wrought-iron tools recovered during underwater excavations to evaluate local practices in the city; practices that are recorded in probate records, but are disconnected from the lived experience. The archaeology of interactions and communication in a public setting among the British colonial merchant class is the focus of investigations at the New Street Tavern in a drier context of Port Royal (chap. 4).

The majority of historical research has focused on the British plantation system in Jamaica. Douglas Armstrong (chap. 5) introduces

this subject by reflecting on investigations at Seville Plantation and highlighting efforts to illuminate 'both the complexity of social interaction and the contexts of dynamic creativity embodied in Jamaica's cultural landscape' (p. 77). A significant aspect of social interaction is the maritime movement of goods and people. Underwater archaeology again offers a unique perspective, this time in the context of a shipwreck (chap. 6). The movement of goods into and across the island is the subject of chapters on the production and exchange of locally produced ceramics (chap. 9); household marketing activities by enslaved peoples in two distinct plantation settings (coffee and sugar plantations; chap. 10); and the essential role of consumer goods in communicating status and social identities (chap. 11). Combined, these chapters provide a harmonic resonance to the diversity of lived experiences, and demonstrate the substantial contributions that historical archaeology has to offer from a focus on materiality.

The complex layering of Jamaica's colonial history is exposed and scrutinized in all of the chapters, from the initial Spanish conquest, to the trading entrepôt of Port Royal, the habitus of hegemonic British plantation landscapes (chap. 7), the agency of enslaved peoples, the 'consumer revolution' (chap. 11), Maroon 'freedom fighters' (chap. 8), and post-emancipation politics and realities, including the importation of indentured labourers from South Asia (chap. 12). This volume also highlights how the people of Jamaica have actively engaged in revealing and protecting their cultural heritage. Not only does this collection speak to the history of Jamaica's peoples ('Out of many, one people'); it situates Jamaica's colonial history within broader world systems. This book is a significant contribution towards understanding the patterns, processes, and motives of the colonial revolution that began in the Americas in 1492, and whose repercussions continue today.

WILLIAM F. KEEGAN *Florida Museum of Natural History*

HOPKINS, NICHOLAS & SOHAIR MEHANNA (eds). *Nubian encounters: the story of the Nubian Ethnological Survey 1961–1964*. xxiii, 328 pp., maps, tables, illus., bibliogr. Cairo: American Univ. Cairo Press, 2010. £22.95 (cloth)

The Nubians – in the relevant sense of that ambiguous word – are a people who used to

inhabit the banks of the Nile from Aswan in Egypt up to al-Dabbah in the Sudan. Most of them spoke one or other of several Nubian languages, though some of the Egyptian Nubians had adopted Arabic. They lived in hundreds of small hamlets, cultivating the generally narrow margins of the river. The poverty of the area was such that many of the men were migrant workers who spent long periods in Lower Egypt. Their reputation for reliability and honesty helped them find work as servants, door-keepers, and the like.

At the beginning of the last century, the first Aswan Dam was completed, and it was subsequently twice raised (1907–12 and 1929–33). As the lake behind the dam grew deeper, a number of Nubian villages were flooded and their inhabitants moved. Relocation on a much larger scale came with the second Aswan Dam (the High Dam), construction of which took place between 1960 and 1970. All the Nubians in Egypt (over 50,000), and most of those in the Sudan, were resettled as their homes vanished under the waters of Lake Nasser.

Archaeologists were deeply concerned at the submersion of the numerous ancient sites upstream of the High Dam, and many people know of the great international effort that led to the removal of the Abu Simbel temples from the area that was to be flooded. Few, however, are aware of the attempts made by anthropologists to deal with the effects of the great dam. The most important of these, the one that is the subject of the present work, was initiated by Robert Fernea, who was at that time teaching at the American University in Cairo (AUC). He enlisted the support of a more senior anthropologist, Laila el-Hamamsy, director of the Social Research Center (SRC) at AUC, and the two of them turned for funding to the Ford Foundation, which responded generously. Field research for the project – the Nubian Ethnological Survey (NES) – was carried out in the Egyptian part of Nubia in the years 1961–4, under the leadership of Fernea and el-Hamamsy. They recruited a senior staff of about half-a-dozen Americans, most of whom (like Fernea himself) had recently received doctorates in anthropology, and a junior staff made up mainly of Egyptian graduate students (among them Sohair Mehanna, the co-editor of this volume).

The NES carried out two broad surveys, one of the Nubian economy, the other of the Nubian migrant workers, and four community studies, three of them among the old Nubian settlements and one in a more northern settlement that had been established in 1934 as a

result of the second raising of the old Aswan dam. The intention was to co-ordinate the work of all these investigations at the SRC, and an 'enormous amount of material' (fieldnotes and the like) was collected there. But the NES staff quickly dispersed, some materials never reached the SRC, and in the event the researchers published their results as individuals rather than as members of a team.

The opening section of this book (by Hopkins and Mehanna) is a detailed account of the NES and of some related research. At the end of the book there is a list of the publications that resulted from the NES, a guide to some of the unpublished ethnographic materials, and a bibliography of some relevant work done outside the framework of the survey.

The main body of the book consists of sixteen papers, covering a wide range of subjects. Three of them are previously unpublished, and among these the account of the resettlement written by Mohamed Fikri Abdul Wahab (the only member of the NES team who spoke a Nubian language) is particularly noteworthy. The NES was a work of salvage ethnography, and viewed as such it was a success, greatly increasing our knowledge of the Nubians. But Hopkins and Mehanna consider at some length whether, taken together, the publications of the NES 'amount to a coherent account of Nubian society and culture'. Their answer is evidently no. One common weakness is the absence of detailed information, which can be felt even in such excellent papers as those by Charles Callender, Abdul Hamid el Zein, and Hussein M. Fahim. The book itself is the product of a larger SRC project, the purpose of which is to collect, order, and make available at the AUC material relating to the NES. It may be that the mass of raw data in this and other archives – to say nothing of an unpublished book left by Callender after his death – will eventually give us a fuller picture of Nubian life as it was half a century ago. In any case, the present publication will remain an indispensable tool for every serious student of the subject.

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**SHRYOCK, ANDREW & DANIEL LORD SMAIL**  
*et al. Deep history: the architecture of past and present.* xvii, 342 pp., maps, tables, figs, illus., bibliogr. London, Berkeley: Univ. California Press, 2011. £20.95 (cloth)

*Deep history* is a volume of great significance, bringing fresh insight, focus, and shape to our

understanding of the dynamic connectedness that spans the entirety of human history. The contributors deliver the compelling case that history must penetrate beyond shallow time, thereby severing the binds between history and text, in order to engage the deep past and the indivisibility of human and world. The calibre of contributors is exceptional and Andrew Shryock and Daniel Lord Smail should be congratulated for assembling the line-up whilst also fostering the volume's collaborative character. Ten thematic chapters are divided into four sections: 'Problems and orientations', 'Frames for history in deep time'; 'Shared substance'; and 'Human expansion'. Each chapter is co-authored, facilitating a sophisticated fusion of insights from archaeology, anthropology, history, linguistics, and primatology. This transcendence of specialization yields some remarkably innovative and perceptive results.

'Histories can be written from every type of trace', Shryock and Smail note refreshingly, 'from the memoir to the bone fragment and the blood type' (p. 13). From this foundation the volume's contributors unpack the fashioning of historical argument through the power of evidence, architectures of likenesses, and narrative structures. This volume therefore exposes and moves beyond the conspiracy – assisted by conceptions of (post)modernity, the triumph over nature, and social evolution – which maintains deep time as inaccessible to anthropologists and historians. *Deep history* also demonstrates admirably how instruments such as patterns, frames, and metaphors enable the reconstruction of deep pasts. In light of this, the work scrutinizes a number of co-evolutionary devices, including relationships ('kinshipping'), exchange, hospitality, networks, trees, extensions, scalar integration, and fractal replications.

Amongst the illuminating contributions – and they are all impressive in various ways – the explorations of 'shared substances' perhaps shine brightest. The case is well made that networks of relationships and exchange are social projects and these have always connected and punctuated time and space. None the less, as instruments for 'making history', they remain 'incoherent and imperfectly intelligible' (p. 132). In chapter 6, Felipe Fernández-Armesto and Daniel Lord Smail describe powerfully, by way of discussion ranging from hospitality and feasting to elite cuisine and cannibalism, the centrality of food to human history and our long social and meaningful engagement with it. The media of kinshipping are explored by Thomas Trautmann,

Gillian Feeley-Harnik, and John Mitani in chapter 7. The authors, positioned between primatology and ethnography, manage to break the bounds of the Hegelian historical frame. In essence this involves defining kinship in terms of consciousness, memory, and gesture rather than language, whilst also recognizing its 'elastic' manifestation. The history of human sociality – from intimate to global – is thereby reconfigured, and with it further transformations unfold, including what it means to be human and the spatial and bodily dimensions of both relationships and materiality. The point could be made in qualification that food and kinship are vast topics. In both cases other areas might have been included fruitfully: for example, movement and flows, social memory, creativity, power relations and inequality, material culture, and ritual. Such interrogations of the interplay between the deep and shallow pasts of shared substances remain available for others.

The impact of the volume is at once inspiring and unsettling. It delivers a challenge for us all to do much better in our various disciplinary attempts to understand deep time and reconnect short and long histories. Some immediate points of self-awareness can be drawn out. Firstly, we must recognize – and tackle – the myopia of inflexible forms of particularism and hyper-specialization. Secondly, we must accept that it is premature to think previous purges of master narratives from the scaffolding of historiography were successful. For example, if we care to look, notions of progress and human exceptionalism can be found fit and well in the lexicons of cultural emancipation, economic development, and technological modernization. Thirdly, we must reject unified visions of human history. This includes key products of the postcolonial search for diversity, often linked to uncritical applications of agency theory, which have transformed and homogenized the subaltern into the familiar.

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TYTHACOTT, LOUISE. *The lives of Chinese objects: Buddhism, imperialism and display*. xii, 275 pp., illus., bibliogr. Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books, 2011. £56.00 (cloth)

Louise Tythacott's monograph takes the reader on a mesmerizing journey through time and continents following the itineraries of five Buddhist sculptures dating back to the fifteenth

century, originating from the island of Putuo, in China, and now in the collections of the Museum of Liverpool. Drawing on Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff's pioneering biographical approach, the book reconstructs the social lives of these enigmatic sculptures through a detailed mapping of their geographical and epistemological dislocations over a period of over six centuries, in two countries (China and the UK), and in diverse contexts of display (Buddhist temples, Great Exhibitions, private collections, and public museums).

Each chapter is devoted to the analysis of the meanings and values attributed to the sculptures in a different context of display. Following a chronological order, the book opens with a chapter probing the sites and modes of manufacturing of these artefacts and their significance as objects of Buddhist veneration in the temples of Putuo Island. The analysis continues with an investigation of the historical circumstances under which the sculptures left Putuo and reached the UK as part of the material collected by a British army officer during the Opium Wars (1839–42). This move also entails a transition from a sacred, public context (the temple) to a secular and private realm (a private collection). After being prominently displayed in London's 1851 Great Exhibition, the sculptures became sought-after collectibles as curiosities, antiquities, and art treasures (chaps 3 and 4). They left the realm of private cabinets and connoisseurship in 1867, following the acquisition by the Museum of Liverpool, where they were subsequently incorporated into displays on the 'Mongolian Race'.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 focus on the social lives of the sculptures as part of museum collections. These chapters show how, as museum objects, the sculptures continued to be highly mobile, as they journeyed across ideologies (imperialism, evolutionism, postcolonial criticism), classifications (as archaeological, ethnographic, art objects), and museological paradigms (modernism, aesthetics, new museology). This fine-grained analysis notably enables Tythacott to raise, in the book's concluding chapter, some key questions about the 'semantic flexibility of things' (p. 226). Is there a limit to the polysemy of objects? Can some objects resist endless re-contextualizations by virtue of their powerful iconography? Tythacott points at the consistent prominence of the religious character of the five Buddhist sculptures – a character that the many epistemological and museological interpretations

never truly managed to overwrite. The book closes with a chapter discussing a range of future scenarios for the five sculptures, including their permanence at the Museum of Liverpool, and their repatriation to China.

Over the last two decades, a significant number of volumes have been exploring the potential of biographical approaches to illuminate the study of material culture. In many instances, however, biographical accounts focus on specific moments in objects' social lives. Based on an impressive amount of historical data collected in archives, libraries, and museums around the world, Louise Tythacott's work is a uniquely comprehensive study: the objects' movements throughout their social trajectories have been painstakingly charted and critically discussed. This material provides the palimpsest for engaging discussions of the role of ideologies, disciplinary taxonomies, display approaches, curators' preferences, conservation techniques, and funding arrangements in determining the fate and value of museum objects. As a result, the book offers a wealth of theoretical insights on a broad range of issues of relevance to museum studies, anthropology, and material culture scholars. These include, but are not limited to, the polysemy of objects; colonialism and cultural hierarchies; the role of collectors and connoisseurship; the creation of knowledge and value; the shifts between private ownership and public good; the issue of repatriation; the placement of sacred objects in secular spaces; as well as the ambivalent status of Chinese objects in Western museums.

Written in an accessible, yet never reductive narrative style, this study tells us much more than the story of a set of Chinese sculptures. The discussion of the endless array of labels, meanings, and values that, over six centuries, the West has been attributing to these objects holds up a mirror to Western civilization – its intellectual shortcomings and illuminations, its greed and fears, and its endless fascination with and (in)capacity to understand other cultures. The rigorous and accurate historical research over an exceptionally extended period of time, and the very effective synergy of historical, anthropological, museological, and curatorial approaches, insights, and research tools, are what make this book unique, and highly recommended reading not only for Asia scholars, but also for anyone interested in the role that objects play in processes of knowledge and value creation.

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## Economics and trade

LYON, SARAH & MARK MOBERG (eds). *Fair trade and social justice: global ethnographies*. viii, 307 pp., bibliogr. New York: Univ. Press, 2010. \$75.00 (cloth), \$25.00 (paper)

'Does fair trade really work?' Anyone who writes or teaches about global trade has fielded this question dozens of times from students, colleagues, and friends. This volume, consisting of ten ethnographic case studies of fair trade's impact on commodity producers around the globe, provides welcome evidence to help answer that question. As a whole, the ethnographies suggest that fair trade has, at the very least, had remarkable success in creating a conversation about how commodities are produced and exchanged internationally. Since the 1980s, fair trade has grown from a fringe movement to a sophisticated global bureaucracy that regulates a market generating over US\$1 billion in sales. This rapid growth has not come without its challenges. In practice, fair trade has often failed to live up to its rhetoric of economic justice and farmer empowerment. While many of the essays in this volume are critical of how fair trade functions 'on the ground', however, the authors are generally sympathetic towards the movement's goals.

Much of the existing scholarship on fair trade has focused on coffee, the product that has the most well-established fair trade market. While this volume contains three chapters on coffee (by Julia Smith, Sarah Lyon, and Molly Doane), it expands our understanding of fair trade by including studies of tea plantations (Sarah Besky and Catherine S. Dolan), bananas (Mark Moberg), flowers (Catherine Ziegler), and crafts (Patrick C. Wilson and Kathy M'Closkey). The editors provide a skilful introduction that summarizes major debates within fair trade scholarship: Does fair trade paradoxically create a market-based solution to problems caused by faith in free markets (p. 7)? Does it turn systematic economic inequalities into matters of private consumer choice (p. 8)? Does fair trade lose its counter-hegemonic force when it is taken up by corporations like Nestlé and McDonald's (p. 12)? Does fair trade create a new system of governance that re-creates unequal North-South power relationships (p. 15)? These questions reappear throughout the volume, which is organized into three sections: part 1, 'Global markets and local realities', focuses on how fair trade's goals are or are not being met in specific

ethnographic contexts; part 2, 'Negotiating difference and identity in fair trade markets', explores the 'continuing asymmetries of power between commodity producers and those who procure their goods for fair trade distribution' (p. 16); and part 3, 'Relationships and consumption in fair trade markets and alternative economies', focuses on the consumption of fair trade products, with one additional chapter (Faidra Papavasiliou) describing an alternative currency project in Ithaca, New York.

This volume is at its best when it presents ethnographic observations that illustrate both the accomplishments and the limitations of the fair trade system. Moberg, for example, describes how the 'social premium' paid to fair trade banana producers in St Lucia has been used to create a 'novel health insurance fund' (p. 59). At the same time, these farmers see many fair trade requirements for weeding and harvesting as being overly burdensome and not worth the trouble. Lyon's discussion of gender inequality within one of Guatemala's most successful fair trade coffee co-operatives shows how fair trade's discourse of democratization and farmer empowerment can gloss over, and even solidify, gender divisions. Besky shows how a fair trade 'Joint Body' on a Darjeeling tea plantation becomes co-opted by a plantation owner, who excludes the plantation's hired workforce from the certification process, leading to a situation in which fair trade strengthens the exploitative relationships it intends to challenge.

While this volume certainly demonstrates the value of local-level ethnography as a research method, it might have been strengthened by incorporating methodologies that offer the potential for more collaboration between researcher and subject. Many of the authors' criticisms of fair trade are discussed among experts within the fair trade bureaucracy. Can plantation labour ever truly be called fair? How can a 'democratically organized' co-operative be certified as such? The ethnographies largely address these concerns from the perspective of commodity producers in dialogue with anthropologists. It would be helpful to know how these criticisms are being discussed and dealt with by professionals within the fair trade establishment.

This is more of a provocation than a criticism. *Fair trade and social justice* is a timely, comprehensive collection of research that will be of great value to anyone interested in trade, international development, or bureaucracy. At a more abstract level, this collection helps us to understand how transnational political projects

are enacted, resisted, and reformed in locally specific ways. The concise and well-chosen chapters will work wonderfully in the classroom, answering some well-known questions about the fair trade system, while stimulating future inquiry and debate.

DANIEL REICHMAN *University of Rochester*

WEST, PAIGE. *From modern production to imagined primitive: the social world of coffee from Papua New Guinea*. xvii, 315 pp., tables, illus., bibliogr. London, Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 2012. £74.00 (cloth), £17.99 (paper)

Scholarly bookshelves are crowded with commodity studies, and potential readers may question what sets this ethnography apart from the others. *From modern production to imagined primitive* is a unique and valuable contribution owing to its geographical focus, its topical attention to gender roles, the complexities of co-operation, and the poorly understood world of commodity distribution. It also deepens our anthropological understanding of the social imaginary and the problematic consequences of identity-based marketing.

West sheds important light on coffee production in Papua New Guinea, a region that is underrepresented in research on agricultural commodities, especially coffee. In PNG, where the vast majority of coffee is grown on small farms in rural settings, one out of every three people is connected to the industry in some way (p. 7). *From modern production to imagined primitive* provides a strong corrective to academics and activists who have a tendency to make sweeping generalizations about the world of coffee production and trade based on the better understood experiences of Latin American farmers. In places like Maimafu, every family has a coffee grove and the crop is the only source of income for many – consequently, it is seen both as their link to cash and the root of their claims to modernity (p. 110).

As a result of her deep anthropological understanding of local culture and history, West is able to illuminate the important ways in which coffee production is shifting gender relations in the community. She details how coffee production has come to define the marital bond and the way that a woman becomes part of her husband's clan at the same time that it is increasing women's workloads and decreasing the time available for socially reproductive practices, such as making net string bags, visiting female family members, and attending church (p. 126). Importantly, West's focus on

PNG also demonstrates how the social ideology of co-operation, so celebrated among supporters of certified coffees, is an external imposition that reorganizes social relations in ways that do not fit with traditional society (p. 146). She demonstrates how the fixation on organic and fair trade certification in the country is potentially raising expectations in ways that are problematic.

The text's focus on the poorly understood realm of distribution is a critical contribution. West argues that the tendency to paint people in the industry as exploitative middlemen is as dangerous as it is inaccurate (p. 243). Although she describes her methods as journalistic, West is able to provide an ethnographically rich analysis of coffee distribution from the local level of coffee buying in Maimafu through the offices and social worlds of expatriates working for transnational coffee import/export firms. In so doing she humanizes the 'coyotes', or coffee buyers, who are spoken of so derisively in fair trade and specialty coffee promotional literature.

Using the lens of coffee, this book helps us to understand the ways in which desire and fantasy become connected to politics. While other authors have explored the increasing commodification of identity, West concretely pinpoints how the use of primitive, edenic, and impoverished images of coffee producers to sell a product is tied to neoliberalization and deregulation. The codes of conduct and certifications in which consumers place so much faith have unfair social and economic impacts on the producers they are ostensibly designed to help and ultimately result in consumers who do not enact real politics.

In short, West builds on the work of critical geographers to argue convincingly that the specialty coffee industry reproduces troubling stereotypical images while occluding the real history and political economic position of the producers (p. 66). The text ends on the sobering note that neoliberal marketing sets the stage for the moment when the lives of poor people across the planet become unfashionable and thereby unthinkable – as West asks, where will we be then (p. 255)? West states at the outset that her book is an attempt to answer the question whether we should buy certified coffees. Her answer is that doing so probably won't help small farmers. Unfortunately, like so much of anthropology, she doesn't tell her readers what they *should* do, offering up critiques rather than solutions. Her own research seems to support a return to political citizenship rather than consumer citizenship: we should be

arguing for structural reforms, such as a return to the coffee quota system and technological assistance to small farmers, rather than a softer, gentler form of neoliberal capitalism.

SARAH LYON *University of Kentucky*

## History

HENG, DEREK & SYED MUHD KHAIRUDIN

ALJUNIED (eds). *Singapore in global history*.  
317 pp., tables, illus., bibliogr. Amsterdam:  
Univ. Press, 2011. €44.50 (paper)

Ambitious and largely well written, this multidisciplinary volume (re)interprets aspects of Singapore's past through an analytical framework that emphasizes global connections and interactions. Its salience, however, exceeds the confines of both historical analysis and the diminutive city-state that is its object. As an exercise in reworking both history and historiography through thick description, it contains themes and predicaments with which anthropologists are undoubtedly familiar.

The editors present *Singapore in global history* as a critical rejoinder to two main historiographical trends: the Euro-centrism of earlier world histories, and Singapore's official account of its postcolonial ascent under the guidance of 'big men', notably the redoubtable Lee Kuan Yew. Eschewing a modernist, teleological narrative of nation-formation, the book treats Singapore's past as multiple, complex, and fluid. Central to this project is the insistence that Singapore has always been 'a location where global processes find their nesting place and where the roots of transformative processes that eventually emanated to other faraway parts of a globalizing world could be traced' (p. 17). In this respect, it serves as a prism through which to explore larger processes, such as the workings of empire, long-distance exchange, and the negotiation of diasporic identities.

The book is characterized by an overarching interest in connectedness as both a theme and a method. Each chapter contains a dense historical exposition of intriguing and sometimes surprising facets of Singapore's past. Some moor themselves in Singapore, tracing the movement of persons, things, and ideas through and around it. Loh Kah Seng, for example, analyses the social and political impact of British military withdrawal in 1971, while Lai Chee Kien paints a

fascinating portrait of a rambutan orchard set up by a Hainanese immigrant, which became a space for the cultivation of distinct diasporic identities by Singapore's Chinese literati.

More than being a site of passage, Singapore was also a node in regional and global events and networks. Assessments of its agentive significance in such large-scale nexuses vary between chapters. Derek Heng and Joey Long, who discuss Singapore's brief tenure as a premodern trading polity and its place in Cold War politics, respectively, depict it as subject to the ebbs and flows of larger forces, much of which lay beyond its inhabitants' control. Other authors, however, place more emphasis on the pivotal role that Singapore played in world affairs. Of particular interest is Huei-Ying Kuo's study of Japanese-Chinese alliances in Singapore (1914-41), which shows how Japan's interwar expansionist policies were shaped not only by anti-colonial sentiment and Sino-Japanese antagonism, but also by shifting – and by no means uniform – economic relations with different overseas Chinese groups.

Textual materials loom large in a number of chapters which explore Singapore's embeddedness in international 'information empires' (p. 85). Torsten Tschacher and Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied look at newspaper reports from different angles: the former at how Singapore's nascent vernacular press responded to a late nineteenth-century Muslim revivalist movement in Sudan, the latter at how Asian and European news outlets construed ethnic riots that broke out in Singapore in 1950. In his stimulating comparative survey of literary ephemera that circulated among the Anglophone classes of Singapore and the Gold Coast (Ghana), Philip Holden reveals how certain shared (Victorian and colonial) motifs and techniques of self-formation were given cultural shape as elites in each context forged their own forms of moral community. In these chapters, Singapore appears as a site for the creation – and severance – of real and imagined relations throughout a colonial nexus, well before the advent of 'globalization' and 'knowledge economies' (a concept pithily examined in Leong Yew's chapter).

The collection demonstrates nicely, if somewhat unevenly, how a concerted focus on the particular can illuminate more general themes and concerns. The contributors' efforts to tease out the links between Singapore and the wider world point to ways of taking contextual complexity seriously without rendering it deterministic. This is surely

instructive to anthropologists, who have long been inspired – and bedevilled – by the comparative project. Yet there are also some familiar pitfalls to this agenda. At times, the writing verges on reifying 'the local', 'the regional', and 'the global' as self-evident phenomena, thus obscuring the crucial question of how scholarly categories are themselves constituted and politicized. This is a surprising elision, given that such categories are every bit as Eurocentric and problematic as the paradigms against which the editors write (p. 13). But tackling this issue may require a different analytical step forward. The chapters in this volume do a fine job of highlighting the complexity and interconnectedness of Singapore's people and past. The question now is whether they can move beyond description and critique towards genuinely new theorizations and frameworks for future scholarship.

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HORNBORG, ALF & JONATHAN D. HILL (eds).

*Ethnicity in ancient Amazonia: reconstructing past identities from archaeology, linguistics, and ethnohistory.* xviii, 380 pp., maps, figs, tables, illus., bibliogr. Boulder: Univ. Press Colorado, 2011. \$75.00 (cloth)

It is difficult to discuss in such a short space a book in which eighteen authors cover different archaeological, linguistic, historical, and ethnographical issues. The general intention of the editors is to discuss the essentialist conception of ethno-linguistic diversity, which appears to be somewhat implicit in classic Amazonian studies. They argue, firstly, that Amazonian societies were not necessarily small, simple, and atomized; secondly, that they did not migrate massively owing to environmental and demographic causes displacing pre-existing natives; thirdly, that there is not a straightforward, mechanical correlation between languages, pottery styles, cultural traits, and bound, discrete, biologically distinct groups. The evidence rather reveals a variable relationship between geography, language, culture, and genetics, in which boundaries and collective identities have been continuously generated and transformed by shifting objective conditions such as demography and ecological diversity, but also by social factors: trading circuits, strategic negotiation, intermarriage, multilingualism, economic specialization, warfare, epidemics, cultural creativity, and so on.

The book is divided into three parts. The first one, 'Archaeology', is perhaps the most interesting. It contains articles by Goés Neves (on the pertinence of correlations between language distribution and archaeological record), Heckenberger (on the Arawak influence in the regional systems of the Southern Amazon periphery and Upper Xingú), De Boer (an eclectic and provoking study of relationships between archaeological data and ethnography of captive assimilation among Peruvian Panoans), Scaramelli and Scaramelli (the colonial construction of generic stereotypes such as '*indios*' and '*criollos*' in the Middle Orinoco), and Hornborg and Eriksen (a comparative systemic analysis of the Panoan people's expansion and their areal relations with neighbouring groups).

The second part, 'Linguistics', is rather technical. It includes pieces by Basso (on the linguistic genres of daily politics in Upper Xingú), Danielsen, Dunn, and Myusken (an analysis of structural features of Arawakan languages), Da Silva Facundes and Brandão (lexical borrowings between Arawak and Arawá along the Perú-Brazil frontier), Dahl, Gillam, Anderson, Iriarte, and Copé (a formalistic combination of geographical information systems, cartographic modelling, and archaeological databases to explore linguistic diversity), Carlin (historical contacts between Arawak, Carib, and unclassified languages of the Guyana-Surinam frontier), and Myusken (grammatical features of northern Quechua as potential indexes of ethnogenetical processes).

The third part of the book is labelled 'Ethnohistory' and includes articles by Hill (Wakuénai sacred landscapes as meaningful environmental histories), Virtanen (an interpretation of the similarities between Manchineri shamanic geometric drawings and the Acre earthworks), Dudley (the Piedmont region of Apolobamba as a strategic intermediation zone between the Andes and the Bolivian lowlands), Whitten (a study of Runa ethnogenesis in Ecuador with special reference to neo-structuralist distortions that reify colonial dichotomies: Jivaroan: Savage; Ethnography :: Canelos Quichua: Civilized; History) and Santos Granero (a comparative analysis of three symbiotic 'captive identities': Taíno-Naborey of Antilles, Tukano-Makú of Vaupés and Chiriguano-Chané of Western Chaco).

The editors argue convincingly for a return of comparative method based on modern exegetical technique. The general impression is that there is a marked Arawakan bias – it was in fact the most widely dispersed linguistic family

during the colonial encounter. There is indeed a certain 'Arawak tone' across the whole book: an austere, serene, conciliatory writing concerned with building bridges rather than erecting barriers (with a few passionate exceptions in Whitten and the Scaramellis, who seem to be primarily interested in the colonial politics of ethnogenesis). The chapters are generally data-rich and interesting, and most of the authors do not seem obsessed with academic fundamentalisms: 'animism', 'perspectivism', 'post-colonialism', and so on.

There is, however, a sort of latitudinal decline, and despite punctual exceptions the northern case studies seem to be better documented than the southern ones (Hill's quick reference to the Guaraní quest for the legendary 'Land without Evil', for instance). It is a pity that the authors in the 'Ethnohistory' section have limited themselves to published sources. This neglect of historical archives seems rather odd: any *longue durée* interpretation of Apolobamba, for instance, would have benefited greatly from numerous colonial and missionary sources kept in Seville, Rome, Buenos Aires, Sucre, and La Paz. There are some misspellings in Spanish ('Madre de Díos', p. 305; 'Santamaría', p. 319) and also a certain indifference regarding Spanish and Portuguese scholarship (the abstruse but highly pertinent works by Branislava Susnik, for instance, have been completely forgotten).

Nevertheless, these minor shortcomings should not conceal the great value of this collective undertaking. Interdisciplinarity is usually a Pharisaic virtue. This book, on the contrary, practices what it preaches: it is full of heuristic hints and meaningful information, which has been actually analysed by engaging in serious transdisciplinary research.

DIEGO VILLAR CONICET (Argentina)

HUNT, DAVID. *Legends of the Caucasus*. 374 pp., tables, bibliogr. London: Saqi Books, 2012. £16.99 (paper)

As Bruce Grant and Lale Yalçın Heckman argue in their introduction to *Caucasus paradigms*, '[T]he Caucasus offers potentially rich dividends in showing, for example, how cultural knowledge can inform the management of pluralism' (2007: 5). *The legends of the Caucasus* contributes to the illustration of the plurality of the region through cultural exchanges, encounters, and transformations.

David Hunt's collection of legends allows a wider readership to come in contact with a rich, regional tradition of oral poetry. The late development of a script for many of the languages spoken (with the exception of the Georgians) contributed to the preservation of cultural knowledge in the collective memory of the Caucasian peoples. The Tsarist colonial modernization in the nineteenth century and the emergence of the various national movements which were strengthened by the introduction of the Soviet Nationality Policy in the 1920s and the policies of indigenization (*korenizatsia*) created a significant need for the collection and writing down of the regional folklore, which played a part in the gradual standardization of ethnic and national cultures and consciousness.

The collection of this material signified the transition from the performance of these 'oral songs' (p. 15) to their transformation into written poetry, which often included two parts, the prose and the poem. The collectors identified at the end of each legend were often prominent members of the intelligentsia: for example, the Georgian ethnographer E. Vralsadze or S.A. Ursibiev, member of a Balkar aristocratic family, indicating the importance paid to the collection of these legends.

David Hunt's collection is based on the presentation of Caucasian legends from various mountainous peoples (Chechens, Ingush, Laks, Abkhaz, Balkars, Georgians, and others). As he admits, legends form a special genre which is characterized by its strong tie to a specific locality, and, therefore, it has an immediate reference to its people and their beliefs. The legends included in the book belong to three categories: military matters, food culture, and family relations. According to the author, the criteria used for the selection of legends were the knowledge of the person or place where the legend was recorded and the fact that all the magic elements to which there are references in the texts have once been considered real.

The collection includes historical-political legends, covering Nogay Khan, Tamerlane, and Vakhtang Gogarsali (chap. 1); three legends of resistance to foreign invaders – Persian, Mongols, and the Russians (chap. 2); and nine against the feudal lords (chap. 3). There is a chapter dedicated to legends of rustling and stealing of animals (chap. 4), and another to hunting legends (chap. 6). Chapter 5 refers to warriors and blood revenge legends, and introduces the concept of honour and its significance in family relations in the Caucasus, something that is further developed in the

legends about family and personal honour (chap. 9) and relations within the family (chap. 10). There is also a very interesting chapter about legends of shepherds which connect to Cyclops legends (chap. 7) and a chapter on abundance (chap. 8). The two final chapters present legends regarding religious issues, such as the significance of dead ancestors to the organization of the Caucasian communities (chap. 11), and Prometheus legends, which are tightly linked to the concept of hearth (chap. 12).

In each chapter there is a very helpful overview, covering, for instance, information about the historical figures who feature in the legends, and anthropological data about the organization of family/blood relations and marriage or about the political economy in the region (such as hunting and agriculture, or scarcity of resources). There is also an interesting comparative table that presents the elements included in the Cyclops legends in different ethnic groups. In the appendix, the reader will find an informative text on the legendary Nart people, to whom many Caucasian peoples refer in their genealogies and oral traditions. At the end of the book, there is a helpful glossary of terms and places, followed by a predominantly Russian, English, and French bibliography.

The book is a rich collection of folk poetry of a region long misunderstood as a space of feuds, bloody wars, and political unrest which could captivate not only academic readers. The more systematic inclusion of short biographical notes on the collectors of the legends or the newspapers and journals that published them would have been a plus. Furthermore, there is a need for a brief historical introduction to the region and a map.

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SABLOFF, PAULA L.W. (ed.). *Mapping Mongolia: situating Mongolia in the world from geologic time to the present.* xxvi, 273 pp., maps, figs, tables, illus., DVD, bibliogr. Philadelphia: Univ. Pennsylvania Press, 2011. £42.50 (cloth)

This volume brings together a range of disciplinary approaches to the study of Mongolia. Contributions come from social and biological anthropology, history, geography, geology, archaeology, and international relations. The aim of the volume is to consider, from these different disciplinary perspectives, the merits or disadvantages of the study of

Mongolia within two 'grouping methodologies' (p. 16): a North American area studies framework or, alternatively, a framework based on Appadurai's concept of '-scapes'. Sabloff argues that this has implications for the importance afforded Mongolia in both academic and diplomatic contexts.

The volume gives a good impression of the myriad academic and policy concerns relating to Mongolia, and should be of relevance to those who are less familiar with the country and to specialists who are interested in findings from other disciplines. It should be noted that the volume does not aim to represent the breadth of academic disciplines relating to Mongolia (development studies and art history, for instance, are not included), nor does it aim to reflect the variety and debate within the subjects included. What unites these diverse chapters is a consideration of how best to frame the study of Mongolia. Hurst's chapter introduces the North American academic and political context for area studies. Sabloff discusses possibilities for developing a framework based on Appadurai's work, loosely fashioned on the notion of 'specific interaction patterns that transcend the nation-state' (p. 18).

Sneath looks at Mongol identity from a historical perspective. Considering a broad historical period, he looks at the nature of political organization and rulership and argues that Anderson's term 'dynastic realm', rather than concepts rooted in national populist ideas, better describes this area. Atwood, in turn, considers the geographical denominations of Central Asia, Inner Asia, and Central Eurasia in relation to Mongolia. He points to unifying processes under the expansion of the Mongol Empire and, from the fourteenth century onwards, of separation into 'two different worlds', one Turkic and Islamic and orientated towards Istanbul and Mecca, the other Mongol and Buddhist and looking east to Lhasa, Wutai Shan, and Beijing (p. 76).

Goulden, Nandintsetseg, and Ariuntsetseg describe the origins of Mongolia's geological landscape and how this has affected the country's climate and ecology. This perspective is brought to bear on recent climatic and ecological conditions. Barfield takes a broad perspective on the pastoral nomads of the Eurasian steppe, considering shared aspects in livelihood and cultural practices as the basis for 'distinctive cultural identity' (p. 104). Schurr and Pipes consider the origins of and affinities between Mongolians, and base their chapter on studies of cranial, dental morphological trait,

and genetic diversity in Asian and Siberian populations. They note how patterns of biogenetic diversity reflect not only evolution and adaptation, but also political exchanges, demographic processes, and forms of social organization (p. 126).

Two chapters look at archaeological material. Fitzhugh and Bayarsaikhan focus on Bronze Age archaeological sites composed of *Khirigsuur* (boulder mounds serving as burial structures) and deer stones (cenotaphs), dating from the early first millennium BCE. The authors consider these part of a single ritual complex (p. 182) that predates Scythian origins by between 300 and 600 years (p. 167). Honeychurch and Amartuvshin also consider Bronze Age *Khirigsuur*, slab burials, and deer stones, but from the perspective of their spatial distribution and in relation to the physical geography and political landscape. Goldin looks at pre-imperial and imperial Chinese understandings of steppe nomads, pointing to a fundamental shift in Chinese conceptions occurring as a result of contact with the Xiongnu (p. 226). It is noteworthy that only the final chapter, by Enkhsaikhan, focuses on the recent past and present-day policy concerns. Other chapters largely discuss historical or prehistorical periods before the establishment of the modern nation-state of Mongolia.

Such 'transnational' perspectives are clearly different in nature from Appadurai's focus on the new global cultural economy associated with 'disorganized capitalism', and the fundamentally disjunctive and unpredictable character and relationships between global cultural flows (which he terms ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes). In this context, Sabloff's application of Appadurai's work risks reducing this conceptual framework to such a degree that it loses its explanatory relevance. While all contributors embrace the principle of a broadly defined geographical framework for their subject matter, one suspects that (with the exception of Honeychurch and Amartuvshin) the term '-scape' often simply replaces existing terms that might equally well describe the phenomena discussed, for example ethnicity, cosmology, or technology. Yet that is not to say that the volume is not both welcome and enlightening in its interdisciplinary approach and conception of Mongolia and Mongolians as part of much wider-reaching, flexible configurations or networks that extend beyond national borders.

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WHITTEN, NORMAN E. & DOROTHEA SCOTT

WHITTEN. *Histories of the present: people and power in Ecuador*. xii, 253 pp., fig., plates, illus., bibliogr. Chicago: Univ. Illinois Press, 2011. \$80.00 (cloth), \$27.00 (paper)

Norman E. Whitten Jr and Dorothea Scott Whitten's most recent book, *Histories of the present: people and power in Ecuador*, is a collection of several key articles, written by this prolific couple over the past ten years or so, about the 'transformative dynamics' of history and contemporary cultures in Ecuador. Together they constitute an ambitious yet ethnographically and historically grounded attempt to view Ecuador's cultural diversity and political transformation in terms of ongoing intercultural relations. The book is equally a testament to this couple's unique and ever-growing contribution to our understanding of how Ecuadorians from multiple ethnic and class backgrounds engage with and challenge colonial social categories and power relations. In this sense, beyond constituting a far-reaching and decidedly diachronic perspective on Ecuador, this book raises questions about race, power, and history that are important for understanding Latin America more generally.

The book begins by defining 'interculturality' as a process by which Amazonian, Andean, and black Ecuadorians challenge formulations of race forged in colonialism and embraced today by elites. The authors describe how the current indigenous movement and its supporters reject the national ideology of *mestizaje* and with it the notion of 'whitening' that is central to a racial hierarchy that devalues difference. In this way, the emerging focus on interculturality embraces cultural difference such that it fundamentally challenges the idea of a common national identity as *mestizos*. In considering what the authors describe as 'the indigenization of modernity' in Ecuador, the book draws on a combination of Geertz's interpretative approach to culture, Turner's symbolic anthropology, and Sahlins's notion of the 'structure of the conjuncture'.

What is most striking about this book is the multi-regional perspective it brings to understanding past and present cultural processes in Ecuador. Chapters 2–4 make a particularly convincing case that indigenous and black Ecuadorians can be understood as having in common not only the experience of suffering racism and marginalization, but also being part of the same political process of challenging colonial mentality. This allows us to see the

country's indigenous uprisings since 1990 as part of a wider conjuncture between colonial ideology and contemporary notions of interculturality that resonate in many parts of Ecuador.

Chapters 6 and 7 explore the theme of 'alternative modernities' by considering the relationship between indigenous cosmology and the changing political economy of Ecuador. One of the most interesting chapters in the book is Dorothea Whitten's study of painters from the Tigua area of the Ecuadorian Andes. She approaches these painters as 'indigenous ethnographers' whose artwork incorporates shamanic imagery alongside images that speak to contemporary national politics and international concerns. Whitten argues that, in depicting ousted presidents, ecological destruction, shamanic healing, and the 9/11 attacks, these paintings 'illustrate the dynamics of interculturality and reflect a clear sense of alternative modernities' (p. 146). The chapter provides a clear ethnographic example of indigenous ideas and practices that engage processes extending well beyond the localities that have defined much previous anthropological research in Ecuador.

Chapter 7 builds on the theme of 'alternative modernities', describing historical and contemporary relations between Amazonian and Andean peoples as part of a dynamic regional system. It relates the history of ethnogenesis in Amazonian Ecuador to the Whittens' analysis of Canelos Quichua mythology and ritual, arguing that indigenous ideas and practices constitute alternatives to Western understandings of modernity. The aim here is 'to understand the cosmological scheme of a given people as it articulates to the pragmatics of changing political economy' (p. 179). What makes this process particularly interesting in Ecuador is how, in recent decades, these same indigenous people have had a considerable role in actually altering the political landscape of country.

Taken together, the essays in this book consolidate a new and important way of understanding Ecuador beyond the confines of conventional regional studies of Amazonia and the Andes. By integrating the study of diverse Ecuadorian communities in terms of colonial history and intercultural dynamics, the book provides a fascinating perspective on contemporary Ecuador. Although the authors make a convincing case that their ethnography reveals alternatives to Western capitalism and modernity, readers may be left wondering whether or not indigenous perspectives should

be understood as versions of 'modernity' at all. It is striking that, whereas so many 'Westerners' understand their world – and those of others – in terms of modernity, it is not clear that the people in this book are centrally concerned with being 'modern'. I would contend that, rather than insisting that other perspectives are in fact 'alternative modernities' or 'the indigenization of modernity', we should be open to the possibility that other cultures, cosmologies, and social movements might defy our understandings of modernity and tradition altogether. The strength of this book is precisely in illuminating how many Ecuadorians today are embracing a vision of the future that challenges age-old social categories and power structures. The rich historical and ethnographic perspective that it brings, as well as its serious engagement with national political currents, makes this book key reading for scholars working in Ecuador and elsewhere in Latin America.

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## Language and linguistics

AHEARN, LAURA M. *Living language: an introduction to linguistic anthropology*. xviii, 348 pp., tables, figs, illus., bibliogr. Oxford, Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. £19.99 (paper)

There seems an essential tension with many an introductory linguistic anthropology textbook, wherein it is heavy on the *linguistic* and light on – if not bereft of – the *anthropological*. So it is with some delight that we review Ahearn's contribution, which is orientated in the perspective that language use is 'social action' (p. xv). Ahearn has written an accessible and engrossing introductory linguistic anthropology textbook. The book nicely meshes exploration of the work done by linguistic anthropologists with theoretical discussions and an emphasis on methodological rigour. The interspersed discussion of Ahearn's own work with Nepalese love letter writers' participation in a new literacy (*Invitations to love*, 2001) ties together sections and chapters, providing students with the chance to engage ever more deeply with that work as they read.

The book contains twelve chapters in three sections: 'Language: some basic questions'; 'Communities of speakers, hearers, readers, and writers'; and 'Language, power, and social

differentiation'. The first section introduces 'key terms': multifunctionality, language ideology, practice, and indexicality. By delving into these terms immediately, Ahearn reminds us that 'introductory' does not have to mean 'superficial' – for example, the section on practice (pp. 23–5) urges students to consider how society and language both provide and limit possibility. A particular strength is chapter 2, in which she describes the questions linguistic anthropologists might ask and how they might go about answering them. We also appreciate the emphasis on *data*: while we may use quantitative or qualitative data, or both (p. 34), linguistic anthropology is an empirical enterprise, even when grounded in the desire to use our research for social action. We would, however, quibble with Ahearn's discussion of the work of Sapir and Boas with reference to linguistic relativity and the exclusion of an explicit discussion of the role of poetics not only within discussions of linguistic relativity, but also in its wider import to the study of the nexus of language, culture, and the individual (see Paul Friedrich, *The language parallax*, 1986; Joel Sherzer, 'A discourse-centered approach to language and culture', *American Anthropologist* 89, 1987, 259–309).

Section 2 focuses on studying communities; the interrelations of multilingualism and globalizing dynamics; literacies; and performance and performativity. Taken together, the chapters in this section can help students decouple their own connections between language and nationality/ethnicity. Chapter 6, on multilingualism, investigates how we understand the bounds between languages and dialects. Students may be intrigued to discover that speakers from the same family may have very different linguistic profiles (p. 137). We further appreciate the discussion in chapter 7 of the emerging work that deals with understanding literacies as contextual, rather than as a monolithic, transformative, and unequivocally beneficial phenomenon.

The third section provides a detailed examination of how linguistic anthropology can deal with questions of gender, race, and nationalism, and finishes with a theoretical discussion that recaps studies cited earlier in the book. Of particular import for scholars of language contact and shift dynamics is chapter 11, 'Language death and revitalization', giving students an idea about the way language shift and death affect specific individuals (pp. 240–2). These examples are followed by a useful discussion of what it means numerically to

characterize a language as dead, endangered, and so on. While noting that Jane Hill and others have provided a necessary warning about the effects of this kind of discourse ('"Expert rhetorics" in advocacy for endangered languages: who is listening and what do they hear?', *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 12, 2002, 119–33), students come away able generally to understand the social and political dynamics and inequalities in which language shift is enmeshed.

The final chapter of the book, chapter 12, recaps earlier examples Ahearn gave which illustrated the role of language in the lives of individuals. What ties these examples together is explicated in the chapter's discussion of the relationships between language, power, and agency, or 'the socioculturally mediated capacity to act' (p. 21). Ahearn does not shy away from introducing Bourdieu, Foucault, and Williams, and includes a section discussing Judith Irvine and Susan Gal's seminal paper on the processes of iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure ('Language ideology and linguistic differentiation', in *Regimes of language* (ed.) P. Kroskrity, 2000, 35–83). The placement of this chapter at the end allows students to come to the discussion with examples of the on-the-ground work that can be re-examined in relation to the theories that frame our enterprise.

A general criticism of the book is that while other introductory texts might be light on the anthropology, this one is light on the linguistics. The later chapters in particular include discussion of more formal linguistic phenomena like ergative versus nominative systems (pp. 281–3). These are not necessarily described in a way that is accessible to an introductory-level student, and need to be accompanied by examples that break down concepts on a morphological and syntactic level. This can, of course, be accomplished through lessons on morphology and syntax in a separate unit, or by including a discussion accompanying the chapter.

In conclusion, we strongly recommend the book for both undergraduate and graduate introductory courses. The addition of a text like Victoria Fromkin, Robert Rodman, and Nina Hyams's *An introduction to language* (2010) may be necessary if a descriptive linguistic background is part of the established curriculum (and we think it should be). Chapters of the Ahearn volume could be used singly to demonstrate application of the formal materials, or the Ahearn volume could subsequently be used *in toto*. For all levels, individual pieces cited in the book could be assigned in connection

with individual chapters, especially with regards to poetics and linguistic relativity. While we may put forth a few pedagogical and theoretical quibbles, we are very much in favour of and sympathetic towards the project Ahearn has undertaken here.

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REED, ADAM. *Literature and agency in English fiction reading: a study of the Henry Williamson Society*. xi, 212 pp., illus., bibliogr.  
Manchester: Univ. Press, 2011. £65.00 (cloth)

Broadly ethnographic methods have recently migrated to new locations and been put to ever more varied practical uses, from market research to designing welfare services. At the same time, previously atypical ethnographic objects, like documents, financial markets, or legal-political institutions, continue to attract anthropological interest. But even as part of the series of 'New Ethnographies' from Manchester University Press, an ethnography of reading sounds challenging.

In Adam Reed's highly original book, based on over a decade of active involvement with the Henry Williamson Society, reading clearly works as an ethnographic object, allowing him also to engage with many ongoing academic debates. Into the bargain, the book teaches something about Britain's literary societies and about the prolific author Henry Williamson, perhaps best known today – apparently to the chagrin of many Society members – for *Tarka the Otter*, first published in 1927.

Curiosity about the way English social arrangements reproduce class identities has periodically given rise to first-rate ethnography and acute insight. Drawing a vivid picture of a tweedy and comfortable world where nostalgia and a strong, property-mediated, sense of territorial belonging seem to be taken for granted, Reed's ethnography bears some resemblance to this tradition. However, *Literature and agency in English fiction reading* is more about experience and how to understand it, and less about identity and even less about social structure. For Henry Williamson Society members, reading and rereading the works of an author considered by many as 'hopelessly middlebrow' stirs passions and brings forth tumultuous experience. Even though the monograph deals with reading that is thought of as special – readers even use the word magical – perhaps it is precisely here that the power of

mundane literacy and the significance of literary community, which surely deserve scholarly attention, are best approached. In this geographically dispersed but cohesive Society, where people enjoy the ordinary comforts of industrial modernity, reading is at once unremarkable and constantly remarked upon.

Although Reed draws on disciplines such as literary criticism, the sociology of literature, and cultural studies, the monograph is anthropological in being descriptive, agnostic, sympathetic, and highly self-aware. Reed did his early fieldwork in Melanesia, and his subsequent work on Britain shows the huge potential of personally felt comparison, implicitly if not explicitly. That Reed draws so much on the theoretical work of Alfred Gell and Marilyn Strathern further indicates an intellectual association with Melanesia, but there is also a personal and ethnographically derived aspect to the book, which somehow calls to mind the best of Melanesianist anthropology. Difficult conceptualizations of agency, time, and nature, for example, are productively pursued through analytically sharp accounts of protagonists' experiences of reading or Society activities.

Anthropology's preoccupation with agency seems to have been reinvigorated recently through dilemmas relating to materiality, technology, and intentionality. Reed, however, refers only fleetingly if at all to this work. Instead, he follows his own route to similar issues, leading to suggestive observations about ideas of nature, trust, and persons. He frames and develops these not with reference to globally designated crises but by turning again and again to the solitary yet social reading experience that opens up possibilities of living the world from another person's perspective – mainly 'Henry's', as Williamson fans refer to him. This prompts Reed to write as if readers sense fictional characters (even animals) or past events (like the horrors of the First World War) as real, or get inside 'Henry's' mind. That Reed also often writes as if from inside Society members' minds feels awkward yet also suggestive.

Overall, in the process of trying to understand Society members' 'life with "Henry"', Reed contributes to debates not only on literacy, but also on nature ontologies, social memory, sense of place, and material culture, among others. His ethnography opens up England, particularly North Devon where the author lived, and readers' homes with their soft armchairs and overflowing bookshelves, yet forcefully resists prejudices about what modern comforts and literary habits imply. The book

might elicit judgements of both 'Henry' and his readers for their political and cultural preferences, but I expect Reed's capacity to identify variety and imagination where one expects merely the middlebrow will inspire interested undergraduates and advanced researchers alike.

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## Method and theory

ASSMANN, JAN. *The price of monotheism* (trans. Robert Savage). ix, 140 pp., bibliogr. Stanford: Univ. Press, 2010. \$55.00 (cloth), \$19.95 (paper)

Jan Assmann, professor of Egyptology at Heidelberg from 1976 to 2003, has worked on cultural memory and 'political theology'; his German background has sensitized him to the problems raised by anti-Semitism. These concerns came together in *Moses the Egyptian: the memory of Egypt in Western monotheism* (1997). The present volume is a response to critiques of *Moses the Egyptian*, especially to Assmann's concept of the 'Mosaic distinction'; five scholarly critiques were incorporated in an appendix to the original German, but do not figure in Savage's fluent English version.

Fundamental to Assmann's methodology is the discipline of mnemohistory, or the history of cultural memory, in which there is a merging of 'mimetic memory' (action, custom, ethics), 'memory of things' (which creates individual identity), and 'communicative memory' (language, social interchange), described already in Assmann's 1992 work *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis* (English translation: *Cultural memory and early civilization*, 2011). Mnemohistory, in contrast to the positive history of interpretation, is highly selective; here, it is the history of Moses as a figure of memory, in a line stretching from Akhenaten (the 'Egyptian Moses'), through Israelite monotheism and its development in later Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and eventually via John Spencer, William Warburton, Reinhold, and Schiller to Freud (whose *Moses and monotheism* has enjoyed a recent revival) and the twentieth century. Both the beginning and the end of this genealogy will raise the eyebrows of biblical scholars, and indeed on p. 117 in the present work Assmann himself disclaims it.

Assmann's leading concept is the 'Mosaic distinction' (*Mosaische Unterscheidung*). This

originates with Pharaoh Akhenaten, in the fourteenth century BCE, since he was the first we know to have made the essential distinction between truth and falsehood in religion. Traditional dating of Moses, based on 1 Kings 6:1, puts him back as far as the fifteenth century BCE, earlier than Akhenaten, but the sources are considerably later. As Assmann aptly observes, 'Moses is a figure of memory but not of history, while Akhenaten is a figure of history but not of memory' (*Moses the Egyptian*, p. 2; see also p. 23).

Primary religions, such as the polytheisms of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, affirm the world and all its gods; they are cults, articulated in myths, not linked to exclusive truth claims. Secondary religions, specifically the monotheisms of Akhenaten/Moses and ultimately of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, do make exclusive truth claims; they rest on cognition, whether through direct revelation or through written texts, and depend on the rejection of primary religion.

Primary religions tend to mutual tolerance. Long before Romans noticed that Latin Jupiter was equivalent to Greek Zeus, diplomats and translators in Egypt and Mesopotamia had discovered the translatability of pantheons; this enabled the writing of binding international treaties, for it was recognized that the gods were universal even though their names changed according to language.

Secondary religions, however, stress the uniqueness, incomparability, and non-equivalence of God with any pagan gods. Israel's God is not equivalent to Zeus; He is a 'jealous' God and demands the destruction of idols, for they are 'false'. This essential intolerance, with its social consequences in warfare and persecution, is the 'price' paid for monotheism.

Is this too heavy a price to pay? In response to critics who thought that this was what he was suggesting, Assmann stresses the positive value of monotheism, comparing Israel's advance in religion with Greece's advance in science: 'Just as monotheistic religion rests on the Mosaic distinction, so science rests on the "Parmenidean" distinction. One distinguishes between true and false religion, the other between true and false cognition ... Both concepts are characterized by an unprecedented drive to differentiation, negation and exclusion' (p. 12).

The biblical record, Assmann now concedes, is not simply a polemic against idolatry, however strongly that features in certain strands. Israelite

Polytheism, the popular religion of Israel, is never far from the surface; indeed, the polemic against idolatry articulates an internal Israelite struggle, notwithstanding how much priests and prophets attempt to portray it in terms of Israel versus the nations.

Assmann distinguishes between exclusiveness/intolerance as exhibited in Christianity, on the one hand, and in Judaism, on the other. Whereas Jews interpreted the Mosaic distinction as a border separating them from the outside world of falsehood, Christians sought to abolish the border by applying the distinction universally. Jews isolate themselves, in other words, while Christians (and Muslims) seek to convert; but for all, the distinction between true and false in religion remains paramount.

This is a stimulating book, posing significant questions about European cultural experience over three millennia; its brevity will be welcomed by the 'intelligent reader' but may annoy scholars who feel their specialties have been glossed over.

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EDWARDS, JEANETTE & MAJA PETROVIĆ-ŠTEGER (eds). *Recasting anthropological knowledge: inspiration and social science*. xii, 206 pp., illus., bibliogr. Cambridge: Univ. Press, 2011. £55.00 (cloth)

It is often the case with great thinkers and writers that, in time, the volume of literature written about them will be larger than that the writers themselves produced. One day, predictably, this, too, will prove to be the case for Marilyn Strathern. This will be no mean feat, for Strathern's scholarship is as prolific and inspiring in volume as it is in scope. *Recasting anthropological knowledge* is an edited volume by a handful of Strathern's previous graduate students, all at different stages in their own careers, and of different generations. Intended to mark the recent retirement of their teacher, this volume is partly a tribute to Strathern the anthropologist and her influence on the work of contributing authors (and anthropology generally); and partly a testimony to Strathern, because the quality and diversity of chapters, which are inspired by her, are also inspiring in and of themselves. This volume thus sets an impressive benchmark for the, presumably vast and yet unwritten, literature about Strathern, or Strathernian anthropology.

This volume, however, is not actually *about* Strathern in the traditional sense of the word. Although the book could be read as an entry into Strathernian anthropology, it is not a 'Companion' or an 'Introduction to ...'. It is much more than that. The editors made the wise decision not to engage with Strathern's work by thematically attending to her fields of inquiry or key concepts point for point. Nor do they treat her output chronologically. Instead, the contributing authors were briefed to consider the ways in which Strathern's work has inspired their own, and to engage this as a point of departure.

Attending to Strathern's work on kinship, persons, audit, and, of course, the relation, all of which are recurrent themes in this book, the introduction (Edwards and Petrović-Šteger) eloquently sets the scene for the chapters that follow. It not only lays the theoretical foundation itself, but it also hints at the, often multifaceted, meanings these themes have for the volume. The introduction further, and rather beautifully, draws a connection between legal disputes in recombinant technology and recombinant knowledge, in which this volume is an exercise, and thus considers the question of indebtedness and being inspired (by Strathern); both of which re-emerge in different ways over the following chapters.

The contribution of chapters is well chosen. Their diversity, perhaps a nod to Strathern's own, presents ethnographies from several different parts of the world: human-mosquito blood relations in Tanzanian experiment huts and scientific environments of facts (Kelly); the hazards of universality as they arise in hybrid customary, or underlying, law practices in Papua New Guinea (Demian); and legal personhood as it is exemplified by corporate debt transactions and the Japanese household (Riles). Putiņa's chapter turns our attention to heteronormativity, invisible families, and unnamed kin relations in Latvia; while Yarrow attends to the question of belonging through core kinship or core house in a Ghanaian resettlement town. Enthusiasm is a theme that runs through Berglund's chapter on the Women's Design Service in Britain, which persists despite goal-orientated forces and audits; as well as Petrović-Šteger's on an international art collective where workshop participants dislodge memories from the present and send them into the future. Other chapters treat the question of inspiration as it appears among prisoners in Papua New Guinea, reader-writers of the Henry Williamson Society, as well as a

Strathern-inspired author (Reed); and Battaglia considers the inspiration of Strathern herself when she generously quotes her students (thus re-worlding their ethnographies), and in turn makes them akin to Papua New Guinean birds.

This brief presentation of the chapters cannot do justice to the analytical thought and care that has contributed to their production. All the authors succeed in their analytical strategy of not constricting themselves merely to translating or introducing Strathernisms to their own ethnographies. Rather, they take inspiration in the fact that Strathern's contribution to anthropology regularly is noted for its exquisite capacity to scrutinize everyday, taken-for-granted concepts and idioms and to de-situate and re-situate them in new domains and conversations. In a similar vein, the authors here unmoor anthropological concepts, even Strathernian ones, recast them in new conversations in order to make explicit their relations, and 'in so doing acknowledge the unpayable debt that [they] (and social anthropology) have gladly incurred' (Introduction, p. 18).

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MEEKS, BRIAN (ed.). *Caribbean reasonings: M.G. Smith: social theory and anthropology in the Caribbean and beyond.* xiii, 341 pp., bibliogr. Kingston, Miami: Ian Randle Publishers, 2011. \$35.00 (paper)

Brian Meeks cannot be praised enough for editing a volume in honour of M.G. Smith that opens the widest possible space for a multi-perspectival reasoning on Caribbean social history – past, present, and, in fact, future. It therefore well befits the standard set through a series of conferences and volumes organized by the Centre for Caribbean Thought. The editor is right in his assertion that Smith's much-contested conceptualizations of the 'plural society', 'creolization', and corporation theory still stimulate vigorous debates and are therefore – far from becoming academic dead stock – relevant for contemporary discourses on social change within the Caribbean and beyond. Current themes of globalization and glocalization, hybridization and strategic essentialism, or even such fashionable concepts as the 'black Atlantic' can be traced back to these earlier debates and thereby gain in their genealogy of thought.

The fourteen contributions to this book cover a wide range of research interests, theoretical positionings, and academic and sociopolitical worldviews. These argumentative spaces provide an overview on the intellectual landscape travelled by Smith and his critics and at the same time provoke the reader into probing his or her own theoretical stances while border-hopping from one terrain to the other in plural and/or creole society debate. The first of three parts of the volume deals with such 'critical contestations'. It involves its five authors (Philip Burnham, Jean Besson, Mervyn C. Alleyne, Don Robotham, and Colin Clarke) in a virtual dialogue on the merits, limits, and flaws of the aforementioned concepts and thereby thoroughly discloses the – sometimes conscious, sometimes habitualized – ideological contents on both sides of the pluralism/creolism divide.

Creolization theory, solitarily upheld by Jean Besson (in this volume), does not fare too well in this match. Her rereading of Caribbean 'creolization' emphasizes the processes of 'localization' and 'indigenization' as defining elements. Maroons, Revival religions, even the Afrocentric Rastafari movement are all subsumed in the process of 'Caribbeanization', involuntary or not. One may wonder how, for instance, Rastafari would react to such a categorization from the outside (presumably with their vociferous protest, known as 'fire bun' rhetoric). Beyond such inter-cultural intricacies, the explanatory value of the notion becomes in fact quite opaque if all dynamic culture changes are translated as so-called 'creolization'. Besson correctly concedes dynamism as an integral feature of the African heritage in the Caribbean. But this must logically apply to the African heritage in Africa as well. Then the African heritage would *per se* appear in permanent 'creolization' and the category might finally lose its spiritual charm even for its most faithful believers, as Alleyne boldly states in his chapter: 'I wish to claim that creole is an ill-defined, variable and complex (or complicated) concept, although it is very appealing as a concept to express a rather idealistic view of, or hope for, the future of world society' (p. 47). Robotham pursues this critical course by unsheathing the hidden (perhaps subconscious) cultural-political agenda of 'creolist constructions' vested in middle-class, Eurocentric interests and an ideology of healing of structural disparities and fragmentations through peace and (false) unity talk. In short, Robotham's treatise plays havoc with the value-based judgements of creolization

'theorists' and does not stop short of calling for the concept's abolition, once and for all.

The second part presents three revisited empirical studies of M.G. Smith as 'anthropological excursions'. Its chapters (by Mohammed Bashir Salou, Murray Last, and Christine Barrow) highlight the empiricist foundation of Smith's grand theoretical framework and provide test cases for his theorizing on social change by reviewing current developments in 'his ethnographic sites'. The third part assembles six contributions (by Wyatt MacGaffey, Rivke Jaffe, Jack Menke, Peter Meel, Anton Allahar, and Huon Wardle) that take the reasoning 'beyond M.G. Smith' by choosing some of his paradigms as a starting-point to discuss their own research. Both parts deepen the understanding of the 'critical contestations' in part 1 either on the empirical level or in relation to other theoretical approaches towards ethnicity, nation-building, historical narratives, and power. However, I found it somewhat surprising that no author referred to the praxeological theory of Pierre Bourdieu (and others), which seems to offer quite a few remedies for at least some of the unresolved structuralist dilemmas highlighted in most chapters. An overall 'economy of interests' may perhaps help in analysing power structures in the Caribbean and beyond, inscribed not only in social structures of (post)colonialism, but also in the habitus of social actors exposed to these very structures, including academics.

To sum up, this volume challenges eloquently current concepts of creolization, fusion, mixing, pluralism, interculturation, hybridity, and so forth, which, in my view, all too often go unchallenged for their political implications, erasure of embedded power structures, and their silencing of those categorized in one way or the other by anyone but themselves. It is therefore a highly recommendable reading not just for scholars interested in the Caribbean, but for all concerned with these ideas/ideologies exported from anthropology to so many other neighbouring fields.

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NARAYAN, KIRIN. *Alive in the writing: crafting ethnography in the company of Chekhov*. xiii, 154 pp., fig., bibliogr. London, Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press, 2012. £11.00 (paper)

Originally drawn to this slim book by its bright yellow cover and the clean-cut simplicity of its

design, I was also put off, on closer inspection, by the reference to Chekhov in the subtitle. I had been frustrated in the past by books on 'how to write' that, while urging us to be more creative, failed to equip us to marry that creativity to the scholarly rigour demanded of the peer-reviewed journals in which most professional anthropologists must publish to survive. I was sceptical about whether the writings of a nineteenth-century Russian playwright and storyteller, inspiring as they might be, could offer much assistance in the more prosaic task of crafting academic texts. Nevertheless, since I was actively searching for new materials to teach an undergraduate research methods module – and encouraged by the fact that there were only 121 pages to get through in the main body of the book – I decided to read on anyway. I am glad I did. Chekhov, at least in Kirin Narayan's deft hands, proved to be a surprisingly solid source of advice for the ethnographic writer.

Far from the ethereal musings I had feared, this book is a real hands-on guide, or, as Narayan's husband described it, 'not a *how-to* manual but a *how-about?* manual'. Readers are encouraged to dip in and out, to read it out of sequence, and, at many junctures along the way, to set the book aside and undertake the writing exercises she sets us. There are a dozen or more such drills sprinkled throughout each of the five main chapters, demanding between two and fifteen minutes apiece to complete, as well as some longer ones – each calling for two pages of written text – at the end of every chapter. The work that they require of us broadly reflects the titles of the chapters: after an overview in 'Story and theory', subsequent chapters are entitled, simply, 'Place', 'Person', 'Voice', and 'Self', and encourage us to explore our data through these themes. One of the exercises I found most helpful – and which I earmarked as a starting-point for students preparing to write up their undergraduate dissertations – was one asking us to list theories 'that your most powerful experience might connect to', taking us beyond the literary to the synthesis of raw data and theoretical insight that the best ethnographic writing produces. We should not, though, be hoodwinked into thinking of creative and academic writing as two mutually exclusive domains. 'Professional survival and success can depend on learning to strategically pitch a voice to a setting, even as it remains your own', as Narayan writes. 'At the same time, ventures into alternative creative spaces that allow more experimentation with one's full expressive range – without fears for

livelihood – can, I believe, deepen and enrich a professional voice' (p. 60). With a little help from Chekhov, she convinced me.

Chekhov, we learn, works for Narayan as an 'ethnographic muse' in at least three ways. First, his impressive corpus of writing, like that of any competent ethnographer, draws self-consciously on a wide range of perspectives, places, and lifeworlds, and demonstrates how that diversity might be captured within a single text. Secondly, Chekhov is held up as an exemplar of how divergent professional identities might coexist, holding out 'hope for anyone who writes both as a scholar and in other voices, or who moves between ethnographic insight and social activism' (p. 17). Given that Narayan is herself a novelist and memoirist as well as an anthropologist, it is easy to understand her attraction to Chekhov in this respect. Thirdly – and as relevant for those who stick to academic writing as for those keen to venture beyond – Chekhov speaks clearly to the problems of representation that have been a constant theme for all anthropologists since the mid-1980s.

Although Chekhov is more than a device – a useful prop around which to stack her own insights about ethnographic writing – the book's title is slightly misleading in its implication that he is her sole companion. The book is also rich with inspiration and pithy advice drawn from work dating back as far as Malinowski and Margaret Mead, and from more contemporary classics from authors including Lila Abu Lughod, Nancy Scheper-Hughes, and Marilyn Strathern. It is Piers Vitebsky, for example, whose description of a Siberian winter in *The reindeer people* (2005) – in which 'flash-frozen saliva and hot tea evoke the cold with a startling, visceral immediacy' (p. 31) – inspires us to describe more vividly.

What Chekhov does particularly well, however, is to put into words the dilemmas that unsettle most anthropologists at some stage in their work. His comment after spending two months documenting life in the prison colony on Sakhalin resonates powerfully with the despair sometimes experienced during fieldwork. 'I have the feeling I've seen it', he wrote, 'but missed the elephant' (p. 23). Likewise, in respect of his writing, there are moments when he wants to 'work at it furiously; but at times, in moments of doubt, I could spit on it' (p. 112); or when 'I feel such a sense of revulsion as if I were eating cabbage soup from which a cockroach has been removed' (p. 112) – feelings which speak of the insecurities, self-doubt, and (very occasional) moments of euphoria that accompany the writing process

and which we convince ourselves apply only to us. With some help from Narayan, Chekhov can make us feel less alone.

Bullet-pointed lists on general tools for good writing, getting started, moving forward, dealing with writer's block, revising and finishing – all gathered together in a final postscript – are reminders I shall return to, and direct my students towards, often. The tips listed there are not earth-shattering in their originality, but that is not the point: they offer commonsense, practical advice designed to keep you on track and focused on what you want to say in your own distinctive voice. This is a good, useful book: fun to read and an excellent resource for teaching. It is also reintroduced me to Chekhov, whose stories – I was happy to discover – can now be electronically downloaded for free.

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## Politics

CRAPANZANO, VINCENT. *The Harkis: the wound that never heals*. xii, 240 pp., bibliogr. London, Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press, 2011. £22.50 (cloth)

Of the many painful and enduring legacies of the Algerian War of Independence, the fate of the 'Harkis' is perhaps most illustrative of the moral decay of the French state during this bleak period in its history. Vincent Crapanzano's disturbing account complements an increasing number of works in French to address the circumstances of this long-suffering minority, for whom the conflict is still, effectively, unresolved. The Harkis are Algerian Muslims who fought as low-ranking auxiliaries alongside the French military during the brutal eight-year war. For many, their reward was abandonment, torture, and massacre at the hands of victorious Algerian forces once the conflict had ended. For the fortunate Harkis who were granted refuge in France, as Crapanzano's book documents, their fate was brutal in a different fashion. They were imprisoned in squalid internment camps before many were relocated to isolated rural work camps in the French Midi, where for years they were compelled to labour in reforestation programmes.

It was 2001 before France officially recognized the predicament of the Harkis with Chirac's 'Day of National Recognition', but this

was in many respects too little, too late, as this study illustrates. Crapanzano sets the scene with an opening chapter which addresses the acute and unresolved issue of the Harkis' relationship to their past, and their conflictive present, through analysing their hostility to a play by an Algerian playwright which sets their history in the wider context of the war. The chapter introduces Crapanzano's analytical strategy, which melds oral history, textual analysis, and psychological insight in a visceral synthesis, grounded in a 'loosely phenomenological approach' (p. 6) whose overall effect could be viewed as a form of collective biography. The book's chief effort at historical contextualization follows in chapter 2 and comprises a twenty-page historical background. A more substantial analysis is perhaps warranted, given the complexity of events in post-war France and Algeria, and their importance for understanding the Harkis' fate. Crapanzano's account should thus be read in relation to other works on French involvement in Algeria, such as Silverstein's excellent *Algeria in France* (2004), but, placed in that context, the achievement of its core chapters comes to the fore.

The central focus of the book is developed through foregrounding oral accounts of individual Harkis, and the legacy of their betrayal as this emerges in stories of repressed memories, social humiliation, and psychological scarring, particularly as mediated within families. Chapter 3 reviews the role of the Harkis during the war. Chapter 4 documents their abandonment by the French and massacre by Algerians. Chapter 5 focuses on life in the internment and forestry camps in France. This chronological progression is followed with a chapter on life 'after the camps', examining how Harkis view themselves today, and their ongoing struggle for recognition, compensation, and apology. What is notable about Crapanzano's approach, and grants the book its power and conviction, is precisely the skilful ethnographic presentation and analysis of individual testimonies of suffering and abjection at the hands of the French state. Crapanzano identifies his own ambivalence to what is at times an overt sense of victimhood, given the Harkis' original siding with the French, and argues that it is partly his intention to evoke this complex moral response in the book's readers (p. 11). An important effect of this strategy is thus to compel the reader to question previously held moral assumptions about victimhood, revenge, and mistreatment.

French politics is still significantly shaped by historical events in Algeria, as the strong

showing of the far right in the recent French elections demonstrates, a power-base partly constructed on mythologization of the Algerian conflict. Crapanzano's study illustrates how this legacy continues to shape the interior life of individuals, reinforcing arguments that France is yet to make peace with this brutal history. What processes of healing can finally lay such ghosts to rest, it is hard to say, and in a revealing final chapter, Crapanzano's synthetic approach is deployed to analyse this problematic issue for the Harkis. In particular, he addresses the impact on younger people of their parents' silence and marginalization within French society. This is 'the wound that never heals', and while his own account would perhaps make for difficult reading for his subjects, one assumes that a full exposure of this legacy could be a vital step. In this regard, this important piece of anthropological research both is a significant contribution to the literature on contemporary France and, one hopes, might play a role alongside an increasing number of French-language works which also seek justice and healing for the Harkis.

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**CREED, GERALD W.** *Masquerade and postsocialism: ritual and cultural dispossession in Bulgaria*. xi, 254 pp., illus., bibliogr. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 2011. \$70.00 (cloth), \$24.95 (paper)

In an increasingly crowded market for works of contemporary society in Central and Eastern Europe, Gerald Creed's ethnography of 'mumming' (performance of seasonal folk plays) in Bulgaria is a welcome reintroduction of a classic anthropological category of analysis – ritual – into the subfield. It is also a reminder of the important contribution that studies of vernacular culture can make to grasping the social and cultural complexities of European integration and post-socialist liberalization. Indeed, Creed's point of departure is that such 'folk' practices have long constituted a local cultural resource and, thus, offer an indigenous alternative to the wholesale restructuring of society and the social ontology of village life after socialism. Ignored equally by academics and policy-makers, Creed states, such cultural expressions (or, perhaps, in this case cultural performances) have lost their alterity under the pressures of hegemonic, Euro-American models of liberal democracy, civil society, and market capitalism. In this sense, Creed's book is a case

of salvage ethnography with a difference: rather than documenting disappearing cultural phenomena for posterity, he seeks to reveal their lost promise as mechanisms of social cohesion and democratic consolidation, and uses these to build a potent intellectual critique of post-socialism and its literature.

In Bulgaria, mumming rituals are commonly performed around the New Year or Lent. A stock of characters (a transvestite bride, a priest, a 'gypsy' bear trainer and his bear), wearing masks, animal skins, and large bells, visit homes in the village to bestow fertility and abundance to householders in return for money and/or foodstuffs. House visits may be supplemented by public performances with differing degrees of commercial sponsorship and involvement from the local government. Drawing on more than a decade of fieldwork amongst mumming communities across Bulgaria, Creed describes how these basic elements are elaborated by individual village groups over time in response to notions of authenticity developed in collaboration with ethnologists and other mumming groups, and the changing political context of the post-socialist period, in which many rural communities experienced economic implosion, unemployment, and depopulation. In some cases, these responses are directly visible in the inclusion of novel mumming costumes with direct reference to politics or sports. In others, Creed detects a far more subtle renegotiation of issues of gender, ethnicity, and community in mumming practice and performance under the influence of what he calls Euro-American ideals of civic engagement.

Tackling the issue of gender head on, Creed shows how the historical association of mumming with the performance of masculinity is increasingly being refracted through the lenses of a post-socialist 'crisis of masculinity' and of global gay culture, rendering elements of transvestism and sexual licence problematic. Creed takes the fact that acts are now interpreted as emasculating or sexually ambivalent as evidence of a fundamental shift from the perception of the two genders as autonomous but complementary to one in which masculinity and femininity lie on a single continuum. He makes a similar point in the case of ethnicity, arguing that a historical system of 'ambivalent inclusion' of Roma populations and other non-Bulgarian elements is being displaced by models of multiculturalism which are often ill suited to the local context. Yet, where Creed is at his most persuasive is in his use of the material to critique notions of civil society, community,

and the theory of socialist-era 'atomization of society'. He transcends the context to ask fundamental questions about the way anthropologists have previously theorized conflict and solidarity, and how such models have often acted to reinforce preconceived notions of political organization and social cohesion. Beyond arguing that mumming is a contemporary form of civic engagement, Creed's point seems to be that conflict, prejudice, or selfishness do not exclude incorporation and tolerance in community life, but can be a constructive (as well as disruptive) force.

*Masquerade and postsocialism* is written with great sympathy for the people it describes and bears the marks of a work matured by decades of fieldwork. Creed takes the rare (and brave) step of choosing to analyse an indigenous tradition as a key to understanding the state of contemporary society, where others have typically sought answers to the same questions in studies of privatization and structures of governance. A consequence of this choice, however, is a slightly weaker handling of precisely these issues. A more detailed consideration of how the generic 'Western' models of gender, ethnicity, and civic engagement are present in Bulgaria, and how they filter through to rural communities and are presented to participants, would have strengthened his position even further.

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FASSIN, DIDIER. *Humanitarian reason: a moral history of the present* (trans. Rachel Gomme). xvi, 336 pp., tables, bibliogr. London, Berkeley: Univ. California Press, 2011. £44.95 (cloth), £18.95 (paper)

*Humanitarian reason* deserves to be widely read as an introduction to the work of one of the most influential and most engaged of contemporary anthropologists. As well as qualifications in medicine and social science, and a record of diverse field research and prolific publications, Didier Fassin has had four years of managerial experience with Médecins Sans Frontières. Retaining his close links with France, in 2009 he was appointed professor of social science at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton.

Unafraid to challenge received wisdom, in *When bodies remember: experience and politics of AIDS in South Africa* (2007), he argued that the obloquy which met President Thabo Mbeki's rejection of the international public health model of HIV distracted attention from the salience of exploitation and poverty in

aggravating the spread of AIDS in South Africa. The jury is out on that controversy: Fassin refers to it only fleetingly in his new book. The case studies that he covers include the Sangatte transit centre, on the site of a former Nazi forced labour camp near Calais, where successive foreigners took shelter between 1999 and 2002 before trying to cross to England by train or boat to seek asylum; official procedures in France with which the immigration authorities set out by means of medical reports to differentiate victims of torture from 'economic migrants'; floods and landslides in Venezuela in 1999 and the consequent, short-lived sense of national unity that they made possible; traumatic symptoms suffered by young Palestinian men who took part in the Second Intifada; and the disparity in aid organizations between NGO expatriates and local employees that extends not only to salaries and living conditions but also to the amount of physical protection given them in conflict zones.

These and other chapters, all of empirical interest in themselves, are held together by Fassin's concept of 'humanitarian reason'. By this he means a globally pervasive, morally untouchable *idéologique*, in confronting which he seeks to straddle the two normally contradictory senses of 'ideology': on the one hand, an insidious veil obscuring brutal economic interests (as in Marx); and, on the other hand, a cultural system that makes sense of social relations (as in Geertz). Quoting Foucault – 'We must go beyond the outside-inside alternative, we must be at the frontiers' – Fassin tries to view humanitarian reason from various angles:

... I have moved between the inside and the outside of the social worlds I studied, remaining attentive both to the discourses and practices of their members and to the facts and stakes of which they seemed unaware ... I knew from experience that it was possible to obey this dual injunction: having drawn up medical certificates for undocumented migrants at the same time as criticizing the humanitarianism of immigration policy, and having worked in humanitarian organizations while maintaining a critical position within them, I was conscious of the possibility and even the necessity – but also the difficulty – of this negotiation between involvement and detachment, which rather than being a sort of schizophrenia, simply proceeds from an ethical and intellectual rigor in which

respect for informants does not preclude the exploration of areas where they are unable or unwilling to go (p. 246).

A cubist approach, we might call it. Though Fassin launches a 'critique of humanitarian reason' to conclude this book, echoing Kant and Sartre, he recognizes that 'humanitarian organizations call for a politics of life that reestablishes solidarity and gives equal value to lives' (p. 241), even though their bridging of the world's injustices is doomed to be ephemeral and illusory.

As an example for anthropologists, this is surely admirable. However, Antonio Donini of the Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, has recently suggested that, whereas global budgets for relief aid have increased fivefold over ten years, humanitarianism as a 'mobilizing myth' may be on the decline, to be replaced by more modest aims – sometimes described as 'neo-Durantist'. Urgent needs include the apparently increasing gravity of so-called 'natural disasters', the virtual breakdown of the international asylum system – refugees being succeeded by internally displaced and 'internally stuck' people – and (probably in the near future) the effects of increased violence as a result of falling standards of living. Didier Fassin's combination of analytical toughness and expressive empathy should inspire a new generation of hands-on ethnographic researchers. But he does skate over the slipperiness of the word 'humanitarian', which is habitually used with varying degrees of looseness but also has precise legal meanings under the Geneva Conventions.

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**VIATORI, MAXIMILIAN.** *One state, many nations: indigenous rights struggles in Ecuador.* X, 155 pp., maps, illus., bibliogr. Santa Fe: SAR Press, 2009. £29.95 (paper)

In this fascinating and largely very successful work, Maximilian Viatori examines the effects of the intersection of non-Indigenous allies, an international indigenous movement, environmentally focused and other NGO projects, and Ecuadorian indigenous protests and state multicultural policies on the Zápara, an Indigenous group of approximately 1,300 persons whose territory ranges between the Pindoyacu and Conambo rivers in the eastern Ecuadorian province of Pastaza ([www.codenpe.gob.ec](http://www.codenpe.gob.ec)). Although the Zápara were once rather widely dispersed throughout

the eastern tropical forest region of Ecuador, perhaps ranging from Colombia into northern Peru, they nearly disappeared as a result of colonization, rubber tapping, disease, a border war (1941–2) between Ecuador and Peru, and the encroachment of more powerful local groups.

In 1998, four communities were recognized by the state as NAZAE (today ONZAE), the Zápara Nationality of Ecuador. Viatori's work focuses on ways the Zápara people and *dirigentes* (leaders) sought funding and technical assistance from a variety of European and North American NGOs, the United Nations, and the World Bank to build a trilingual education programme in Zápara, Spanish, and Kichwa (the most widely spoken Indigenous language throughout Ecuador and the one in which most Zápara are fluent). In 2001, the Zápara language was recognized as a 'Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity' by UNESCO. This recognition (and the \$200,000 promised to fund a multi-year language education and teacher training project) was very important to the Zápara as speaking an Indigenous language is an essential 'marker' without which Indigenous people find it difficult to achieve the recognition needed for access to resources and the possibility of legal recognition of bounded territory.

Unfortunately, the necessary funding did not materialize until 2004, and by then many problems had developed that undermined significant aspects of the project. In examining the 'tribal slot' into which UNESCO expected the Zápara to fit, as well as the frictions created by PRODEPINE – Ecuador's Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian Peoples' Development Project, funded by the World Bank from 1997 to 2002 – which promoted indigenous 'social capital' in addressing poverty and inequality through 'ethno-development', Viatori argues that governmental reforms and outside assistance actually created new problems for the Zápara during the first decade of the twenty-first century. These include intra-group divisions and conflicts, new forms of class distinction, tensions between *dirigentes* and *solidarios* (advocates), the restriction of Indigenous political action, and various dependencies on the very outsiders who were supposedly working for Zápara autonomy. Because these mega-projects focused on 'social capital' (i.e. cultural knowledge and practice) rather than on historical and structural inequalities, any failures of these projects to relieve poverty in Indigenous communities were blamed on a 'lack of local initiative' that ultimately 'reproduced the status quo' for the Zápara (p. 113).

This new era of decentralized social services and cultural programmes propped up by international grant funding has turned activism into ‘project-ism’, whereby the only way to achieve anything concrete (at times) is to write exhaustingly long grant proposals, sometimes (in the case of UNESCO) in languages other than Spanish (p. 83). For instance, to receive the UNESCO designation the Zápara had to contract a university-educated outsider to write a proposal of more than 100 pages that justified the revitalization of Zápara on the grounds that ‘their rapidly vanishing language represented an enduring link between Zápara collective identity and the rain forest ecology of eastern Ecuador’ (p. 83). The Zápara had to argue strenuously to get the important element of shamanic practices inserted into a proposal that otherwise redefined their reality into concepts and project pieces defined by UNESCO.

My criticisms of this work, which would be an excellent text for courses on globalization and Indigeneity, language disappearance and revitalization, or Indigenous movements in the Americas, are minor. Although I agree with Viatori’s suggestion that more scholars should conduct ethnographic studies of the effects of ‘large-scale reforms’ on Indigenous peoples (pp. 122–3), I wish that he, and other scholars who work in Latin America, would make more connections to the peoples of and scholarship about Indigenous struggles and advocates in North America and the Pacific. Also, although Viatori’s work is full of references to recent work on the history and political science surrounding Indigenous activism and challenges to survival in the Ecuadorian Andes and Amazon, one learns relatively little about the Zápara people and their language outside the realm of policy and politics. This shortcoming produces an irony that unfortunately parallels some of Viatori’s own critiques regarding the frictions produced by non-Indigenous advocacy and the perils of multiculturalism.

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## Race and racism

BRANTLINGER, PATRICK. *Taming cannibals: race and the Victorians*. x, 277 pp., bibliogr. London, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 2011. \$45.00 (cloth)

Though the twenty-first-century public might associate cannibalism most readily with the fava

beans, Chianti, and smooth threats of the cultured Hannibal Lecter, scholars of nineteenth-century empire, race, science, and pseudo-science will now think of literary critic Patrick Brantlinger, who analyses Victorian notions of the practice in his latest book. In fact, cannibalism is just one aspect of the attitudes towards non-white or ‘uncivilized’ races that he examines in a wide-ranging and thought-provoking study. Although the last instalment of an informal series on race and the Victorians, this tome will be a fruitful source of ideas for those unfamiliar with his previous work, as well as long-standing followers hungry for the final portion.

Each case study is bursting with tantalizing material about the strangeness of nineteenth-century British notions of race and civilization. Chapters consider such diverse topics as Victorians’ fascination with Fijian cannibalism and Benjamin Disraeli’s affection for Turkish people and Ottoman civilization. When focusing on views of the Irish, Brantlinger observes the accusations of cannibalism levelled against participants in the 1798 rebellion. Analysing accounts of those Aborigines civilized to death in Van Diemen’s Land, he describes the ghoulish hunger of pseudo-scientific British racists for the remains of William Lanney, thought to be the last Tasmanian man. If accusations of cannibalism against Lanney’s people were wholly unsubstantiated, then his ‘civilizers’ were clearly eager consumers of his corpse in their own depraved way. Though the volume is not limited to references to cannibalism, but ranges far more broadly, there are enough of these references around to make a nice recurring theme in otherwise diverse contexts of racial thought.

Brantlinger shies away from overreaching conclusions, and his work shines when highlighting paradoxical tensions in Victorian culture or unresolved disagreements between authors and thinkers. It would be nice to know more about which aspects of the texts he analyses were, in his view, commonly representative of the society which produced and consumed them. Fact and fiction blur, and it is not clear where Victorian storytellers make idiosyncratic connections and where they merely offer clear examples of commonplace social facts. Following Edward Said, to whose memory the book is dedicated, Brantlinger suggests that ‘racism and empire have been two sides of the same coin’ (p. 10). But it would also be interesting to consider more fully the

relationship between the expansion of territorial empire and notions of civilization, perhaps by considering how theories of racial civilization worked in places beyond British political borders as distinct from those within them.

However, while the chapters may feel somewhat episodic, and this historian would have preferred a bit less psychoanalysis, the book's strength is ultimately in the breadth and intelligence displayed.

In the introduction, Brantlinger criticizes some of the chronological judgements made by Andrew Porter in the nineteenth-century volume of the *Oxford history of the British Empire*, fearing that they downplay racial thinking before the 1880s. Yet *Taming cannibals* would itself benefit from more attention to questions of change over time, even if bigotry was well represented throughout the century. One section reinforces the traditional view of the 1860s as a transformative period, but the exact degree of this change can be overstated. Even if splits healed at this point between the Anthropological and Ethnological societies – ultimately merging to form the Royal Anthropological Institute – the complexity of racial thinking was probably still multiplying rather than consolidating. An afterword ingeniously deploys Kipling's 1898 'White man's burden' to link Britain's civilizing imperialism to the expansion of the United States. It might, though, have been wiser for the author to omit allusions to 'neo-imperialism' in Iraq or anti-Islamism and anti-immigration in American and British politics as *prima facie* evidence of persistent assumptions of white supremacy (p. 23) unless the direct link could be demonstrated in greater detail and the argument could be developed more fully.

Brantlinger notes the malleability of ideas of race, nation, and civilization, and his greatest achievement is to add such exciting, rich, and flavourful morsels to our understanding of a baffling complex of prejudices and assumptions. The finest couple of chapters concern imaginary ancient – white – races of extinct African civilizations and the speculative rise of successor species – of machines, aliens, or degenerate humans – in the future. Those interested in the histories of empire, human sciences, or racial exploitation will eagerly devour this book, blending the author's expertise in literary criticism with a wider range of multidisciplinary research. *Taming cannibals* offers a feast of ideas for readers from a wide range of disciplines to digest.

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FABIAN, ANN. *The skull collectors: race, science, and America's unburied dead*. xii, 270 pp., illus., bibliogr. London, Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press, 2010. £18.00 (cloth)

Ann Fabian has written an illuminating study of so-called 'scientific racism' in the United States from the 1830s into the 1900s. She begins with the skull collecting and 'craniometry' of Samuel George Morton, author of *Crania Americana* (1839). Morton agreed with Blumenbach that there were five human races and that the 'Caucasian' race was superior to the others. Unlike Blumenbach, however, Morton contended that the races were separate species. He collected and measured the volume of skulls as an index of intelligence to prove his ideas about race. Despite his biased approach, he was widely recognized as a reputable and objective scientist.

Fabian soon broadens the focus to include other skull collectors. Morton constructed his 'American Golgotha' through the help of many others in the field. George Combe, the Scottish phrenologist, wrote the afterword to *Crania Americana*. James Audobon, John Kirk Townsend, and Louis Agassiz helped. And Morton had a direct influence on George Gliddon and Josiah Nott's *Types of mankind*, which 'brought Morton's theories about skulls as a record of racial hierarchy to new groups of readers, including a handful of firebrand southerners who liked his idea that "Negro-Races" had "ever been Servants and slaves"' (p. 11).

Gliddon's lengthy career in Egypt brought mummies into the picture and led to Morton's 1844 *Crania Aegyptiaca*. Their mutual conclusion was that 'the physical or organic characters which distinguish the several races of men are as old as the oldest records of our species' (quoted on p. 106). Caucasians created Egyptian civilization and black Africans were then as today the slaves of the Caucasians. Races and racial inequality were fixed for all time.

It was a puzzle, therefore, to know what to make of William Brooks, or Stumanu, a central figure in chapter 2. He was a Native American from Oregon whose skull had been deliberately flattened in a cradleboard when he was an infant. Having a cranium shaped like his was a mark of distinction among the Flathead Indians. But if skulls were culturally malleable, then how could Morton's conclusions about the timeless characteristics of races hold up? And how could George Combe's phrenology be sustained? Morton and Combe found the 'flathead' phenomenon fascinating, but it did not change their conclusions.

Chapter 4 shifts to the Fiji Islands. In 1838, commanded by Captain Charles Wilkes, a fleet of six American ships set off to explore and map parts of the Pacific Ocean. Naturalist Charles Pickering, an old friend of Morton's, sailed on one of the ships. When the US Exploring Expedition returned in 1842, they brought a Fijian chief, Veidovi, who died soon after they anchored in New York. Pickering urged Morton to come quickly to see the Fijian before he died, but that wasn't possible. And Morton himself died before he had a chance to study Veidovi's remains. But Morton's disciple, James Aitken Meigs, took charge of Morton's collection of crania. Meigs also saw Veidovi's skull on display in Washington, D.C., although what he made of it is sheer speculation (p. 128). Veidovi had been seized as a murderer and cannibal whose followers had killed and allegedly eaten ten American sailors. Did the shape of his skull register murder and cannibalism? No doubt for most Americans it registered savagery. Yet the Exploring Expedition lost two more sailors in a violent confrontation with the islanders, which led the Americans to take revenge by torching villages and killing some ninety Fijians.

With the turn to Fiji, Fabian moves away from Morton and his version of craniometry. The final two chapters follow race science through the 1800s and beyond. Chapter 5 stresses the irony of Americans confronting the massive death toll of the Civil War and putting parts of dead white soldiers on display in the Army Medical Museum versus the continued grave-robbing practised against Native Americans. And the epilogue moves into the 1900s and the interest in measuring the brains of 'eminent men'. How to explain their eminence when they had small brains? Fabian then briefly comments on Robert Wilson Shufeldt, author of 'Personal adventures of a human skull collector' (1910) and of two racist diatribes against the 'menace' the 'Negro' race posed to American civilization. She ends by noting the 1990 passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. Altogether, this is a fascinating study; Fabian has important stories to tell about the abuses of science by the powerful.

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KINKEL, MARIANNE. *Races of mankind: the sculptures of Malvina Hoffman*. xiv, 276 pp., illus., bibliogr. Chicago: Univ. Illinois Press, 2011. \$40.00 (cloth)

On 6 June 1933, Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History opened an exhibit of 105

sculptures, representing 'The Races of Mankind'. Three years earlier, the museum had commissioned sculptor Malvina Hoffman to produce pieces meant to capture the physical differences understood to be the distinguishing features of different races. With museum support, Hoffman spent several months in Asia, recruiting 'anthropological subjects' in Japan, China, Bali, Java, and India. She also borrowed images from photographs that had appeared in anthropological texts and then recruited a team of able assistants (talented artists hard-pressed for work by the Great Depression) to produce a collection of busts, of individuals and groups.

Museum curators kept Hoffman's sculptures on display until 1969. Debates over the idea of race and tensions between the dictates of physical anthropology and the demands of art made the exhibit controversial from the start, as art historian Marianne Kinkel explains in her detailed new book. Could physical anthropologists and artists agree on a means to visualize racial difference? How were museum visitors meant to understand Hoffman's sculptures? Were they portraits of individuals or racial types? And how did their meaning shift over the course of the twentieth century, as events of the 1930s shattered any lingering sense of innocence in displays of racial hierarchy?

Kinkel has written a 'cultural biography' of Hoffman's sculptures that explains their production, follows their circulation as small-scale replicas, their reproduction as photographs in atlases and encyclopedias, and explores the changing racial paradigms that shifted their meanings.

The work of physical anthropologist Aleš Hrdlička helped set the stage for Hoffman's project. Hrdlička tried to capture a visual logic of racial difference with a display of individual portrait busts and skeletal materials for the Panama-California Exposition in 1915. Many visitors left with the impression that Caucasians topped the evolutionary scale. Whatever its message, Hrdlička's 'dry as dust' scientific display lacked the visual punch of popular natural history. To attract and entertain a general audience, curators and board members at the Field Museum turned to artistic taxidermists and skilled scene painters to build emotional appeal into dioramas of people and animals.

Hoffman seemed to have the skills to put some of that emotional appeal into a display on human races. She was in her mid-forties when the museum hired her, well known for portrait busts that she produced for wealthy clients and

for small statuettes and garden statuary that appealed to the same group. Through family connections, she had badgered her way into studying with Auguste Rodin. In 1930, her taste still ran towards classical sculpture and away from contemporary modernism.

Perhaps this bent has left her something of an outsider in histories of twentieth-century art – an ‘uneasy toehold’ is the phrase Kinkel uses to describe the status of her work. But Hoffman’s approach to sculpture prepared her well for the museum’s project. She claimed she worked from a kind of mystical connection with her sitters that would leave her ready to receive the imprint of the visual characteristics of race. As Kinkel writes, ‘Her sculptural approach involved reconciling portraiture conventions with the accuracy requirements associated with anthropometric photographs, plaster casts, and measurements, while also engaging fine art compositional techniques and ethnographic narratives that she hoped would enliven the figures’ (p. 47). Hoffman’s ‘daybooks’ capture her efforts to balance aesthetic ideas with a scientific call for authenticity and accuracy.

There was no way to fix a single settled meaning on the figures she had produced and their ambiguity fascinated Kinkel. Even museum anthropologists disagreed about how to present and interpret the figures. The museum presentation did seem to assume that an ideal visitor was white and to hint that evolution had deposited a white race at the height of civilization, but the sculptures were too rich in contradictions to convey anything resembling scientific certainty about race. The Parisian avant-garde delighted in replicas on display at Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro and New Yorkers crowded the Grand Central Galleries and bought up the figures.

Their ambiguities suited them well for the next several decades’ changing understandings of race. In the 1940s, Hoffman’s figures were recruited into wartime efforts to promote a sense of the brotherhood of man, and in the 1970s, faculty at Chicago’s Malcolm X College put them on display in a celebration of Afro-centrism. They had their widest circulation as images along the margins of maps published in school atlases and popular encyclopedias, where they perpetuated the old racist logic of visible, biological difference. As Kinkel describes it, Hoffman’s ‘Races of Mankind’ staged some strange scenes from a marriage of art and anthropology.

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## Sex and gender

AMIT, VERED & NOEL DYCK (eds). *Young men in uncertain times*. viii, 329 pp., bibliogr. Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books, 2012. £55.00 (cloth)

The edited volume *Young men in uncertain times* exemplifies a new wave of scholarship on men which benefits from the recent growth of men’s studies. While continuing to fill gaps in the anthropology of men, newer works can also respond to a critical mass of existing scholarship. This volume provides important ethnography on an understudied phase of men’s lives – youth – while also engaging in critical conversation with prior work that has exceptionalized young men’s experiences. By analysing these experiences in a political-economic context, this book provides a timely addition to conversations between masculinity studies and youth studies, undermining simplistic attributions of young men’s problems to ‘youth culture’ or masculinity.

In their introduction, editors Amit and Dyck critique journalistic and academic assertions that young men are a unique and dangerous population, calling these claims a moral panic related to tensions resulting from economic turmoil and widespread inequality. They frame the volume’s project as contextualizing young men’s actions by investigating how global trends like widespread lack of employment (despite expanding educational access), ongoing economic crisis, and violence have hindered male youths’ attainment of local markers of manhood. The editors call for a shift from focusing on young men’s deviance to studying most male youths’ attempts to conform to social expectations. They argue that this can best be accomplished through ethnography that locates young men’s experiences and actions in a political and economic context.

The volume’s contributors meet these aims ably. Providing the necessary historical and structural background while foregrounding ethnography is a difficult task that most contributors achieve elegantly, meaning that readers without deep knowledge of specific world regions will nevertheless understand the relationships between specific young men’s experiences and the structural circumstances shaping them. Individual chapters also contribute in different ways to the shared project of denaturalizing young men’s experiences and the labels they receive. For example, Mains’s

chapter shows how the structural conditions that cause young Ethiopian men to deviate from the ideal life-course of finding work and marrying lead to their characterization as simultaneously ‘threatening’ and ‘lacking in agency’. Irwin critiques the standard view of combat as a rite of passage by revealing, through extended ethnography with Canadian soldiers, that it produces ‘old young men’ rather than paragons of ideal masculinity. Taking a historical view, Jankowiak, Moore, and Pan show how political-economic developments in China have fostered the emergence of an extended youth phase, while undermining previously entrenched male privilege. Also revealing the construction of new categories, Terrio describes how young migrant men are criminalized in French court discourse.

It was somewhat disappointing that two chapters that exemplify the book’s goals were largely reprints. Elliston’s chapter, a condensed version of an excellent 2005 article, explicitly denaturalizes the fact that it is often young men involved in nationalist uprisings, by asking what historical, economic, and cultural events made this the case in French Polynesian protests. Evans’s chapter, which begins with a compelling critique of the recent gendering and racialization of British knife violence, does not integrate this theme into the interesting but previously published ethnographic content that follows.

A major strength of this volume is its cross-cultural scope. In addition to providing a broad view of how young men respond to shared global pressures in different local settings, the volume as a whole presents interesting similarities and differences between ethnographic cases. This was especially apparent in young men’s enactments of emotion. While Frederiksen’s chapter shows that Georgian men value emotional openness demonstrated through heart-to-heart talks, and Irwin’s shows Canadian soldiers crying unabashedly when a friend is killed, chapters by Roche, Evans, and Armstrong and Rosbrook-Thompson show young men valuing emotional closure and ‘hardening’ in resource-poor neighbourhoods of England and sectarian Northern Ireland. Several chapters also compare and contrast different young men’s lives, providing nuanced portraits that avoid homogenizing geographically similar men’s experiences. Notable in this regard are Rios and Rodriguez’s comparison of two American young men of colour’s family histories and experiences of the ‘school to prison pipeline’, and Armstrong and Rosbrook-Thompson’s presentation of the

life-stories of young men in London’s Camden Town.

This volume will be useful for scholars of masculinity, youth, and anyone interested in understanding the lived consequences of neoliberalism and inequality worldwide. Since the chapters draw on a range of theoretical orientations with specialized languages, the book as a whole may not be appropriate for beginning undergraduates, although single chapters would be ideal for area studies courses. It would be an appropriate text for advanced undergraduate or graduate courses on masculinities, youth, or political economy.

EMILY WENTZELL *University of Iowa*

**NEWMahr, STACI.** *Playing on the edge: sadomasochism, risk, and intimacy.* xi, 228 pp., bibliogr. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 2011. \$70.00 (cloth), \$24.95 (paper)

Scientific approaches to sadomasochism have most commonly treated it as a manifestation of social and psychological pathology, practised by damaged, possibly dangerous, and probably deeply misogynist individuals. Staci Newmahr’s 2011 book on the North American SM community of Caeden comes, therefore, as a refreshing take not only on SM practice specifically, but on marginality and constructions of ‘deviance’, intimacy, play, and risk more generally. The central argument of the book, which is based on four years of participant observation in the Caeden SM scene, is that SM interactions are not primarily sexual, but concern the setting and pushing of a range of boundaries at the extremes of human identity and existence. With this insight, Newmahr establishes commonalities not only with other examples of ‘serious leisure’ – such as gambling, free running, tombstoning, and mountain rescue – but also with the existential dilemmas thrown up by participant observation, which here takes on the quality of an extreme form of immersive embodied practice.

Newmahr introduces us to the world of Caeden through its personalities and its community structure. We see community members laughing and joking together at the communal breakfasts that follow a Saturday night out at the club, organizing parties, and stewarding at lectures and public events. Members of the community are big on hugging. Both men and women show care and concern for each other, and take collective responsibility for the safety and well-being of their members.

So the apparent violence of some of the SM encounters described in the book comes as a shocking contrast to the solidarity and bonhomie pervading the descriptions of the community. Nevertheless, it is the safety net of the community that enables and sustains the acting out of fantasies framed by SM 'play'. In the public SM scene explored by Newmahr, the 'play' provides a dialectical space in which the participants explore the power and the limits of illusion, the parameters of which have been discussed and agreed in advance by both or all the parties to the play. However, whilst consent is one of the cardinal rules of the SM community, Newmahr demonstrates, through interviews, observation, and her own embodied participation, that the sought-after experience of the play is the dangerous edge of uncertainty at which the participants connive. How far will the illusion be taken? When does illusion become reality? Newmahr's analysis highlights the role of pain in mediating the agency of participants in plays that have unequal power relations at their heart. The 'tops' or dominants who hand out pain in various forms reject the idea that their aim is to 'hurt' the partner adopting the 'bottom' or submissive role, just as the 'bottoms' reject the notion that their desire is to be hurt. From both perspectives, managing and embracing pain becomes a means of exercising joint agency and achieving an altered state, characterized by a sense of catharsis, flow, and the suspension of thought. This is an enterprise that revolves around the issue of trust. However, in order to maintain the illusion of the play, trust becomes meaningful precisely because of its capacity to be broken. It is the very edginess of this precarious balance that opens up a space of risk and uncertainty, allowing for the emergence of an exceptional intimacy which, Newmahr argues, is the real goal of SM encounters in the community she studied.

The power of Newmahr's analysis is that she goes beyond the exotic eroticism of her subject in order to open up broader theoretical debates around the concepts of edgework, gender identity, intimacy, and risk. Much of her discussion about safety and risk resonates, for example, with debates in gambling research contrasting 'safe' recreational play with 'addiction', and I have heard habitual gamblers talk about the experience of 'flow' in much the same terms as some of Newmahr's informants. Grounding her observations in the fine grain of detailed, long-term ethnographic research, Newmahr provides a convincing argument for a properly sociological reappraisal of the positive

values ascribed to intimacy, which she contrasts with the pathologization of violence and risk. As with much of the material presented in her book, this is a line of argument that takes us into potentially uncomfortable places, such as the contemplation of rape, murder, and assault as intimate practices. It is a symptom of the quality and integrity of her work that Newmahr is able to take us to the dangerous edges of sociological thinking on these risky topics.

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WEST, MARK D. *Lovesick Japan:*

*sex\*marriage\*romance\*law.* ix, 259 pp., tables, bibliogr. London, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 2011. £19.95 (cloth)

It is difficult to write responsibly about sex or sexuality in Japan for an English-speaking audience. Many people I encounter in my courses or elsewhere in the world are quite sure that, although they might not know much about Japan, Japanese sexual practices are strange. American news media and popular culture feed this mistaken image, from an infamous *New York Times* article about a Japanese man and his plastic, blow-up 'girlfriend' going out for a date on the town, to throw-away one-liners on prime-time television shows about how all the weirdest sexual kinks belong to the Japanese. These images create, in my students and many other people, a firm but incorrect expectation that Japanese people are what I've labelled 'hyper-sexual virgins' – people with unusual sexual practices who also don't have much sex; weirdos whose weirdness is confirmed.

This global discourse about and marketplace for representations of Japanese sexual weirdness makes it incredibly difficult to write responsibly about Japanese sexuality because an author can never be sure how, exactly, his research is going to be used. Any book about Japanese sexuality could be mined for freaky tidbits and used to concretize Orientalist fantasies. This is what I call the Dave Chappelle conundrum, after the American comedian who came to understand that some of his audience were finding confirmation of, not challenge to, their racism in his comedy, and suddenly quit rather than participate in that dynamic. In *Lovesick Japan: sex\*marriage\*romance\*law*, Mark West anticipates and parries the very real Orientalist assumptions many readers might bring to any book about sexuality in Japan.

Without a doubt, *Lovesick Japan* is a fascinating book that offers a necessary

perspective on legal ideologies surrounding love and romance in contemporary Japan. West's primary research focuses on 2,700 court opinions written by Japanese judges in all sorts of cases. With convincing force, he argues that ideologies about love, and what makes love 'real' or 'natural', underpin legal judgments, often in ways that the judges themselves find unconscious or surprising. More broadly, he finds that love is a vitally important standard in many cases where it ostensibly shouldn't matter. Love is mentioned more in criminal cases than in marriages and divorces, and the measurable realness of a defendant's love could be used, for instance, to differentiate the same actions as either a homicide or a failed double-suicide, the former bringing a much more severe sentence. *Lovesick Japan* repeatedly describes legal judgments that hinge on the realness of a person's love, which judges use to justify or excuse otherwise inexcusable actions. West's analysis also finds that most judicial uses of 'love' describe it 'as if it naturally could not be anything other than an overwhelming, disorienting force to which people unwittingly cede self-control' (p. 29). Love, in these legal descriptions and uses, is a dark force that pushes people to do bad things.

Addressing the hypothetical Orientalizing audience that always has me worried, West begins the book by emphasizing that only the most unusual cases work their way into the legal system. By studying court cases, he discovers many interesting things about the ways Japanese judges write about love, but very little about how love is imagined and experienced by the vast majority of 'regular' Japanese people. That said, *Lovesick Japan* is an immensely readable book that is full of surprising and upsetting case studies. The author offers myriad examples of Japanese judges making arguments about what love 'obviously' is, or ultimately 'should' be, which often make them seem out of touch or horribly damaged people. Indeed the book begins with a short but powerful chapter that describes how the legal system is structured to make judges quite literally out of touch with average citizens: law students are more likely to be recommended for judgeships if they minimize their own opinions; judges are relocated regularly so they never get too close to any particular community, and are therefore also very likely to live in isolated communities with other judges and their families. When judges socialize primarily with other judges, and encounter only the most damaged experiences of love in their courtrooms, it begins to make

sense that their judgments assume that all love is damaged or damaging. In many ways, this book is ultimately about Japanese judges and what arguments they find the most compelling.

This book would be helpful to anyone interested in the broad intersection of law and human experiences, particularly around romance. Perhaps preaching to the choir, I hope that any potential readers use it to acknowledge the complexities of love and sexuality in contemporary Japan, rather than reinforce everything they think they know.

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## Social anthropology

BESNIER, NIKO. *On the edge of the global: modern anxieties in a Pacific Island nation.* xxiv, 297 pp., maps, tables, illus., bibliogr. Stanford: Univ. Press, 2011. \$70.00 (cloth), \$22.95 (paper)

The Pacific Island nation of Tonga, also called 'The Friendly Islands', is situated in the Southwest Pacific, right next to the International Dateline and thus close to – or even beyond – the edge of many ordinary world maps. To many Westerners it is also, if at all known, a prototypical example of a South Sea paradise, apparently fallen out of time and untouched by the anxieties and burdens of modern-day life. Nothing, in fact, could be more wrong, including the very assumption that Tonga is only 'there', in this small island group in the Pacific, at the edge of the world.

*On the edge of the global* by Niko Besnier is a compelling attempt to straighten these misconceptions and render instead a comprehensive account of how immersed in a globalized world and in modernity the people in (and out of) Tonga actually are. Not only have people of Tongan descent spread all over the world, with almost as many if not more of them nowadays living abroad than in Tonga itself, but a substantial proportion of Tongan citizens keep moving between different islands, different countries, and different worlds, in search of education or medical care, owing to family feasts and other obligations, and for economic reasons of all shades, such as seeking wage labour, as part of their profession, or for stocking retail products. Even the lives of those who do not travel are so much affected by production and

consumption processes elsewhere, and are so much intertwined with ideas, ambitions, and aspirations generated multilocally, that it must appear almost impossible to tease apart 'the traditional' and 'the modern'.

And yet this is one of the author's goals that he is successful in achieving. Key components in this endeavour are the protagonists' bifocality, a broad variety of sites and selves, and the significance of objects and bodies. The sometimes opposing, often complementary, roles of producers and consumers, their roots at home and in the diaspora, their proximity to – and sometimes identity as – local others, are unravelled and analysed in detail. All of these analytic ingredients and tools are used to shed light on the second topic of the book: the anxieties that modernity brings with itself, how they are experienced, how they are operating in people's daily lives, and how they are coped with. This focus on anxieties is framed by a detailed description and subsequent account of the events of '16/11', the unprecedented outburst of violence that took place in the capital Nuku'alofa in 2006.

To illustrate his theoretical arguments, the author takes his audience on a round tour through Tongan modernities, to various places and events most of which are considered banal even by their most essential actors, but which none the less provide fascinating and revealing showcases for the intricacies of this topic: second-hand marketplaces and pawnshops, beauty pageants, hair salons and gyms. Even the Heilala festival, which is intended to weave together strings of 'Tongan culture' (*anga faka-Tonga*), reveals many details about modernities in Tonga. A whole chapter is devoted to the role that religion and church denomination may play, both in production of and coping with anxieties, as well as in shaping the different roles that people may adopt when dealing with these anxieties.

Based on some twenty years of extensive fieldwork, the author has gained knowledge of Tongan language, culture, and life-style that informs his keen ethnographic observations and analyses, interspersed with linguistic examples. Besides its profound insights, the book is also just pleasant to read, comprehensible even in its most theoretical parts, as entertaining as it is instructive in its descriptions of daily life, and with a fine sense of humour shining through occasionally. For me, as an anthropologist working in Tonga for more than ten years, this book is a jewel. For anybody interested both in the region or the topics more generally, this

book is a must-read. For everybody else, it is simply a pleasure.

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DONAHOE, BRIAN & JOACHIM OTTO HABECK (eds). *Reconstructing the House of Culture: community, self, and the makings of culture in Russia and beyond*. xii, 336 pp., maps, figs, tables, illus., bibliogr. Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books, 2011. £55.00 (cloth)

Houses of Culture, often situated in the centre of towns, were plentiful across the Soviet Union. At these cultural institutions Soviet citizens underwent socialization, and acquired and gave expression to their civic and ethnic cultures. But since 1992 what has become of these spaces of mass leisure (places of community entertainment, dance, music, libraries) and how do local people and artists experience these public spaces both within Siberia and further afield? This edited volume answers these questions. *Reconstructing the House of Culture* is based on a comparative research project funded by the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, as well as the accompanying conference, 'The Social Significance of the House of Culture in Siberia', and workshop, 'Reconstructing the House of Culture'. This book is essentially a social anthropology of contemporary Russia. The chapters emphasize the post-Soviet era and explain what locals now experience at the Houses of Culture. General themes covered are ideological change, socio-economic transition, and the impact of free market reforms upon local cultural production and values. Scholars interested in the anthropology of modern-day non-Slavic Russian peoples will find this book very useful indeed.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part looks at Siberian Houses of Culture in a comparative perspective, and the second part examines Houses of Culture in a broader historical and geographical context. If the five Siberian case studies (the first five chapters) give the book analytical depth, then the chapters on Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Bulgaria, as well as Cuba and Brazil, add breadth and situate the book in a wider global context. Indeed, they add value to the book by defining and re-defining the House of Culture in the contemporary world. But just as important is the explanation of the everyday personal interactions at these places. The authors provide a collection of engaging personal observations from their fieldwork studies. Virginie Vate and Galina Diatchkova's

opening chapter sets the tone of the book and explains the history and contemporary development of the House of Culture in Chukotka. The section on (Chelsea FC owner) Roman Abramovich summarizes the problems and challenges of social transition in Siberia today (p. 39). Brian Donahoe's chapter on the Tyva House discusses how the locals feel about the loss of central funding post-1992, the impact of Federal Law 131 (2006), and the lack of moral and ethical infusion in contemporary culture. In their chapter, Joachim Otto Habeck, Brian Donahoe, and Siegfried Gruber discuss the findings of the comparative research project. (The appendix to the book provides detailed information about the research methodology used, including the structure and type of research questions asked. Overall this appendix is designed to provide ideas for future social/cultural anthropology studies.)

In part 2 of the book, Ali Igmen's chapter on the radical aims of Houses of Culture in Kyrgyzstan during the 1920s and 1930s addresses the 'civilizing mission' of the Soviet Houses of Culture amongst the predominantly rural Muslim Kyrgyz and Uzbeks (p. 165). His study of the local implementation of Soviet cultural policies notes how, '[i]n the long run, the clubs in effect encouraged Kyrgyz to reassess their indigenous culture to create their Soviet community' (p. 183). In other words, a hybrid community was formed bridging local and union-wide identities. Alexander King's contemporary fieldwork study on the Kamchatkan indigenous communities highlights the economic problems faced by local artists today, and the resourcefulness of these locals. Aivita Putnina's chapter explains how Latvian state cultural policy somewhat mirrors the former Soviet practice and sees culture as 'clearly defined', whilst simultaneously fostering free market and private forms of sociability (p. 231); her example of government funding cuts, and the public gardening and environmental work by women (p. 227) is topical in the context of the popularization of community and allotment gardens in modern cities. Nadezhda Savovas's thoughtful chapter creatively fuses present-day examples from Bulgaria, Brazil, and Cuba. She poetically describes how 'tactile human interactions and social networks express a need and a dream to inhabit home-like community spaces: tangible houses that in their essence are intangible, moving and ever-changing' (p. 260).

The link between public leisure, culture, and ethnic identity makes this book topical; its

anthropological content makes it original. This text fills a gap in the market regarding the social and emotional significance of public leisure institutions in Siberia and elsewhere. Its chapters clarify issues of change and continuity in the Siberian House of Culture paradigm, as well as explaining the international reach and resilience of these institutions.

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GROVES, MURRAY. *The Motu of Papua: tradition in a time of change*. xxii, 255 pp., maps, figs, tables, illus., bibliogr. Vancouver: Webzines of Vancouver, 2011. \$25.00 (paper)

Murray Groves's *The Motu of Papua* is an unusual text. The book was composed at the end of the 1950s as a doctoral dissertation on the basis of research amongst Motu people living in the vicinity of Port Moresby, the capital of Papua New Guinea (PNG). Neglected for some five decades by the author, it was finally published in 2011. The book is therefore a historical text. This is an ethnographic account of Motu social life in the 1950s. It is not a history of Motu life during the 1950s seen from the perspective of a scholar in 2011. Indeed, the text offers almost no contemporary commentary on the original 1950s material, nor does Groves engage in any theoretical discussion. It is not, therefore, an intervention into contemporary anthropological debates. Rather, it must be read as an ethnographic description and profoundly empiricist anthropological analysis located in the discipline as it existed at the end of the 1950s: it testifies to Motu life in colonial PNG and demonstrates anthropological thinking of the period. Once these features of the text are understood, the book makes intriguing reading.

The book is divided into two halves. In the first, Groves gives an account of the main historical and political dynamics contributing to Motu life in the 1950s. In the first chapter, he describes their territory, relations with nearby groups and trading partners, and the main political distinctions operating between Motu people. He also sketches some myths of origin and key political issues affecting Motu social life. The following two chapters give an account of missionization and its effects; and of government, the development of the city of Port Moresby, and their impact on indigenous life. Both of these chapters draw on archival material. The lack of theoretical engagement in these sections is extremely marked. This limits the

usefulness of these sections for scholars interested in colonial and postcolonial issues at large or in Papua New Guinea more generally. However, the synthesis and summary of the archive sources is deftly handled and these chapters will provide a valuable resource for researchers with an interest in the region.

The second half of the book provides an analysis of what Groves regards as the Motu political system. This section is at once representative of the state of the art of Melanesian anthropology in the 1950s, and an intelligent and shrewdly observed extension of it to confront manifest processes of social change. Groves's analysis of Motu social structure demonstrates clearly the conflicts faced by his structural-functionalist contemporaries, especially in the New Guinea Highlands: there is a lineage structure from which there are significant exceptions; there is a hereditary system of authority which also depends on personal prestige; property relations vacillate between the personal and the collective. The absence of any systematic symbolic analysis, which again dates the book, makes it impossible to reconcile these conflicts.

Despite these limitations, this section of the book does make a series of intriguing interventions into issues of social change. Groves traces a transition in political systems between villages close to and within Port Moresby, and those furthest away. He shows that while the most remote villages deliberately partition themselves from statutory colonial authorities, those in the city have abandoned customary forms of political regulation in favour of local government. Those on the coast between these find that the capacity of traditional forms of prestige-based politics to govern migrant workers operating with different values and resources has collapsed, yet the local councils which seek to replace these customary forms of control are ineffective. This analysis leads Groves to the highly contemporary observation that these Motu people operate a politics concerned with performances of state power. In this section of the analysis, Grove's work relates strongly to literature on cargo cult and the state in Melanesia and indeed more recent material on the 'performance' of personhood.

This is a book that will be of most interest to scholars who have a direct interest in the Port Moresby region and Motu people particularly. Because this is essentially a text written in the 1950s, its capacity to intervene or be applied to contemporary debates is limited, although its analysis of colonial politics is sharply perceptive

and might usefully be read alongside material on cargo cult, development, or law in the region. *The Motu of Papua* is a book that will make a considerable contribution to the long history of Motu studies in anthropology, within which it can take its place.

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JONES, GRAHAM M. *Trade of the tricks: inside the magician's craft*. xvii, 289 pp., illus., bibliogr. London, Berkeley: Univ. California Press, 2011. £18.95 (paper)

Entertainment magic involves keeping secrets, of course, but it also (and even more importantly) depends upon their revelation. Indeed, though most magicians go to great lengths to conceal their tricks from non-magicians, practising conjurers routinely – although very carefully and highly selectively – reveal tricks to their peers, typically in exchanges that diffuse technical knowledge within the subculture while accruing social capital for its participants. Exactly how and under what conditions magical secrets get transacted lies at the heart of Graham M. Jones's fascinating book, *Trade of the tricks: inside the magician's craft*, based on fieldwork conducted as a participant observer in the thriving magical communities of Paris, where Jones took part in regular meetings of a number of magic clubs, attended performances, and created countless opportunities to interact with other *magicos* (the term French magicians use for themselves in both the singular and the plural). Now Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Jones became a member of the Fédération Française des Artistes Prestidigitateurs – requiring an oral examination and a performance for the admissions committee (as well as a secrecy oath) – during his research. As a *magico* himself, Jones has an insider's knowledge of this unique subculture. His writing is lively and engaging; *Trade of the tricks* will fascinate specialist and non-specialist readers alike not simply through the inherent intrigue of its French magician subjects, but even more so with the many unexpected insights Jones derived from studying them closely for several years.

Jones's keen appreciation of the craft of magic brims over throughout the book and draws one into his analyses of how magicians learn, perform, interact, form social groups, and earn a living – for many, the latter depends on unemployment benefits for performing arts workers. Jones is attuned to phrasing and word

choice and uses linguistic anthropology (not to mention a high level of French fluency) to parse the verbal subtleties of conversations for what they reveal of interpersonal dynamics and tacit understandings and expectations. He makes astute comments on the delicate balance that conjurers must perpetually strike between deceiving and alienating their spectators. Jones points rather ruefully to the fairly small number of women involved in magic (several of whom he spoke with), noting that 'the locker-room atmosphere of some clubs imbues many interactions with unpleasant sexual overtones' (p. 136). Onstage, Jones says, 'much of magic is dominated by a system of heterosexual masculine signs in which women, when they do appear, figure as the objects rather than the agents of illusion' (p. 132), although he finds a noteworthy exception in a comically ironic performance by Otto Wessely and Christa (last name not given) that shows some of the 'subversive potential' of what he terms 'queer magic' (p. 159).

Near the end of a captivating introduction, Jones offers the following disclaimer: 'Appearances aside, this isn't *really* a book about magic anyway; it is a book about the social organization and valuation of expert knowledge that just happens to focus on magic' (p. 32, original emphasis). Indeed, for Jones, contemporary French magicians present a compelling case study of how specialized knowledge is protected and transmitted. And despite the ubiquity of modern communications technology – the author spots one curious audience member searching the Internet on a smartphone for an explanation of how a trick is done while the magician is still in the midst of a performance – one comes away from the book with the sense that the most crucial things magicians do still occur in unmediated face-to-face interactions. In an especially intriguing section, Jones explores how magicians work to establish intellectual property rights not only by 'publishing' tricks in limited-edition print and DVD publications, but also by 'registering' them through informal processes that rely on shared communal norms and the ostracism of violators.

The book primarily concerns prestidigitators of the present, but Jones's assiduous historical research (showcased in a rich and diverse bibliography) also pays dividends, starting with a 1953 poetic homage to magicians by Jean Cocteau, which Jones translates in its marvellous entirety. He places twenty-first-century French magicians within a proud national tradition

dominated by the figure of Jean Eugène Robert-Houdin, the so-called 'father of modern magic'. This legacy, however, as the book's final chapter makes clear, was not enough to prop up the ill-fated Centre National des Arts de la Magie et de l'Illusion in Blois, which lost vital political and economic support during construction in the 1990s – yet another recent reminder of 'magic's questionable cultural status' (p. 221), however fascinating the art and its practitioners continue to be for so many today.

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RUMSEY, ALAN & DON NILES (eds). *Sung tales from the Papua New Guinea Highlands: studies in form, meaning, and sociocultural context*. xvi, 330 pp., maps, tables, figs, illus., music, bibliogr. Canberra: ANU E Press, 2011. Free (download)

The book, which is available to download free from ANU E Press, is the result of a ten-year interdisciplinary project. It deals with the art form of sung tales that is widespread in the central Highlands area of Papua New Guinea. Since a great deal of knowledge about culture, language, style, and musical form is required to be able to fully embrace this multileveled art of sung poetic language, an investigation into this topic was only possible by combining the expertises of different scientific fields. Specialists from different countries and stemming from the fields of socio-cultural anthropology, linguistics, and ethnomusicology came together in two consecutive workshops in 2004 and 2006 in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea. A variety of approaches to the complex matter are documented in the volume: the thirteen chapters have been written by fourteen authors, covering analyses of styles, structures, and languages, thus making it possible for the first time to compare the different forms of sung tales from the Papua New Guinea Highlands.

Some characteristics of these sung tales are as follows: (1) they are nightly entertainment, often with an educational aspect; (2) they are performed indoors by a seated individual, mostly male, performer; (3) they are sung to a melody in an archaic language, thus different to regular speech; (4) the storytellers are respected specialists, creating poetry in performance, and are paid; (5) there are no musical instruments or dances used in the performances; and (6) the stories are known to the listeners but they are improvised upon. This art form does not appear

completely alien to European readers: it is reminiscent of the ballad-mongers that were fixed parts of pre-television entertainment. These performers were also mainly male, used archaic language, performed in a way different from acts using normal speech, were often without musical accompaniment, and hoped to be paid for their services. The contents of the sung tales might be factual or fictitious (or both) and elaborate on romance, history, and mythical prehistory, or the fight between good and evil, in most cases based on the journey of a protagonist.

The book is aimed not only at specialists in the region or the topic but also at 'readers with a more general interest in comparative poetics, mythology, musicology, or verbal art' (p. 1) and, after a short introduction to region and topic, studies are presented from different linguistic groups in the densely populated area. The diversity of styles in the different regions of the variegated country allows the use of the term 'sung tale-genres' (p. 1, cf. p. 20). Duna, Huli, Enga, Ipili, Angal, Ku Waru, and Melpa all offer a similar use of the sung tales and this first-of-a-kind comparison also serves as a fascinating investigation into similarities and differences among these groups with their 'long history of social interaction and intercultural exchange' (p. 5). Thus, it is not only interesting in which areas the sung tales are performed, but also in which of the neighbouring areas they are not – even though an absence of a regional variety in this book does not necessarily mean

that the region lacks this art form (p. 22). In some cases, detailed information is still scarce and further investigation would be needed.

As part of a multimedia offering, besides the text chapters there are also audio examples, a full text of an interview, and a video to be downloaded. Unfortunately, these important extras are not added as a CD to the purchasable hard copies, but they are listed at the beginning (p. xv). So, the more complete version is the digital one. There is a positive side to E Press: it is possible at low cost to publish material which would otherwise not be published, and it is democratic, allowing everyone with a computer to read it. But the growth of online publications also releases many publishers from the duty to print less popular material. If all specialist literature without a substantial lobby were published in digital form only, it might be lost should this way of conserving knowledge prove unstable. Having made this point, I want to state that through the novel way of presenting different views on such an interesting topic as the sung tales, this edited volume should be considered more than just a specialist publication for a small group of readers. So much of a culture is combined in the tales through their contents, interaction of characters, humour, and metaphors that they allow a deep and intimate view into another people. I can highly recommend to everyone this poetic approach to an interesting region.

ALEXIS TH. von POSER *Ethnological Museum, Berlin*