



## Book Reviews

**Biocapital: The Constitution of Postgenomic Life.** Kaushik Sunder Rajan. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006. 360 pp.

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Kaushik Sunder Rajan's *Biocapital: The Constitution of Postgenomic Life* is a theoretically and methodologically ambitious text. It is at once an attempt to theorize genomics in the context of globalizing aspects of highly capitalized technoscience (p. 14) and to do so through a multi-sited ethnography that is an explicit response to Marcus and Fischer's 1986 call for experimental ethnography. As Sunder Rajan puts it, he seeks "to study locality and particularity in order to map a set of global systems, structures, and terrains" as a means of capturing the "complexities and multiple causalities that constitute contemporary social systems and structures" (p. 30). Identifying genomics as one of the rapid changes that mark the contemporary historical moment, Sunder Rajan selects postgenomic drug development marketplaces as a productive arena in which to track how capital, biology, and processes of globalization are drawn into complex assemblages with a range of human and non-human actors. Sunder Rajan's study moves across an array of domains in India and the United States, including labs, conferences, trade shows, genome start-up enterprises with joint public and private funding in Hyderabad and Mumbai, and an e-learning start-up company in San Francisco.

Sunder Rajan argues that biotechnology represents a new phase of capitalism marked by "an implosion of capitalism with 'life itself'" (p. 171) in which biotechnology is inextricably entwined with capital. Bringing Foucault's theorization of the biopolitical into conversation with Marx's historical materialism (p. 14), Sunder Rajan argues that the constitution of postgenomic life involves the development of social and material relations along with certain kinds of institutional structures and subjectivities that are always rooted in existing histories with the result that just what postgenomic life is now and will be in the future is constituted in different ways in different places.

What is compelling about the book is its groundbreaking effort to move the anthropology of science beyond the industrialized settings that have been the focus of so much

work in this emerging area of the discipline. Sunder Rajan makes clear that the life sciences constitute a set of globalizing phenomena and, as such, play out differently in the diverse social, historical, and economic specificities in which they are located. He offers an intriguing description of the establishment of Genomed, a genome start-up company with both public and private funding in Parel, a district in the heart of downtown Mumbai, surrounded by poverty resulting from the destruction of the once flourishing textile industry (pp. 83–97). Sunder Rajan invites us to imagine the constitution of the impoverished citizens of Parel as the research subjects through whom postgenomic drug development may well occur while pointing to the constitution of U.S. and European citizens as the consumers waiting for the therapies imagined by postgenomic drug developers.

Sunder Rajan also makes an appealing argument that it is essential to take seriously both the fears and the hype that surround contemporary genomics. He views the fears as "dialectic components of the political economy" he is working to trace (p. 208) while he considers the hype a "visionary articulation that allows the . . . [creation of] the conditions of possibility for presents that allow those futures to materialize" (p. 267). In taking this stance Sunder Rajan points to the social power of vision and promise and offers a very nice discussion engaging Haraway's 1997 analysis of genetic fetishisms.

All this being the case and in spite of his claims that he will not "subscribe to, or repudiate entirely" the fears or hype attendant on biotechnology (p. 208), Sunder Rajan appears throughout the text more inclined to refuse the fear and accept the hype. This is most obvious when he repeatedly writes about future genome-based therapies as if they are real or likely to become actual commodities, for example, when he describes a therapy as "an object that makes sick people better" (p. 210). While the vision, promise, and hope around genomics are clearly forms of future building, one has to wonder if it is these phenomena themselves, rather than the therapies they point to, that make up the commodity being bought and sold in the contemporary marketplace.

A book that attempts the broad conceptual reach we find in *Biocapital* demands a careful consideration of the degree to which it realizes its ambition. Three missed opportunities, where its ambition is underrealized, stand out

in particular. The first of these is a technical issue having to do with the structuring of the text that makes it read as if it is two books: the book itself and the narration of the book. The latter (“in this chapter,” “in that chapter,” “I have argued,” “I will argue,” etc.) is not only present to such a degree that it becomes a significant distraction, but it also does not always correlate with what is in the text. This is particularly striking in a passage where Sunder Rajan tells his readers that he will be investigating the hype about personalized medicine “set against the contradiction at the heart of the pharmacogenomic promise, which is the fragmentation of pharmaceutical markets” (p. 153) but never actually returns to elucidate this crucial aspect of the story of pharmacogenomics.

Second, these kinds of absences speak as well to the ethnography itself, which could have been thicker. If understanding the market is crucial to understanding genomics then surely ethnographic elaboration of the dynamics around the crucial contradiction of personalized medicine—that it conflicts with big pharma’s desire for blockbuster drugs that can be prescribed for everyone—would elucidate important aspects of this story. Too often Sunder Rajan makes broad claims extrapolated from what appear to be one or two isolated conversations rather than sustained engagement in the sites he is investigating. One is struck, as just one example, by the fact that in the discussion of the constitution of impoverished residents of Parel as research subjects for postgenomic drug development only one resident of Parel is quoted (a community organizer), and there is no description at all of actual efforts to recruit from this community.

Third, the book reflects a missed opportunity for Sunder Rajan to fully situate his work in relation to other highly relevant conversations in the field. Sunder Rajan is one of a dynamic group of interdisciplinary scholars working to understand contemporary genomics and, while he engages some of these scholars, there are some striking absences. Mention of Sarah Franklin and Margaret Lock’s 2003 theorization of something they also named “biocapital” is completely absent. Monica Konrad’s 2005 coining of “patients in waiting” is particularly relevant to Sunder Rajan’s discussion of the constitution of citizens in the United States and Europe as both patients and consumers in waiting but there is no reference to her work. Nor is there reference to Catherine Waldby’s 2002 work on “biovalue.” Marcus and Fischer’s call for experimental ethnography, which inspires Sunder Rajan’s project, has been extensively critiqued since it came out over 20 years ago for its dismissal of feminist scholarship. This makes Sunder Rajan’s omission of so many significant feminist voices that directly engage issues central to his work particularly ironic. It suggests the persistence of an attitude toward scholarship that Catherine Lutz has vividly named “the gender of theory.”

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**The Hidden Life of Girls: Games of Stance, Status, and Exclusion.** *Marjorie Harness Goodwin*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006. 329 pp.

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Good books often do the eye-opening work of debunking popular stereotypes. *The Hidden Life of Girls* is that kind of book, offering welcome relief from widely available yet flawed accounts of gendered speech. It accomplishes other goals set out by Goodwin, but its achievement extends beyond her stated aims. Discussion of the book might be contextualized in any number of ways, but only a few are considered here. I am most impressed by how Goodwin questions gender stereotypes, engages with an appropriate methodology, and looks at how class status is enacted.

Scholars have begun to critique a widely acclaimed dogma that asserts that women and men have fundamentally different ways of communicating. Deborah Cameron (2007) dismembers this myth using history, linguistic studies, and other evidence to explain why it is so fashionable. Goodwin has a similarly important task in challenging studies that depict preadolescent girls as having a nonassertive, nurturing linguistic style. It is not always a pretty picture, and we find in her data that girls bully people, ostracize others in an overt manner, brag about wealthy families, and speak in ways that contradict claims by famous scholars, including media pundit and linguist Deborah Tannen.

Writing by Tannen and others is characterized by an essentializing, binary model of gendered discourse, according to which girls—women are cooperative, polite, and see social harmony as their main goal, while boys—men are aggressive

and self-focused, concerned with status and face. Tackling such an entrenched myth takes both finesse and good evidence, and Goodwin provides both. But to challenge common perceptions, she had to ask the reader to look at and digest what girls actually say and do when they are in their own playtime environments. This sounds easy, but there is something about natural language data that can be off-putting. It does not look like dialogue found in novels and movies, and is messy and confusing. Transcripts of naturally occurring interactions are not aesthetically pleasing; they take up valuable print space so publishers don't like them either. One of Goodwin's masterful moves is to lure the reader in before they realize that some cognitive energy might be needed to process the forms and sequencing of everyday language.

Goodwin examines the stories, assessments, and insults that occur among a group of socially and ethnically mixed preadolescent girls in Southern California. Decades after the inception of Conversation Analysis, there are still very few monograph-length studies that utilize its methods and findings. Michael Moerman's (1988) brilliant book *Talking Culture: Ethnography and Conversation Analysis* introduced it to a wide audience through microanalysis of data recorded in a Thai cultural context. Unfortunately, his publisher made him place the crucial transcripts at the end of the book, a flaw that Goodwin was spared. She larded each chapter with transcribed excerpts from more than 80 hours of recordings that were collected over a three-year period, convincing the reader of their importance. Some who are not accustomed to looking at transcripts complain that attention to bits of language is distracting, but as Goodwin illustrates, transcribed talk is not an interruption to an argument, it is essential to understanding how social life is accomplished. Of course, there are other productive methods scholars have used for understanding local meanings, such as interviews and analysis of a variety of texts, discourse, and narrative types. Goodwin, however, makes a good case for why her methods are particularly appropriate for the research questions she poses. While engaged in jump rope and hopscotch, telling stories and exchanging gossip, the girls' own local criteria and notions of morality, class, social worth, and coolness are apparent in her tour through their talk and embodied behaviors.

*The Hidden Life of Girls* details how girls organize themselves into cliques and perform alignments and attitudes to others. In particular, we learn how some girls are terribly victimized. The gossip, whispering about others in their presence, erasure of copresence, and forms of exclusion and bullying Goodwin describes might be eerily familiar to professors on university playgrounds. Yet despite the ubiquity of such behaviors, how someone gets placed in such a degraded status is rarely so well documented as it is here. The girls in her data ridicule others as "geeks,"

"butt ugly," "weirdo," and "Chimney Butthead," challenging claims that nurturance characterizes the way girls deal with others. Goodwin likewise tackles the problem of how social class and other social roles are negotiated in language practices. We learn that girls position themselves and others through talk about things such as leisure activities (tennis in Palm Springs), consumption preferences (owning a digital pet, buying clothes from specific stores), and family wealth (how many homes their families own). The transcript of three girls comparing the number of times they have been on an airplane (182) exquisitely makes it clear which among the three is working class.

Some critics, pointing to the fact that our key anthropological concepts and methods have now dispersed to other fields, suggest that a discipline with historic ties to colonialism ought to perhaps die a natural death. Yet, even using ethnographic research methods, many scholars outside anthropology retain culture-bound, class-based categories and viewpoints. Goodwin's anthropological perspective combined with close attention to naturally occurring talk allowed her to step outside these constraints to locate girls' own rules for conflict negotiation, class status, and concepts of morality. Goodwin wants to share her mind-blowing findings with a broad readership, so she explains ideas in a way that an educated undergraduate and a language-data phobic scholar ought to comprehend. This important book has much to offer both scholars and students and is highly recommended as a class text and as a resource.

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**Embodying Honor: Fertility, Foreignness, and Regeneration in Eastern Sudan.** Amal Fadlalla. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007. 210 pp.

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Amal Fadlalla's *Embodying Honor: Fertility, Foreignness, and Regeneration in Eastern Sudan*, although based on her dissertation, is greatly enhanced by her postdoctoral research at Harvard and further fieldwork in the Red Sea area of eastern Sudan among the poverty-stricken Hadendowa (a

branch of the Beja). It is one of the best books written on Sudan and on this general subject of how relationships of power, lack of power, and social conflict figure in women's narratives about health, fertility, and reproductive issues. In Fadlalla's eyes, women's narratives and healing practices revealed broader socioeconomic problems such as poverty and global disparities. It is the first book written about the lives of Hadendowa women and the first to use their own narratives in documenting their own lives. She has, in fact, developed an accessible methodology for integrating minority women's voices into her larger framework.

Based on two years of ethnographic fieldwork, *Embodying Honor* is a beautifully written work. Fadlalla has divided the work into an introduction—"Weaving the Web of Regeneration," and six chapters: "Famished Land: Gender, Identity, and Place"; "Historicizing Foreignness: Alterity, Disease, and Social Vulnerability"; "Performing *Durarit* [Honor]: Constructing Gender through the Life Course"; "Gendered Placenta: The Paths to Proper Fertility and Responsible Motherhood"; "Precarious Trajectories: Managing Reproductive Suffering"; and "Whose Modernity? Negotiating Social Change." The book is generously illustrated with both black-and-white and color photos, the bibliography and index are helpful, and the glossary is excellent.

Fadlalla's skill as a short-story writer and poet comes into play in the elegance of the writing. The work is one of the most readable ethnographies I have encountered for some time. Fadlalla has been able to transfer her poetic style to this ethnography, lacing it with lovely narratives, poetry, and sayings. She has quoted many Hadendowa women themselves, as well as Homer, Victor Hugo, the economist Amartya Sen, Hadendowa songs and proverbs, and the Qur'an. It makes the narrative very graceful. Even the more "academic" (as in theoretical) portions are enhanced by elegant writing as are the sections that contextualize Hadendowa life within a political-economic framework, noting with subtlety the extreme poverty and harshness of the land and life.

Furthermore, *Embodying Honor* is the best book written on Sudanese women (or on Sudan, for that matter) since Janice Boddy's *Wombs and Alien Spirits* (1989). In some sense, Fadlalla's work may overtake Boddy's because of the way in which she incorporates so many social elements. They are both great books for some of the same reasons: a sound theoretical base, detailed and clear ethnographic description (that is highly readable and not dry), original ideas, and eloquent prose. Therefore, I can say without reservation that this is a major contribution to anthropological theory and Sudanese and African ethnography. As for Sudan ethnography, Fadlalla is following in the footsteps of some of the best ethnographers of Africa who all worked in Sudan, for example, Talal Asad, Ian Cunnison, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Godfrey Lienhardt, S. F. Nadel, and Fredrik Barth.

Fadlalla's work is not only a major contribution to African ethnography but also to Islamic African ethnography and to women's studies.

Fadlalla deals with themes that, in the hands of others, come across as ethnocentric and trite, for example, the theme of honor (*durarit*, so central to the story). In the hands of others, the theme of honor (as in honor and shame) is often a dichotomous treatment, uncomplicated by the interventions of other factors outside of some perceived honor system. Her use of such concepts as "regeneration" instead of "reproduction," in and of itself elevates the study. That Fadlalla is able to give a feminist theoretical interpretation of material that might have been spoiled by many others makes this a definite major contribution to women's studies and feminist theories. For one thing, Fadlalla has managed to raise the study of a Muslim group to a level that is striking but does not delve into "exceptionalism," a great failing in ethnographic and feminist studies of Muslim women and African women. In fact, it is a pleasure to read a book about Muslim women that manages to avoid all the pitfalls of a pitfall-ridden field—Middle Eastern or Islamic women's studies. By dealing with women in their everyday lives, by participating with them in their daily tasks, by elevating without romanticizing, Fadlalla's work ranks with Lila Abu-Lughod's excellent ethnographic work—*Veiled Sentiments* (1986) and *Writing Women's Worlds* (1993), both also highly personal accounts of Bedouin women's lives.

That brings me to another main point about *Embodying Honor*, which is related to the advantage of having a Sudanese, an African woman, write this work. We have very few women writing about women in Islamic Africa, and the works we do have are of a much lesser quality by far. Such a view—almost from an insider (Fadlalla is not from the Hadendowa group, although she is very familiar with eastern Sudan from her early background)—is very valuable. Without being unsubtle, she subverts many of our stereotypes of Muslim, African, nomadic women, but as I said, without romanticizing. These are poor women struggling against great odds (famine, poverty, sexism, various forms of colonialism); there is nothing romantic about it. In this sense, her work exceeds Abu-Lughod's two ethnographies mentioned above in subverting romanticism.

Fadlalla centers her work around particular symbolic concepts such as honor and fertility, underscores the body spatiality of women, and unravels the Hadendowa concept of foreignness (which allows her to position herself, a northern Sudanese, as *balawait* while unsettling our usual notions of "insider" and "outsider"). In her own words, Fadlalla states that: "The focus of the feminization of social vulnerability shifts attention from anthropology's symbolic emphasis on gendered meanings of fertility to a conception of ritual symbolism and practices as diagnostics of

historical relationships of power, marginality, and social conflict" (p. 5), and that "Hadendowa women embody the cultural meanings of affinity, motherhood, and regeneration" (p. 85).

This graceful work manages to combine demographics, poetry, and ethnography rather seamlessly, all the while making a major contribution to the fields of African ethnography, women's studies, feminist theories, Muslim studies, population and health, and Sudanese studies.

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**An Island Called Home: Returning to Jewish Cuba.** Ruth Behar, photographs by Humberto Mayol. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007. 297 pp.

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It's hard to imagine who wouldn't want to read *An Island Called Home: Returning to Jewish Cuba*. Part memoir and part ethnography, Ruth Behar's theoretically rich and suggestive study of Jews in Cuba delves into topics as varied as tourism, migration, and diaspora; the methods and ethics of fieldwork; the quality of religious life in today's world; the work of subject formation; socialist and postsocialist societies; and material culture. The text also complicates many studies of Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Jewish Diaspora by highlighting in new ways the diversity in these fields. Finally, with prose that responds to the beautiful and provocative photographs taken by Cuban photographer Humberto Mayol while Behar "spoke to and interacted with people" (p. 261), the work is an innovative and collaborative departure from the more typical use of photography to illustrate ethnographic text. Suitable for undergraduate and graduate students alike, *An Island Called Home* will provide a variety of scholars with much to ponder.

One of the most productive aspects of the text is its abundance of poignant and stimulating tensions that compel us to reflect anew on how we choose our projects and produce our anthropological knowledge. Born in Cuba, Behar left the country as a small child when her family, along with some 95 percent of the other Jews, voted with

their feet against Fidel Castro and the nationalization of private enterprise. But Cuba tugged at her heart and, beginning in the 1990s, she began to visit regularly, bringing goods to loved ones and searching for elusive childhood memories that seem to have entered her consciousness more by way of family photographs than lived experience. In 2000, she embarked on a more "concrete search for the Jews who make their homes in Cuba today" (p. 3), partnering with the award-winning photographer Mayol and even leading a tour for American Jews curious about Cuba. Her deft foregrounding of her own feelings of longing and displacement, her profound if received trepidation of all things related to Fidel Castro, her economic privilege as a citizen of the United States and ambivalence about tourism, and her acute appreciation for the political stakes of representing anything or anyone Cuban usefully combine to highlight the complexity of conducting intellectually, emotionally, and politically ethical fieldwork.

*An Island Called Home* also speaks in perceptive and innovative ways to what is far too often depicted as a virtually universal and uniform revival of religion. While it is true that nearly all the Jews with whom Behar speaks in Cuba have affiliated with synagogues, pursued *b'nei mitvah* (coming-of-age rituals), and learned to read Hebrew and chant Torah only in the past 15 years or so, Behar wisely resists a unitary representation or explanation for this. Instead, readers learn through her numerous informants of the varied social, cultural, personal, spiritual, and economic draws of Jewish life in Cuba, each of which ebbs or flows at different moments and in different ways for multifaceted subjects. Although Behar may have been searching for the Cuban Jewish life of her 1950s childhood, what she finds is *sui generis*: Jews with a singular Jewish grandfather; Jews who are converts from Catholicism; Jews who hadn't picked up a prayer book in 40 years; Jews who find Jewishness in physics, literature, socialism, and sugar cane; Jews who were circumcised at the age of 69; Jews who arrive late to an interview because they were tracking down a leg of pork for lunch.

Indeed, perhaps one of the most important contributions of Behar's book is the insight it offers into the complex work of subject formation. Many of the Jews she meets by way of religious institutions weren't Jewish before and nearly all the ones who were weren't Jewish in the same way. Assessing this phenomenon, Behar notes the 1992 constitutional decree that modified Cuba from an officially atheistic to a secular state, as well as ensuing legislation that legalized the use of the U.S. dollar in 1993. Thankfully, however, Behar refuses to yoke her analysis of the "Jewish renewal" to the hackneyed narrative of Jews who are finally free to return to their cherished traditions as the sun sets on yet another totalitarian socialist regime. Instead, she points repeatedly to the hefty infusions of human and economic

capital that come from American Jews and their institutions, detailing how they determinedly forge what is in Cuba a novel version of Judaism. Readers interested in subjectivation will find much to consider here: just as Cuba negotiates a future made economically uncertain by the end of Cold War politics but with an ongoing U.S. embargo, the version of Judaism that washes up on its shores arrives replete with the same narratives, rituals, aesthetics, and “flotsam and jetsam” (p. 169) that characterize the dominant form of Judaism in its capitalist neighbor to the north.

Finally, Behar’s text speaks provocatively to questions of material culture, specifically the complex and at times seemingly paradoxical ways that objects acquire and maintain institutional, symbolic, aesthetic, and emotional value. Indeed, some objects, for example, Ida Gutstadt’s father’s shirt from Auschwitz and Jaime Gans Grin’s postcard with canceled stamps of Hitler—the writer of which “was dead by the time it arrived at its destination” (p. 224)—are so charged with meaning that their owners cannot even bear to possess them: Gutstadt’s shirt resides instead on the tallest shelf of a hidden closet in the majestic Patronato synagogue; Grin’s postcard is passed on to Behar, its owner “glad to finally part with it” (p. 225).

Through *An Island Called Home*, Behar takes her readers on a journey that provokes, inspires, moves, and satisfies. There are few ethnographies that are at once so intellectually rich and aesthetically fulfilling, so accessible and so stimulating. Scholars and students alike will benefit from this insightful and beautiful text.

**Birth on the Threshold: Childbirth and Modernity in South India.** Cecilia Van Hollen. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003. 295 pp.

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In social science studies of reproduction, we are quite familiar with critiques of the medicalization of pregnancy and childbirth. Cecilia Van Hollen’s recent book, *Birth on the Threshold*, offers another perspective on the topic of childbirth, biomedicine, and modernity. Her study amongst poor women in the city of Chennai and its environs, in the state of Tamil Nadu, India, illuminates productive tensions between tradition and modernity in women’s experiences of childbearing. But it does so without recourse to notions of women’s universality and without portraying biomedicine as hegemonic. Rather, Van Hollen shows how biomedicine has been localized and stresses that Tamil women’s critiques of biomedicine are not counter hegemonic but concern the discriminatory way that services are provided. One of the things I like best about this book is that it challenges

readers to consider another set of sensibilities concerning the medicalization of childbirth. Van Hollen describes with subtlety and insight how and why Tamil women seek access to the same kinds of biomedical maternity care that many childbirth activists and scholars in North America have been fighting to curtail.

The central image of birth on the threshold is both literal and figurative. Van Hollen opens the book with a story of Mumtaz, a young woman who is in labor with her first child, waiting at her doorstep for the autorickshaw to take her to the local government hospital. By the time the rickshaw arrives, Mumtaz has already given birth with the help of her mother and a village health worker, quite literally in the doorway of her house. Van Hollen uses this evocative image of the threshold as a metaphor not only for the transition of childbirth from the private space of the home to the public domain of the hospital but also for “a shift in systems of knowledge about the body in general and women’s reproductive bodies in particular” (p. 3).

The shifts Van Hollen describes are framed by the idea of the modernization of society through the bodies of women. The “modernization processes” she addresses include: the professionalization and institutionalization of obstetrics, changes in consumption patterns and reproductive rituals, the emergence of new technologies for the management of childbirth pain, the international mandate to reduce population, and development agencies’ agenda to spread biomedical notions of reproduction. The author’s combination of methods—archival, ethnographic, and documentary—to tell this story is a major strength of the book.

Van Hollen begins by recounting British colonial efforts to bring “enlightenment” to the dark recesses of Indian family life by transforming childbirth practices in late 19th and early 20th century. By educating the Indian woman on matters of sanitation and modern medicine, the British sought to improve maternal and infant health and thereby address the specter of depopulation of the labor force. Training programs for *dais*—traditional birth attendants—were launched as a stopgap measure, but the introduction of professional obstetrics was seen as the real solution. Contemporaneous counter arguments of local nationalists, however, identified not Indian “backwardness” but, rather, the unequal distribution of health services as the real problem—a critique that persists in the present day complaints of Tamil women, and one that Van Hollen returns to throughout the book.

In post-Independence India to the present, Van Hollen describes a range of options for birthing women—including government hospitals, private hospitals, and private practitioners at the neighborhood and village level with varying degrees of medical training. Cost, distance, and congruity with women’s expectations of care are all factors in women’s choice of maternity care. Van Hollen carefully

illuminates the micro forces of decision and meaning making around childbirth—both its clinical and ritual aspects—stressing social and political context. Particularly compelling is her chapter on the meaning and management of labor pain in which she shows how pharmaceutical augmentation of labor has become normalized in some parts of Tamil Nadu. She recites a common piece of knowledge among Tamil women that “the baby will only be born if the pains are strong” (p. 112). Women are understood to naturally possess the strength to withstand the pains of labor and, thus, pain (*vali*) is to be invoked not avoided in childbirth. “In Tamil Nadu,” the author concludes, “cultural notions about female power (*sakti*), local constructions of the body, and traditional medical practices to accelerate labour pains combined with the political economic situations of large government hospitals make accelerating labour economically efficient and render the use of analgesics an unaffordable luxury” (p. 113).

Van Hollen’s analysis also avoids the dichotomization of submission and resistance in the profile she offers of Shahida, a middle-class Muslim woman with an air of professionalism and some modern drugs, who attends deliveries in the village. Van Hollen reads Shahida’s popularity as a kind of resistance to allopathic medicine but one that doesn’t invoke Western critiques of male-dominated, fragmented, medicalized births. Rather, she argues, local women’s resistance “took the form of the search for some access to the professional and technological aspects of birth outside of the institutional structures which they felt had not served them well and which had attempted to eradicate what they saw as viable collective cultural practices” (p. 214).

How the shifting concerns of the modern state seek to work through women’s bodies is the theme that continues to animate this book, as the author turns her attention to population health and family planning policy in India. Here she traces the back story of international donors pressuring India to meet family planning “targets” as a condition of further aid and loans and shows how the rhetoric of modernization is entrenched in such ostensibly progressive programs as the *Baby Friendly Hospitals Initiative* and the concept of “reproductive rights.” With each example Van Hollen returns to what Tamil women themselves say and do and the importance of socioeconomic context.

*Birth on the Threshold* is clearly written and very engaging in its description and argumentation and thus is a highly teachable ethnography. It makes important scholarly contributions to critical medical anthropology for the way it connects small ethnographic moments to larger forces of history and political economy and presents local cultural expression and experience as a deeply tuned response to local and global assemblages of power. Finally, this book is a welcome addition to a growing body of work in the anthropology of reproduction.

**Making Virtual Worlds: Linden Lab and Second Life.** Thomas M. Malaby. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009. 165 pp., illustrations, index.

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Increasingly, a range of Internet technologies—including virtual worlds, online games, and social networking websites—have become sites of culture in their own right, interdigitating in myriad ways with actual-world socialities even while they cannot be reduced to that interdigitation. Crucially, most of these emergent online socialities are owned by for-profit companies; we need to understand how these companies implement their visions of online culture.

Gaining such an understanding is the primary project of *Making Virtual Worlds*. An organizational ethnography of Linden Lab, the company that made and now governs the virtual world Second Life, it is a landmark work, a fascinating study with wide relevance for scholars concerned with questions of hierarchy, creativity, and contingency, particularly in relation to the pivotal question of how forms of capitalist production shape social assumptions and dynamics. It would be mistaken to confine this book’s relevance to online socialities, for it speaks to broad questions regarding governance, organizations, and capitalism. As I discuss below, it is disappointing to see *Making Virtual Worlds* hobbled by a rushed theoretical framework and ethnographic vagueness. However, I interpret these limitations generously, as reflecting the challenges of exploring the organizations that literally code online worlds.

*Making Virtual Worlds* consists of an introduction and five chapters. In the introduction, subtitled “A Developer’s-Eye View,” Malaby sets out the goals of the text. This is clearly an organizational ethnography, inspired above all by Tracy Kidder’s *The Soul of a New Machine* (Kidder 1981) and Paul Rabinow’s *Making PCR* (Rabinow 1996), for which the title *Making Virtual Worlds* is a “respectful homage” (p. 4). Malaby notes that during the time of his fieldwork at Linden Lab’s offices in San Francisco (December 2004 to January 2006), the company grew from 35 to 67 employees as Second Life grew as well. Malaby had significant access to the company during this period and conducted participant-observation and face-to-face interviews with a range of employees. Theoretically, he situates his analysis in literatures on governance, organizations, and bureaucracy, and also in terms of game studies, an area in which Malaby has extensive expertise.

Chapter 1, “The Product,” is comprised of two parts. Malaby first offers readers a brief introduction to Linden Lab before turning to the theoretical framework, which is taken almost wholly from Pierre Bourdieu’s notion that there exist distinct forms of capital: market capital, social

capital, and cultural capital. With little engagement with the substantial secondary literature on this framework, Bourdieu's typology is presented as truth rather than rubric. We learn, for instance, that cultural capital "has three forms: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized" (p. 37, in Bourdieu 1986:243–248). No possibility is raised that there might be two or four forms of cultural capital rather than three: Malaby simply treats Bourdieu's theorization as a transparent representation of social reality. The theoretical framework is not shaped by the ethnography itself.

Chapter 2, "Tools of the Gods," turns in fascinating detail to the history of Linden Lab, showing how mundane forms of decision making and office interaction shaped how employees conceptualized their work and its implications. For instance, Malaby shows how a shift from "Achievements and Objectives" documents to a bug- and feature-tracking application known as "Jira" influence how employees understand what constitutes a "task" and how they are to collaborate to complete such tasks. Malaby also explores how certain books circulating around the office influenced the design of Second Life: particularly illuminating is the analysis of how Jane Jacobs's *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) shaped a crucial decision regarding how avatars could "teleport" across the Second Life landscape. A vital insight Malaby brings to the table is that "faith in the tool-making tool of computer programming practice served as the go-to practical means by which a public policy problem could be answered" (p. 78).

By chapter 3, "Knowing the Gamer from the Game," the Bourdieuan framework has been largely sidelined in favor of the game studies perspective introduced in chapter 1. Drawing attention to scholarship underscoring indeterminacy in game play, Malaby's working definition of "game" is "a semibounded and socially legitimate domain of contrived contingency that generates interpretable outcomes" (p. 84). The convoluted and doggedly etic nature of this definition reflects two problems compromising the broader analysis of which it partakes. First, the definition is so open ended that it is difficult to imagine what aspect of human sociality would not fall under its purview. Second, the definition has little to do with Linden Lab: the game studies framework appears not as research question but preethnographic postulate. It is indicative that Malaby opens chapter 3 with reference to a video game that some Linden staff play (rather than Second Life itself); while there are some interesting analyses (particularly the examination of how a chess ranking system was used to prioritize company tasks), the game studies framework acts overall as a square hole into which round peg after round peg is pounded. That some virtual worlds are largely or wholly gamelike is beyond doubt, as is the fact that the field of game studies has much to offer the study of virtual worlds. But as designers and scholars of virtual worlds going back to Richard Bartle have noted, conflating virtual worlds with games forces

a series of unhelpful presuppositions into the analytic in question.

Chapter 4, "The Birth of the Cool," explores questions of simulation and a "hierarchy of creation" (p. 124) in Linden Lab's design of Second Life. One case study concerns Linden Lab employees' response to the unexpected growth of dance clubs following an update to the virtual world that allowed residents greater flexibility in avatar animations. Another case study examines the regimes of accountability and value shaping employees' pursuit of "secret projects." These themes are carried into the fifth chapter, "Precarious Authority," which concludes the book by drawing together concerns around bureaucracy, organizational dynamics, and game studies. Drawing on anthropological studies of ritual, Malaby suggests that questions of legitimacy and authority will prove crucial to how we understand emerging regimes of governance with regard to online socialities.

As this overview indicates, *Making Virtual Worlds* provides groundbreaking insights concerning how Linden Lab employees understood their work and its implications. It should also be clear that the analysis is limited by overreliance on a single theorist (Bourdieu) and the overextension of a game studies framework to something doubly not a game (the company Linden Lab is not a game, and the virtual world they govern contains some games inside it but is not a game). For instance, there is no explanation as to why the unexpected growth of dance clubs in Second Life, however contingent from the perspective of Linden Lab employees, should be understood in terms of a model of contingency derived from the study of games.

The biggest disappointment of the book lies in its ethnography. Of lesser importance is the treatment of Second Life. Despite turning to the virtual world for ethnographic authority—every image of sociality in the book (including the cover) is a screenshot from within Second Life (see pp. 21, 103)—Malaby clearly focuses on the physical-world offices of Linden Lab. One strange omission, however, is the failure to discuss how during the time of Malaby's fieldwork, Linden Lab staff had virtual offices, located next to each other in their own region of Second Life. How did the layout and use of "Linden Village" shape their work?

The real limitation of *Making Virtual Worlds*, however, lies in the weakness of its ethnography with regard to Linden Lab itself. The book has only 134 pages of body text—substantially less than Kidder's or Rabinow's works—and many of these pages are devoted to exegeses of Bourdieu and game studies scholarship. The ethnographic material provided in the remaining pages is simply too thin to bear the analytical weight Malaby wishes to place on it. Malaby notes that "this book does not offer a comprehensive account of the practices, meanings, and history of Linden Lab as a conventional ethnography might" (p. 4), not just because of the "small number of its



employees” (p. 4) but because “the book has a different aim . . . [it] illuminates ethnographically complex processes of governance, games, and creativity” (p. 4).

Unfortunately, this illuminative aim (not so “different” from many contemporary ethnographies) does not obviate the need for the kind of careful ethnographic analysis here indirectly denigrated as “conventional.” Most distressing in this regard is that save for two top-level staff (Phillip Rosedale and Cory Ondrejka), Malaby makes no use of pseudonyms or the other devices that ethnographers have long used to specify their interlocutors, even in small field sites. This means that in a most un-Bourdieuian manner, the debates and decisions that took place within Linden Lab are presented as intellectual abstractions rather than invested practices. Repeatedly we encounter statements like “[user] tools were not for tinkering ‘under the hood,’ as Lindens put it” (p. 103), with no sense as to which “Lindens” said this, in what contexts. It may be that “Lindens on the whole saw complex processes engaged by individuals pursuing enlightened self-interest as the legitimate path to self-governance” (p. 104), but given the centrality of governance to the analysis, discussing the exceptions to this “whole” would have been informative. Too often we find an anthropomorphized Linden Lab who “[puts] forth an ideal of agency for its users” (p. 59), or at best collectivities like “Lindens in marketing” (p. 113).

But how did actual staff interaction shape the models and practices of the governance in question? Linden Lab more than doubled in size during Malaby’s fieldwork: what were the consequences of this? What of the janitorial and other support staff that are completely absent as “employees” of Linden Lab, but who are a crucial aspect of any organization’s political economic imaginary? Were “Lindens” involved in community management more likely to be women? Indeed, kinship is one of the most obvious absences in the analysis. As Malaby notes, Linden Lab employees called themselves “the Lindens”; in *Second Life* they even appeared with the shared last name “Linden.” A range of thinkers, going back at least to Engels and including many feminist scholars, have noted the fundamental imbrication of kinship and capital (e.g., Yanagisako 2002). How did not just metaphors but practices of family and intimacy in a male-headed organization shape how “the Lindens” made and governed *Second Life*?

At times, there are tantalizing hints of the substantial ethnographic knowledge that did not make its way into *Making Virtual Worlds*. In the conclusion, for instance, we learn that “there were moments of near-economic collapse, multiple hacker attacks, features added that fell flat, and surprising bursts of participation from the least ballyhooed quarters” (p. 128). It would have been wonderful if Malaby could have shared more of these attacks and features and bursts of participation. (To whom does the mysterious “least ballyhooed quarters” refer?) Such material would

emphatically not have rendered *Making Virtual Worlds* “conventional”—it would have rendered the book more effective in precisely the kind of fine-grained organizational analysis needed to show how specific social dynamics, irreducible to company procedures and manifestos, played pivotal roles in modalities of making and governance. As Geertz observed, ethnography works through a “continuous dialectical tacking between the most local of local detail and the most global of global structure in such a way as to bring them into simultaneous view” (Geertz 1983:68). Without the local detail, our ethnographic analysis is not unconventional but, rather, adrift. It is thus in its role as a point of departure—a “proof of concept,” in the phrase of Linden Lab employees—that the promise of *Making Virtual Worlds* lies. Malaby has opened a vital door to showing the power of ethnographic inquiry to chart the powerful role companies that own and govern online socialities will play in the years to come.

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**Street Dreams and Hip Hop Barbershops: Global Fantasy in Urban Tanzania.** Brad Weiss. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009. 263 pp.

## ANNE S. LEWINSON

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Brad Weiss’s ethnographic study of popular cultural practices in Arusha, Tanzania, provides a thought-provoking analysis of African youths’ lives. As the book title implies, “hip hop” barbershops (male-centered settings whose décor, workers, and clients display the globally distributed symbols and ethos of hip hop) form the primary lens

through which Weiss views this social category. The book's reach, however, extends to other important urban locations, including buses, bars, homes, female-centered hair salons, tailoring stalls, and musical performances. Through detailed analysis of interviews, visual data, spoken exchanges, and observations of daily activities gathered during four research trips between 1999 and 2006, Weiss builds a convincing argument that young African men draw on popular culture to comment on their specific localities, constitute their daily worlds, and position themselves in the wider globe (albeit consciously on its margins).

The book begins with a three-chapter introduction to the subjects of the study, their socioeconomic context, and an analytical framework. Three sections then follow, the first one describing the young men's self-presentations as tough survivors who can endure the assaults of urban institutions and the world order. The second one analyzes their uses of hip hop metaphors and symbols to articulate a marginalized-yet-engaged stance in the world that manifests in the sociality that they have fashioned (premised on excluding women or attachment to them). A third section, divided into three chapters, explores youths' struggles to create viable adulthoods (families and livelihoods) and how their uses of popular culture genres (clothing and hairstyles, television watching, and music-plus-religion) facilitate those struggles. Young female urbanites take center stage in the first chapter of this section with an analysis of their popular genres and spaces (hair salons, clothing, *taarab* music), as well as the discourses deployed to marginalize women. Weiss subsequently discusses the widespread appeal of soap operas as an educational tool for learning about the world, and finally explores the simultaneous embrace of new religiosity (e.g., observant Islam) with rap music performance. The analysis of each genre reveals experiences rooted in a local reality that draw on the global domain (be it through fashion, body hexis, speech, celebrities, *Sunset Beach*, music, Pentecostal Christianity, or Sunni Islam). A brief conclusion summarizes the changing dynamics in Arusha in 2006 as well as the argument.

When anthropologists analyze popular cultural practices in places such as Tanzania, they face several significant challenges. Most theoretical models for studying popular culture (drawn from cultural studies) fall on one side of an analytical divide. Either they grant more power to the "text" (a song, piece of clothing, TV show, etc.) and its creators, arguing that the texts carry messages that imprint themselves onto passive recipient audiences, or they grant more power to active "readers" who attach meanings to the texts, freely using popular culture for their own purposes. This division particularly shows up in analyzing the circulation of European- or U.S.-derived popular culture in African societies, which often has been seen as exemplifying cultural imperialism or conversely as local peo-

ple triumphantly recasting imported goods into their own molds. Neither theoretical emphasis helps an anthropologist to interpret how socially positioned individuals and groups within constraining contexts draw on popular genres to address their situation vis-à-vis other groups, their histories, and the contemporary world.

Weiss navigates between these theoretical pitfalls by emphasizing that the youths in his study are simultaneously conscious of their global marginalization (exclusion from wealth and prestige), constrained by their social-historical positioning, and using mass-circulated symbols and practices to engage in locally meaningful ventures. As he shows, Tanzania's specific context of liberalization involved a brief economic bubble (followed by a protracted bust), which has brought an emphasis on "self-fashioning" through consumption of popular genres, commodities, and styles. While Weiss acknowledges the impact of an individual-focused consumption-based definition of Self promoted by neoliberalism, he also seeks to break down the division between production and consumption by highlighting the new productive processes constituted through the commodities. As well, by providing specific case studies, direct quotations, and descriptions, Weiss demonstrates that these young men are not simply passive consumers or imitators. The term *participation* highlights that they do not control the forms of hip hop, yet they actively enact them. While Weiss delineates the barriers that liberalization has created for youths' movement into stable economic lives and families, he also highlights how the men employ hip hop sensibilities, celebrities, and symbols to generate a sense of empowerment to keep on struggling. He shows powerfully "the potentials and constraints of this contemporary situation without succumbing either to a critique of political economy that sees only dependency and frustrated reaction to an order of domination or to a celebration of the creativity that Africans have generated independent of the harsh realities they daily confront" (p. 238). As a whole, Weiss creates a well-balanced analysis. In addition, this book demonstrates how ethnographic research into popular cultural practices can produce deeply insightful understandings of the contemporary world.

*Street Dreams* has a few minor shortcomings. Some redundancies occur in the ethnographic examples and occasionally in the argument in different chapters. The symbolic analyses sometimes seemed overextended (such as of the term *kijiwe*), especially because this ethnically diverse group is unlikely to share all the subtle semantic meanings suggested. The analytical sections can be wordy in places, with double explanations of the same point. Finally, it was unclear precisely how Weiss was using the key concept of "value," making the argument harder to follow at points. As a result, while the subject and argument in a selected chapter or two would give students great insights, the ethnography in its entirety probably would

work less well in undergraduate courses. For researchers into youths, gender, cities, popular culture, globalization, and African topics, however, this ethnography provides immensely valuable data and conceptual frameworks for future analyses.

**Mortgaging the Ancestors: Ideologies of Attachment in Africa.** Parker Shipton. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009. 327 pp.

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"It is an enchanted, perverted, topsy-turvy world in which Monsieur le Capital and Madame la Terre do their ghost walking as social characters and at the same time as mere things." Thus Marx, in *Capital*, quoted by Parker Shipton near the beginning of this fascinating book (p. 48). Covering the history of land, belonging, and lineage among the Luo people of western Kenya, this book concerns itself with the curious dynamics of freehold tenure in rural development policy and practice. Their hands bound by the mortgage, Monsieur le Capital and Madame la Terre do their ghost walking in the name of the old and still influential theory that all things must be property, all property must be liquid, and all liquidity must be leveraged in the name of greater productivity and, thus, human progress. Shipton deftly reveals the evolutionist doctrine guiding this theory, and takes us on a tour of the various dead men still walking the halls of despots, technocrats, and nonprofit do-gooders alike, from John Locke to Alfred Marshall and the architects of the World Bank. But other ghosts figure in the Luo conceptions of land that get caught up in this theory of productivity: the dead who are buried on the plot of land outside the house, securing the position of the living in a kin group as well as warranting their enduring claim to territory and membership, a claim now up for foreclosure because of the new pragmatics of mortgage financing.

The title of the book is meant quite literally in this second volume of a planned three-volume magnum opus. The first, *The Nature of Entrustment* (2007), was the winner of the 2008 Melville J. Herskovits Award of the African Studies Association and is a fascinating exploration of moral economies of compensation and exchange across generations. The third, *Credit Between Cultures*, is expected in 2010. The trilogy poses trenchant critiques of development policy—especially policies whose aim is to enhance rural people's access to credit and savings—but also provides a richly sympathetic ethnography of people in East Africa trying to maintain their own sense of life and livelihood. For those of you who have not been keeping up with Shipton's work over the years, you've been missing out. Fortu-

nately, the book under review gathers up some of the diverse strands of his research. It also adds to the anthropological literature on topics ranging from descent theory to the anthropology of finance. Shipton has a keen grasp of the hoary debates in our field, a knack for explaining them clearly and concisely, and a gift for channeling these ghosts stalking our discipline and finding that they still have relevant things to say about the most pressing issues of the day.

The cover image of rolling grassy hills, a small thatched roof house and, slightly off-center, a cement or stone grave marker beautifully evokes the attachments of the Luo to the land. So it is fascinating to learn that such burial practices are a recent phenomenon, that people in this densely populated region have become "not less 'clannish,' but more," and that grave placement and marking has come to stake a claim to descent and to "anchor . . . social identity for living persons and groups" (pp. 86–87). At issue is the very nature of modernity, of bureaucratic rationality enhancing "primitive" attachments to kin and land right at the moment where the mortgaging of those attachments becomes possible. Shipton traces colonial-era efforts to, as one colonial writer put it, "throw the money about" (p. 139) to create a more politically palatable rural middle class and offset the rebellious tensions of the Mau Mau and other anti-colonial movements. Cadastral surveys and formal titling allowed land to be "freed up," to start ghost walking with capital, which led Luo and others more firmly to try to secure their own ghosts to what became their "property," invigorating some relationships of kin and ethnicity and obviating others. But titling and mortgages opened the new possibility of "*absolute loss* of ownership" (p. 142), a frightening outcome in a world where previously rights were cross-cutting and diverse, where one person could claim a right to hoe, another to swap, a third to transfer or relocate a wife to the land. Fields may have been bounded with sisal or other markers. But seasonal factors, the role of animals in redistributing "plant energy and nutrients" (p. 71), and overlapping—but not necessarily competing—claims (pp. 71–72) themselves get foreclosed with the possibility of absolute ownership and absolute loss entailed in the mortgage form.

Pointing out the morbid roots of the mortgage, Shipton traces the history of the freehold mortgage process and its inimical relationship to dry land agriculture, where seasonal oscillations involve a temporal cycle at odds with the regularity demanded of the amortization table. He also shows how land tenure and finance are bound up in European ideas about savagery and civilization. His account of the 1950s Swynnerton Plan, the first nationwide attempt in Africa to comprehensively title all land as individual property (p. 143), echoes his telling of the tale of the American Dawes Act and the 19th-century traces of the moral ambiguity of the mortgage in "civilizing" the "savage"

(pp. 30–33) that persist and can be discerned in the now all-too-familiar consequences of the mortgage financing crisis of the late 2000s (with the blame still often ascribed to “subprime” people rather than purveyors of the impossible dreams of property embedded in interest-only home loans or credit default obligations).

Shipton’s book stands as a warning to development planners who would buy into these dreams. Take current efforts to promote savings among the world’s poor. Implicitly referencing Locke’s famous proclamation that money serves the store of value function because unlike apples and acorns, it does not decay, Shipton remarks: “currency inflation . . . can sometimes render money worthless even faster than grain in a granary might rot” (p. 36). This is a powerful and important work, written in an accessible style, and highly recommended for undergraduate and graduate classes on property, economic development, and law.

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**Missions, Missionaries, and Native Americans: Long-Term Processes and Daily Practices.** *Maria F. Wade*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008. 288 pp.

## DANIEL LARSON

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*Missions, Missionaries, and Native Americans* by Maria F. Wade is an ambitious attempt to synthesize historic information pertaining to the impact of Spain’s colonization and Catholic conversion of indigenous populations of Florida, Texas, northern Mexico, and Baja and Alta California. The author examines various conversion strategies used by the Franciscans and Jesuits between the 17th and 19th centuries. She astutely explores the variable reactions by Native American groups to European customs of religion, settlement, and economic expansion. Wade demonstrates that history matters and that both the Catholic Church and Spanish government were well experienced in enculturation processes designed during the Inquisition by trial and error on European peasant communities. She explains that the European religious and political mindset viewed the New World as one of good and evil where the masses of humanity were in need of guidance from higher authority with a divine capable of saving souls from hedonistic ways and an afterlife of infinite punishment, notions

that were incomprehensible in many ways to indigenous peoples.

This book is well written and reflects an enormous amount of work of archival research. There is much to be gained by reading this volume, but for the serious scholar looking for explanation and empirical analysis, this volume is best characterized as traditional historical narrative based on selective data and anecdotal information. I recognize that opinions differ on the use of anthropological theory and the purpose of our research; however, it is important to identify and employ theory that may allow us to explain cause-and-effect relationships in missionization processes as well as ethnographic research in general. I will refer to these alternative theoretical perspectives and empirical studies below in my review. In spite of my reservations, I believe this book is an important pioneering effort, and it should be read by those researchers and students captivated by this topic.

The book is divided into three major sections. In the introductory section, the author discusses several aims, including a commitment to “demonstrate the plight of the missionaries who felt trapped by the system they created” (p. xiii). Wade recognizes the diversity of motives and background of each missionary, and she is astute to the impact of the individuals on missionization and conversion practices. She characterizes the details associated with the daily and yearly activities of indigenous peoples who resided in or near the missions. Importantly, there is an attempt to understand and contextualize the alternative conversion strategies employed by the missionaries in diverse environments among hunters and gatherers as well as precontact agriculturalists. Emphasis on the comparative approach is of great value, and there have been many recent efforts to develop an explicit anthropological theory that can guide comparative studies of cultural diversity.

In the second section, a well-organized and clearly written discussion related to the difference in beliefs and organizations of the Jesuits’ and the Franciscans’ spiritual and structural frameworks and how such perspectives played out in the conversion of indigenous populations. This section provides an essential element necessary to the premise of her book, which is “I aim to show the similarities and differences between Native preoccupations and reactions to conversion and change in missionary practice” (p. xviii). The author suggests that we gain great insights into the minds of the missionaries as well as the Native peoples and that perspectives differ dependent on the geographic region, chronological period, ethnographic group, and missionary sect. The study area is immense, and the cultural diversity of the people within each microregion is great. Unfortunately, anthropological constructs and classification systems often mask the diversity of indigenous cultures that lived in close proximity and this hinders a scientific understanding of cultural processes. The influence of settlers

played a big role in enculturation and brought different kinds of atrocities perpetuated in the name of Spanish greed and colonialism. This section is an interesting read and an important contribution to our understanding of missionization processes.

In the third and final section of the book, the author effectively summarizes everyday activities and annual events associated with integrative religious ceremonies and economic tasks noting similarities and differences in cultural dimensions over time and space. Specifically, this information will be of value to those archaeologists and ethnohistorians interested in the material culture of Native peoples, missionaries, settlers, and military personnel. The quality and quantity of archival data ranges broadly from mission specific architecture to speculations about previous structures and artifact categories. The discussion of mission records is important, but the value of how other anthropologists have employed this empirical data is not referenced here, which is a serious oversight in scholarship. Indeed, other researchers have used such records in innovative ways to enlighten us about the process of missionization. If the author included and reviewed this body of knowledge, her arguments would have been more informed and compelling, especially for California.

The author clearly recognizes that European ways were not completely assimilated, and that when these two cultures entered into unique interactions, cultural transmission systems engaged, resulting in the emergence of new cultural structures that were neither all of one or the other. Self-organization theory is particularly applicable here and is truly a potential theoretical framework that can have a profound impact on anthropological theory and research related to missionization and cultural collisions. The interactions were complex, as pointed out by Wade, involving religious institutions, missionary rules, royal decrees, and attempts to subvert the law and policies of both church and state by Jesuits and Franciscans, as well as settlers. The author's aims are admirable and she explains her study rationale in a straightforward manner. I would suggest that for anthropologists interested in the scientific study of religion, enculturation, and group formation, that work carried out by Martin Novak and colleagues regarding network formation is a rich source of theory that should be applied to ethnographic research concerning colonization and religious conversion. Coupling such an approach to advances in cultural transmission theory, the neurosciences, and evolutionary cognitive studies will surely provide both proximate and ultimate explanation of human behavior. This, however, is my own research bias, but I am hopeful that multiple approaches will meld together into a new framework that will accomplish our diverse scholarly goals.

In conclusion, I would recommend that upper-division anthropology and history students as well as graduate students read this book for it contains a wealth of information

about an extremely important period in the history of the New World. The author certainly deserves praise for the intensive labor required to complete this major undertaking.

**Lives of Dust and Water: An Anthropology of Change and Resistance in Northwestern Mexico.** *María Luz Cruz-Torres.* Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004. 325 pp.

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Sinaloa, a northwestern Mexican state, is often represented as a cradle of violence, marijuana cultivation, and drug trafficking. While acknowledging this reality, the author of this book wishes to focus on another Sinaloa that less people know, characterized by strong peasant and fisher identity and varied strategies of survival in the midst of great political, economic, and ecological changes. Global demand for commodities such as fruits, vegetables, and shrimp has affected these communities. The Mexican government has carried out structural reforms in the 1990s to promote the privatization of agriculture and fishing and its export orientation. This has allowed communities to sell their land and fishing resources to private companies, whereas the government has provided less credit for subsistence activities and has reduced public expenses in social services. Furthermore, the promotion of commercial agriculture and fishing for export has further deteriorated the environment on which these rural people depend. This book focuses on the varied and creative strategies that rural people undertake to survive in this difficult context. Cruz-Torres highlights the important role of households led by women and solidarity networks for community survival. Another contribution of the book is that it focuses on a region and group of people that is less studied by anthropologists: the north of Mexico and mestizo peasants. Anthropologists working in Mexico have tended to focus on regions populated by indigenous groups.

*Lives of Dust and Water* contributes with a detailed history and ethnography of two peasant and fishing communities located in southern Sinaloa. One of the communities is an *ejido*, a form of communal landholding created as a result of the agrarian policies of the Mexican Revolution. The other is a poor peasant community that originated from the dissolution of a hacienda (large landholding), and that is characterized by small private property and a mixture of work in subsistence and commercial agriculture. Both communities, being located on the coast, combine agriculture with the fishing of shrimp in nearby lagoons. One of the most important contributions of the book is the discussion of how poor peasants and fisherpeople use different strategies to survive that include subsistence agriculture, fishing,

wage labor in commercial agricultural and fish farms, informal businesses, and migration.

The historical section of the book is interesting, and it covers from pre-Hispanic times to the present, and from a regional to a local approach. One contribution of this book is to show how the Mexican Revolution was experienced at the community level in this region through oral history. Particularly useful is the discussion of how women could not become *ejidatarías* (with some exceptions) and how men carried out most important decisions. However, women participated in many lower-level committees that were essential for the functioning of the community. A shortcoming of the book is that the connection of ejidos to the ruling party and the state, whose importance has been established elsewhere, is not sufficiently explored. A finding is that, despite what critiques to the ejido claim, *ejidatarios* improved their living standards and were better off than non-*ejidatarios*.

During the postrevolutionary period, fishing was organized in cooperatives whose production was bought by the government at a set price. Later, the Mexican government experimented with the creation of collectively owned shrimp farms as a form of rural development. However, according to the author, these farms provided few benefits for rural communities. A conflict arose between officially approved fishing collectives and unlicensed newcomers and dealers. The political dimensions and the reasons for government approaches to this conflict could have been explored further by the author. The Mexican government is interpreted as an oppressor of the unlicensed poor without taking into account its complex role as a mediator among different social groups and interests.

Then, Cruz-Torres explores what happens to peasants and fisherpeople after the neoliberal reforms that allowed for the privatization of ejidos and for the participation of private companies in shrimp fishing. She shows that the poor have sold or rented their land and fishing grounds to provide for their daily needs. This has led to their greater implication in wage labor. Although the author notes some consequences of neoliberal reforms in these communities, their effects could have been discussed in greater depth.

The section on household relations focuses mainly on the pervasiveness of domestic violence and on how women use family and fictive kinship networks to make ends meet in difficult situations. As other works on gender in northern Mexico have shown, greater participation of women in remunerated activities seems to be the source of increased domestic violence. The author emphasizes the importance of household strategies and networks, instead of social movements, as forms of female resistance. Other forms of survival strategies based on solidarity discussed in this book are rotating credit systems, food pooling, and childcare exchange.

Although the author claims in the introduction to be interested in locating peasants in larger contexts, this is not completely achieved in the book. The discussion of the relation of peasants and fisherpeople with the Mexican government and Mexican politics could have been more complex. Also, the articulation of peasants with the global economy could have been improved providing more context on global strategies and state policies. For example, the book does not offer enough information about the global political economy of shrimp or of Sinaloan commercial agriculture. The reader is mostly left with the local point of view on these issues.

The structure of the book also has some problems. A large section is spent in introductions, and the reader is disappointed to have to wait to almost page 200 to start reading the best, more content-rich chapters. In addition, the book has a number of anecdotes that confuse the reader and the point of which is unclear.

To sum up, *Lives of Dust and Water* makes interesting contributions to understand the varied strategies used by rural people, and particularly by women, to survive in a difficult context of neoliberal reforms and ecological exhaustion. The book may be particularly useful for students and researchers interested in rural histories, strategies, and in rural women, as well as those interested in northwestern Mexico.

**Women of Fes: Ambiguities of Urban Life in Morocco.**  
*Rachel Newcomb.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009. 236 pp.

**DOYLE HATT**

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There is no hint of the exotic in Rachel Newcomb's *Fez*. Citing Edward Saïd's critique of the Orientalist practice of endlessly reproducing the standard themes that are handed down in the academic literature, Newcomb avoids this by training her lens on a series of particular individuals and dealing with the larger structures of Moroccan society only incidentally, as they come up in the various discourses and require to be explicated for a reader unfamiliar with North Africa. The reader thus apprehends and absorbs the cultural content seamlessly and without struggle, and, as noted, the content is purged of exoticism. The book is cast in the tradition of Lila Abu-Lughod's "writing against culture" paradigm, and the reader's attention is drawn to the individuals and their arguments, which, rendered into English by the author, could almost pass for discourses between and about men and women in any moderately cosmopolitan city in the world.

Much of Newcomb's narrative (her word) revolves around proposed reforms to the *mudawwana*, the Moroccan code of family law governing marriage, divorce, and custody of children following repudiation or divorce. This was a key issue at the time of the fieldwork, and it anchors the book and allows the author to range widely around the social landscape as she explores the complexities and ambiguities of gender relations. "Ranges widely around" is a fitting characterization of Newcomb's coverage. The sequence in which various topics are brought to the reader's attention is perhaps a bit arbitrary, but the important thing is that the author guides the reader with a firm hand, deftly making cultural or legal explanations as the need arises, and so the reader is not left to wonder where or why he or she is being taken in a particular direction, or how the new material fits into the old. The narrative proceeds smoothly and naturally, and the reader (or, at any rate, this reader) never feels overwhelmed by the richness and complexity of the material.

On the basis of information she provides, the author was born and raised a North American but has years of Moroccan experience and married a Moroccan husband during the period of her study. Indeed, the photo of the bride being transported to her new house (a standard Orientalist trope, if ever there was one) is a photo of herself at her own wedding in Fez. Her ethnographic stance was thus appropriately marginal-liminal. During her fieldwork, she was a bona fide member of her local society, and, yet, she brought with her both her North American and her academic personae through which to filter her experiences. No one reading this book will doubt that the author has lived up to her aim of making available nuanced portraits of a variety of Muslim women, sensitively and multivocally conveyed, in a domain of literature still dominated by stereotypes of "the oppressed Muslim woman."

By its nature, anthropological understanding bobs uneasily in the waters between the Scylla of universal humanity and the Charybdis of intercultural difference. Given her aim and her method, Newcomb necessarily tacks closer to the shore of universal humanity. In her rendering, her Moroccan women are endowed with intelligence, insight, humor, and fitful strains toward autonomy, even as they remain bound by customs and traditions about which they also (with a few exceptions) evidence feelings of ambivalence. Far from being mindless "bearers" of their culture, they have a degree of consciousness of the social processes that constrain them. But, of course, they appear thus because of the methods Rachel Newcomb employed to meet them, talk with them, and to select from her field notes the materials she included in her narrative.

The book is intended in some measure as a corrective to lingering traces of Orientalism, and it succeeds well in this. Because the exposition is so well crafted, and guides the reader through the material with a sure hand, it is the most successful example of the "writing against culture"

genre I can think of. It is highly recommended to anyone who would be interested in listening into the discourses of real people living in the midst of a changing society.

By rendering the social and cultural differences between "them" and "us" transparent, Newcomb's method privileges the universal humanity that unites them and us. But because the distinctive configurations of Moroccan institutions and practices do not stand out in relief (this being the characteristic of transparent things), it makes it problematic for a reader who, having absorbed the paradoxes and ambiguities, comes to seek some sort of analytical grasp over the institutions and systems that reproduce the cultural practices in question. There are possibly those who can finish Newcomb's book and say, "Well, so that's the way it is" and be content. As for myself, I was looking forward to the "conclusion" chapter switching voices to leave the reader with some takeaway insights and conclusions (in the logical sense) about gender and the reproduction of power relations, and I was a bit disappointed that it was mainly a reprise of the method. In the end, the *mudawwana* largely fizzled out, and even Newcomb has to resort to terms like *patriarchy* to explicate the larger patterns of change-or-continuity. What others might have seen as the persistence of ("exotic") customs, Newcomb recasts as "nostalgia."

In other words, although the book provides us with much a wealth of material to analyze, it does not take us far down the analytical path. However, one cannot fault a book for being what it does not claim to be. Rachel Newcomb's book is an outstanding example of its genre and a welcome addition to the Moroccan ethnographic literature.

**One Homeland or Two? The Nationalization and Transnationalization of Mongolia's Kazakhs.** *Alexander C. Diener.* Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2009. 405 pp.

**EDWARD SNAJDR**

John Jay College, CUNY

Between 1991 and 2001, some 60,000 Kazakhs living in Mongolia migrated to the Republic of Kazakhstan. This large movement of people—most of whom were from the Mongolian Kazakh enclave of Bayan Olgi—followed in the wake of a massive out-migration of ethnic Russians, Germans, and Ukrainians from newly independent Kazakhstan in the first few years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Referred to as Oralmandar (returnees) by their Kazakh hosts, the experience of these migrants has been mixed. Some willingly took up cattle herding in Kazakhstan's rural oblasts despite their having advanced education and little experience with animal husbandry.

Others found themselves unemployed and culturally isolated amidst the bustle of urban and largely Russified communities such as Almaty. By 2001, some 10,000 Oralmandar gave up their quest to live in their “true homeland” and returned to Western Mongolia.

In this well-researched study, Alexander Diener brings together a wide variety of methods to understand how the various facets of Central Asia’s politics, history, and geography have figured in the migration story of Mongolia’s Kazakhs. For example, while the Kazakhstani government acknowledges being ill-prepared to absorb these returnees, the state was instrumental in inviting Oralmandar “back home” during the emergence of ethnonational sentiment at the beginning of the 1990s. At the same time, competing visions of the nation-state in Mongolia offered little sense of security for many of the country’s Kazakh minorities. Diener keenly probes what happens to these communities and their conceptualizations of place and space when the supranational Soviet identity vanishes into the past. Discourses of primordial kin ties to Genghis Khan, ethnic pluralisms, civic cosmopolitanisms, and neotraditionalisms comprise the colorful tapestry of postsocialist identity politics in both countries. But crucial to understanding these emerging constructions of identity are the important facts of geography, topography, unemployment, natural resources, and international geopolitical relationships in an uncertain global system.

To examine these, Diener divides the book into five sections, each addressing key segments of the migration saga including the origins, conflicts, and the compromises involved in the movement of diaspora peoples in the region. In parts 1 and 2, which cover first theory, then history, Diener writes beyond Appadurai’s theoretical concept of “ethnoscapes,” challenging the notion that “a world of places and boundaries is giving way to a world of flows.” Instead, deterritorialized people are reterritorialized, configuring new meanings of homeland and place. Through concepts such as “stretching the homeland” and “scale jumping,” readers learn about the dynamics of placemaking that involve skipping the state as a vital component of identity construction.

While Diener’s thorough reviews of theories on nationalism and on the historical background of the Central Asian steppe are outstanding in their own right, they provide the framework within which to understand the more detailed case studies of nationalization projects in Mongolia and Kazakhstan and the experience of Mongolia’s Kazakhs in each of these domains. Thus, in part 3, Diener provides a fascinating discussion of the different ethnic identities in Mongolia—from the Khalka core to the much smaller Buryat and Uriangkhai communities—and their various political, religious, and economic constructions and contemporary expressions. We learn about the competing eth-

nonational and civic-territorial discourses of belonging in postsocialist Mongolia and how ethnic diversity either supports or confounds these tendencies. Readers also discover the surprising role that Khalka hegemony—targeted toward other Mongol *ethnie*—plays in maintaining and defining the country’s Kazakh minority. At the same time, Diener describes the manifestations of ethnonationalism in Kazakhstan—a state in which Kazakhs themselves comprised a minority during the socialist period—and the government’s strategies to both promote and temper this ideology throughout the 1990s. Part 4 introduces the experience of those who become Kazakhstan’s Oralmandar and traces the trajectories and politics of their migration story. For example, claims by ethnic Russians that Kazakhstan’s policies of returnee resettlement are really thinly veiled missions to push out the state’s European nontitular peoples are challenged with demographic data showing no such systematic effort. Equally fascinating is the politics of reterritorialization of Oralmandar who decide to go back to Mongolia. The Mongolian Kazakh community to which they return posits—with a Geertzian irony—that Mongolia’s Kazakhs are closer to a pure Kazakh *ethnie* in terms of the preservation of traditions and language. Whether this community can fully participate in the newly emerging democratic Mongolia as coequals remains to be seen, but the conarratives of placelessness and authenticity generated within this geopolitical space nevertheless provide a replacement for the primordialist discourses of so-called Russified Kazakhs.

In part 5 Diener concludes that although most Oralmandar have made the move to Kazakhstan permanent, they will likely continue to be “outsiders” lacking full integration into their homeland and, thus, become more “deterritorialized than their kin remaining in Mongolia.” The complicated case of these Kazakh returnees challenges us to consider homelands and ethnonational identities as highly malleable and constitutive, particularly in terms of the sociospatial dynamics on which identities are established, nurtured, and threatened.

This is a rich study that smartly incorporates demographic, archival, and ethnographic material to understand the specificities of liminality in the contexts of placemaking and place changing. Symbols, subsistence, and social structures all fall under the lens of Diener’s inquiry, which shows us how particular migrations are far more complex than simply an account of labor flows or political instabilities. The book includes over 80 helpful and informative tables and figures as well as a lengthy bibliography of sources in four languages (English, Kazakh, Mongolian, and Russian). It is a welcome addition to the growing social science literature that critically examines human movement across borders, boundaries, and the creation and maintenance of community in a world that itself continues to move unpredictably.



**Timely Assets: The Politics of Resources and Their Temporalities.** *Elizabeth Emma Ferry and Mandana E. Limbert*, eds. Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press, 2008. 288 pp., photographs, references, index.

**MICHAEL SHERIDAN**

Middlebury College

Its title and cover illustration (of oil derricks) notwithstanding, this book isn't exactly about resources, and it isn't exactly about time. The book is about depletion and scarcity, but not in the terms of sustainability science or neo-Malthusian analysis. Instead this volume (the product of a 2005 SAR seminar) argues that the way that a society imagines and constructs a resource involves a particular sense of time. It may be unfair to describe a book by what it is not, but potential readers should be aware that this book is more poststructuralist political ecology than environmental history. It is about "materialities" (not substances), "temporalities" (not time), "resource-making projects" (not resources), and "national projects" (not politics). This book (or perhaps I should say "this textual project") will appeal to readers seeking examples of scholars who question positivistic assumptions of resources and time. It does not, however, offer a clear framework for doing so, insisting rather that analysts appreciate the variable "instabilities" of these concepts. Readers who are less concerned with the opposition of human subjects and nonhuman objects should read elsewhere in political ecology.

The book's introduction sets out the editors' vision of how resources relate to time: "to define something as a resource is to suspend it between a past 'source' and a future 'product'" (p. 6). Resources also appear to be suspended between nature and culture, and although Lévi-Strauss does not appear in the bibliography and index, his structuralism is evident throughout. Ferry and Limbert do not, however, keep the reader in suspense about how they constructed the text. The chapter sequence moves from tangible resources-as-objects (oil, silver, and wildlife) to more abstract discourses-as-resources (biodiversity, bureaucratic categories, and nonexistent historical documents). Mandana Limbert's chapter on oil depletion in Oman discusses how both the Omani government and ordinary citizens create and experience doubt and uncertainty about how long the oil will last. Instead of a modernist "teleology of progress," Omanis have experienced an ever-looming (and never quite happening) crisis of oil depletion "within 20 years" (for longer than 20 years). Elizabeth Ferry shows how the ore from a Mexican silver mine is perceived as an ahistorical and decontextualized "nonrenewable natural resource" when it is used for industrial applications but not when it becomes a mineral specimen with a particular provenance in a collection. Silver therefore ac-

quires different temporalities depending on its social context. In the fourth chapter, Paul Nadasdy shows the "working misunderstanding" between First Nations people and Canadian bureaucrats about the status of wildlife as "renewable resources." Although these groups are bound together by community-based conservation programs, they have contradictory concepts about hunting. The bureaucrats discuss wildlife hunting in agricultural terms based on "cyclical time" (as crops being harvested on an annual basis), while Yukon First Nations people experience "circular time" through rituals that make each kill a reenactment of the same mythic hunt. Standard scientific wildlife management practices, such as catch-and-release fishing, are embedded in "homogeneous empty bureaucratic space-time" and, therefore, disrespectful to the animals from a First Nations perspective.

The subsequent chapters shift away from objects to discourses. Celia Lowe's chapter on biodiversity in Indonesia discusses how supposedly value-free biological data becomes nationalized. Scientific data is therefore embedded either in the "temporality of evolutionary process" or the "specificity of Indonesian history" (p. 112). A chapter on the history of exploration in southwestern China compares colonial science with the geographic ritual cosmology of the Naxi people. Erik Mueggler argues that the epistemological divisions between nature and society, and subject and object, were "deformed" in the encounter between rhododendron-crazed British scientists and their Naxi research assistants who patiently collected botanical resources. A chapter based on student work at the University of Virginia describes how minority students become resources for American universities' promotion of diversity. Courtney Childs, Huong Nguyen, and Richard Handler present a Marxian analysis of institutional efforts to promote racial diversity and argue that diversity policies based on having "clear communication" about the "personal experiences" of racism tend to disguise and mystify political and economic inequalities instead of solving them. Paul Eiss's chapter on the spatial and social unit of "el pueblo" in the Yucatan reviews the history of land tenure and social categories in rural Mexico since the Spanish conquest. He shows that notions of community identity emerge from narratives of dispossession and loss, so the lack of land, trees, and gold is itself a resource for social construction. In the final chapter, on the lack of historical documents in Indonesia, Karen Strassler addresses Indonesian anxieties and hopes that key archival records could become resources for the production of a new, post-Suharto political culture. Saying that "documents are good to think" (p. 217), she describes Indonesian controversies about determining the "real" history of the postcolonial state, which therefore demonstrates the "instability of history."

I came away from the book with a sense of skepticism and doubt rather than an illuminating sense of suspension

and instability. Many of these authors balance general theoretical assertions atop thin ethnographic foundations, which in turn are often weakly buttressed by a scarcity of scholarly resources (data). Limbert shows how offhand remarks by three Omanis constitute commentaries on the instability of modernity. Ferry writes more about the symbolic contrast of “corporeal” mines and “corporate” mineral collections than the miners and collectors. Lowe discusses how the recent discoveries of *Homo flores* and a coelacanth show that science is not value-free in Indonesia, but this struck me as an example of straw man demolition without enough straw. Mueggler supports his argument by suggesting what he thinks the botanists’ Nazi assistants *might* have thought about collecting rhododendrons in the early 20th century. Strassler’s chapter is based primarily on journalism and its readers, so the analysis both describes and practices the clipping of newspaper articles to produce a pastiche of worries about the lack of evidence in Indonesian historiography. Overall, I found that much of this book follows a pattern of using minute ethnographic details to launch general theoretical riffs on time and the distinctions of nature–society and subject–object. The links between evidence and assertion are as unstable as the subjects being riffed on, making me wonder if this is “ethnogrifting” rather than ethnography. This book will interest scholars of poststructural political ecology, but it is unlikely to attract a mainstream readership.

**Rave Culture: The Alteration and Decline of a Philadelphia Music Scene.** Tammy L. Anderson. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009. 231 pp.

**AMY C. WILKINS**

University of Colorado, Boulder

Most academic readers probably haven’t been to a rave but have heard the hype. Raves are castigated—or occasionally celebrated, depending on one’s perspective—as spaces in which ecstasy-popping young people dance all night to electronic dance music (EDM), sucking on lollipops and pacifiers. But there is more to raves than this. For Tammy Anderson, the music and community—an ethos known as PLUR (peace, love, unity, respect)—found in traditional raves are emotionally transformative. In *Rave Culture*, Anderson takes the reader on a romp through the Philadelphia rave scene, with brief stops at a range of rave venues as well as detours to London and Ibiza, Spain. The breadth of Anderson’s ethnography provides outsiders with a panoramic view of rave culture, and conveys its dynamism and diversity. At times, this breadth comes at the cost of greater intimacy. I would have liked to know more about (at

least some of) the many people and places we encounter in the book. I was also curious about how Anderson chose the voices she represents in the text. The majority of rave participants are white, but many of the texts’ informants are not.

Anderson’s goal is to explain why and how the Philadelphia rave scene has changed, and to speculate about subcultural change more broadly. She begins this project by showing us that not all raves are the same. The underground, informal, warehouse parties that many of us imagine when we think of raves have been transformed into a diffuse group of more commercialized, organized events in formal clubbing venues. What these parties have in common is their use of EDM, but even this broad musical category splits into a number of genres and has been changed, she shows, by commercial interests that encourage different kinds of musical production and consumption. For example, formats on popular radio stations have created a demand for shorter pieces, supplanting a previous emphasis on long, complicated pieces. This change, Anderson explains, is not just about length but also about the music’s emotional impact and the DJ’s role.

In chapters 2 and 3, Anderson divides the various rave parties and their participants into typologies, pinning them to a continuum between “authenticity” and “commercialism.” Take for example, the “weekly,” which is a party that recurs, as the name implies, every week. Such parties fall in the middle of Anderson’s continuum, boasting some of the qualities of authentic raves, such as a “vibe” of “intimate solidarity,” but few of the organizational features. Like other (non-EDM) club nights, weeklies shut down at 2 a.m., rather than going all night, participants are unlikely to wear rave fashions, but instead don a more casual, alternative style, and so forth. Scene participants also vary in their adherence to “authentic” rave culture; for example, a number of people—Anderson calls them “other party people”—attend events for the party but without a commitment to either the music or the values of the rave scene.

Anderson contends that the rave scene has transformed rather than declined (although throughout one gets the sense that she really thinks it has declined). Moving beyond single-pronged causal arguments, she argues that changes in the scene emerge from interactions between a range of factors, including generational differences, state intervention (via, primarily, the 2003 Rave Act), scene fragmentation, commercialization, and cultural elements of the scene itself. These elements work together to encourage and discourage particular patterns of participation and to support some styles of parties to the exclusion of others. I was particularly interested in her discussion of the effect of generational differences on scene participation. Part of the problem in sustaining the scene is that the long hours and heavy drug use interfere with other adult obligations, such as work and family. Participants thus “age out.” At the same

time, the scene has not successfully recruited a new generation of participants; Anderson attributes this both to the cultural ascendance of hip-hop and to a moral panic about drug use associated with the rave scene. Accounts of the scene's failure to renew itself through a new generation of participants, while convincing, come largely from the speculations of older participants and not from the younger generation themselves.

Anderson further tests her theory of cultural change by taking us to the rave scenes in London and Ibiza, Spain. In contrast to Philadelphia, raves are thriving in both European cities. She attributes these distinct patterns to both structural and cultural differences. For example, she finds that drug use is not only less culturally stigmatized in London and Spain but is also treated as a public health rather than a criminal problem. These differences reduce the social, personal, and health costs of drug use and make it easier for older adults to sustain participation.

Anderson notes that what it means to be "authentic" is determined, in large part, by who you ask, but she nonetheless uses the concept of "authenticity" as a way to organize the book's material. Authentic raves are characterized by, among other things, an informal, underground organization, DJs who spin a range of musical genres and interact with the crowds, lots of dancing, illegal drugs, water consumption rather than alcohol, and, most importantly, to Anderson, "PLUR." For Anderson and other rave "loyalists," the PLUR ethos is central to the appeal of "authentic" rave culture. It is clear that she laments the diffusion of PLUR in emerging scene segmentation and corporatism. I am more skeptical about claims to PLUR than she is, perhaps because I have not experienced the kinds of connection and emotional transformation that she describes. In my own research on Goths, however, I found that participants boasted about a similar ethos but that these descriptions often contradicted observed race and gender dynamics within the scene (see Wilkins 2004, 2008).

Anderson's inclusion of her own experiences in the text leads her to describe the book as an autoethnography, but I think this claim is misleading. Anderson was certainly a participant, as well as an observer, in the rave scene she chronicles, but *Rave Culture* is not about Anderson. *Rave Culture* should be of interest to scholars and students interested in youth cultures and broader issues of cultural change.

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**Sex at the Margins: Migration, Labour Markets and the Rescue Industry.** *Laura María Agustín.* London: Zed, 2007. 248 pp.

## LORRAINE NENCEL

VU University Amsterdam

Laura Agustín's book is an excellent resource for students, researchers, and NGO workers who have ventured into the domain of working or researching "human trafficking." By simplifying her language and omitting internal text references, the author aims to make this book accessible for experts, academics, and extension workers. Academically, its merits can be sung for the way she managed to debunk existing myths about migration and sex work; identifying the problems, gaps, and silences in contemporary theories and by doing so, unclosing the fuzzy nature of migration for sex work in its diversity. Agustín argues and illustrates that sex work is one of the different but limited alternatives available for illegal migrants in Europe. She analyzes sex work within the group of service activities such as domestic help and personal care—showing that all these activities share similarities in regard to their exploitive and insecure nature. She sustains that sex work must be analyzed within the broader frame of migration theory to understand its complexity. This is one of the objectives of the book. Despite the similarities shared by these different activities, the multitude of studies published on migration and "human trafficking" have isolated sex work from other migration options constructing a separate category of victims that lack agency and autonomy. Agustín wants to understand how and why this occurs. The search for the answer to these questions guides her throughout the book. Finally, a personal motivation led her to this study, namely, being a sex work researcher and activist and previously working in NGOs working with sex workers and migrants, she wants to understand why the life of people who sell sex has not improved, in spite of organizations' efforts and the many studies dedicated to this goal.

The book opens with a short introduction presenting various vignettes that immediately contrasts sensationalist media representations of migrant sex workers with the actual motives for women choosing to migrate. These include economic motivations but places them side by side with migrants' desires for other things such as adventure and travel. From that moment on, the reader becomes aware that migrant women's motivations and experiences are diverse and cannot be represented homogeneously. The second chapter initiates the development of Agustín's theoretical argument. She defines a migrant as a traveler sharing a common process rather than identity with others. The chapter examines definitions such as labor migration and "feminization of migration," to show, for example, that female migration is not

a new phenomenon, criticizing studies that conceptualize the “feminization of migration” as a recent development. It zooms in on migrant sex workers and explains how “trafficking discourses” and the “rescue industry” define migrant sex workers as (trafficked) victims because of the way they leave their home countries and arrive to Europe, that is, through debt bonding. The chapter counteracts these theories of “trafficking” and highlights women’s agency. Using empirical quotes, a picture is painted that portrays migrant women generally to be aware of the consequences of debt bonding. A distinction is made between being aware of the consequences of debt bonding and finding oneself on arriving in Europe in exploitative and violent work conditions—this distinction is generally not recognized in the trafficking literature. In the third chapter, she follows the same road of analysis criticizing the use of concepts such as informal sector, the types of work that migrants do, and the position of sex work therein. She successfully analyzes sex work as a supply and demand relationship. Sex workers are depicted as individuals consciously offering services. The quotes used to illustrate clients’ motivations reveal that far from being deviant, clients perceive buying sex as a demand for a service.

Chapters 4 and 6 should be read together. By tracing in chapter 4 the historical development of “the rise of the social” in the 19th century, Agustín attempts to understand how the development of the philanthropic discourse that targeted the poor and particularly prostitutes in need of help, is reflected in contemporary discourses and initiatives of the “rescue industry.” The chapter illustrates that it was in this period that the “prostitute” as a stigmatized, victimized, morally weak identity was constructed. Chapter 6, based almost entirely on ethnographic fieldwork, dives into the world of governmental and nongovernmental organizations’ activities and documents and shows that even projects that distance themselves from antiquated labels such as the “prostitute,” replacing them with more neutral terms like sex work, do not escape from the 19th-century notions of prostitution and help.

Critical analyses of the “rescue industry” are few and hard to find. Agustín should be applauded for her originality and her willingness to put herself in a vulnerable position as researcher and activist. Still it is here, where certain weaknesses can be found. While the link between the 19th-century socially invented object “the prostitute” and the contemporary category of the prostitute or sex worker is analytically strong, the same does not hold true in relation to the development of 19th-century philanthropy and its connection to the contemporary “rescue industry.” Agustín expects the reader to accept this assertion, but the analysis would benefit by illustrating this link more explicitly. Perhaps this can be partially attributed to the fact that in chapter 6 the author loses her balance between herself as a re-

searcher and as an activist. Agustín’s report of her research findings expresses the irritation and annoyance she felt in the field while accompanying outreach workers. Although she rightfully concludes the chapter expressing the need for help organizations to be reflexive about their work, this conclusion is also applicable to the author. The researcher’s lack of reflexivity concerning her own reactions and position makes her theoretical claim concerning the relationship between 19th-century philanthropy and the contemporary situation less convincing. Nonetheless, after reading this book the reader will not be able to think, hear, or talk about migrant sex work and trafficking the same way again.

**Improvising Theory: Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork.** *Allaine Cerwonka and Liisa Malkki.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. 203 pp.

**KIRSTEN SCHEID**

American University of Beirut

The document is seven paragraphs long; the first five and the final paragraph discuss a body of theories and related literature. Paragraph number six, containing a mere tenth of the total word count, is the sole place for discussion of research method. The document is Allaine Cerwonka’s Fulbright application for her doctoral research into Australian nationalism. In its format the document mirrors the place given to methodology in the majority of ethnographies and graduate training programs alike. It is included in *Improvising Theory: Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork*, coauthored by Cerwonka and Liisa Malkki, but the larger volume physically inverts the theory to method ratio, and in upsetting the dominance and precedence of theory, makes a case for reconceptualizing the relationship between the “how” and the “why” of ethnographic knowledge.

An established scientific model for anthropology has assumed that theoretical perspectives should outline field methods and the definition of data in advance. Yet, historically, according to Joan Vincent (1990), innovations in anthropological theory have generally followed from innovations in fieldwork rather than the opposite. Further, a respected mechanism for critiquing anthropological claims is to reveal the moments in full-fledged ethnographies in which theory has overtaken data and produced totalizing accounts. Meanwhile, graduate students are continually astonished, and rightly disturbed, by how little their theory-heavy training prepares them for working in the field. Many a manual has been created to get the cart back behind the horse and help students navigate from well-justified

proposals to successful, publication-rich destinations. That is not the aim of *Improvising Theory*. Neither an apology for the messiness of fieldwork, nor a forewarned-is-forearmed account, the book is a concrete, convincing call for enriching cultural theory by developing precisely those aspects of fieldwork most frequently treated as problematic, such as the fluidity of the fieldwork, the impinging character of non-research relationships, and, most of all, the researcher's affective, often uncooperative self.

The bulk of *Improvising Theory* consists of a series of e-mail exchanges between Cerwonka and Malkki, extending over nine months of fieldwork. Chattily, the exchange details embarrassing nocturnal pub rounds, necessary billiard skills, awkward explanations of the research project, hostility in a handful of informants, recurrent stomach cramps, the agony of awaiting official permission, a grumpy partner, a negligent landlord, inconvenient schedules, an inauspicious nickname, and all manner of gritty personal experiences, all the way to the anxiety of carrying other people's secrets and the anguish of knowing that one's genuine care is accompanied by intellectual curiosity. Further, it is enhanced by beautiful prose, such as when Cerwonka describes how:

the pain and experiences of these people are catching my clothes like burrs might during a walk through the woods. . . . But today I am tired and raw. I am flustered and frustrated by the pieces of lives I feel. I want to lie down, but when I do, all the words and fragments of experiences I have gathered up from people in my field sites are there. [p. 99]

*Improvising Theory* is foremost an excursus on anthropological frames of thinking, and it is among the most readable discussions of theory this reader has encountered. Indeed, it often reads like a crime novel or a confession, with strong, sympathetic characters and gripping dilemmas expressed in conversational language, making it eminently accessible to students of all levels. The importance of this medium, however, is in how it serves as a means to the goal, which is not to humanize abstract knowledge-production or demystify ethnography—in fact, a semimystical quality remains to the extent that the reader realizes no recipe for success is on offer. Rather, in recreating the centrality of surprise encounters with the undisciplined “imponderabilia of everyday life” the text reveals what models of cultural practice gain when conceived of as eclectic and flexible processes of simultaneous data interpretation and data capture. Transcending the limitations of the Malinowskian field diary, *Improvising Theory* intertwines Cerwonka's experiences with Malkki's sometimes minute-by-minute advice and insight, grounded in her own fieldwork experience as much as in her daily life on the other side of the globe,

as well as in a set of books, films, and exchanges with other people. Thus, fieldwork is vividly set within a vast, irreproducible network of contingencies that generate the possibility of fieldwork and its understanding simultaneously and unceasingly.

The selection Cerwonka makes of field sites is a case in point. Whereas her funding application implies the field sites were known in advance, the e-mails show that Cerwonka remained uncertain about her sites until seven months into her fieldwork, and that her continued questioning of her choices shaped her understanding of national identity as practice rather than an entity. At first, Cerwonka thought to contact ethnic clubs she found listed in a phone book, but she was dissuaded by the bluntness of cold-calling. Several months later, Cerwonka responded to the recurrent themes of landscape, urban development, and indigeneity by joining a gardening club. She also began interviewing policemen, who seemed to make a strong social contrast with the genteel gardeners. Yet a few weeks on, she nearly canceled the cops, uncertain that talking to such mobile people would benefit her research and discouraged by her discomfort talking to them. The contrast in her personal experience of comfort with the gardeners and discomfort with the cops prompted her to question her own social categories, and from here she started to make stronger connections between the two groups as practices of relating land to identity, seeing their parallel movements through neighborhoods and the importance of their corporal, sensual connections to spaces of inhabitation. For the e-mail writing Cerwonka, these insights are moments of “serendipity” (pp. 76, 122–123), but their “real-time” recording in the e-mail exchange demonstrates clearly they are the result of Cerwonka's methodological suppleness that enabled her to attend, physically and intellectually, to unexpected patterns of living.

While the text tells little about Cerwonka's eventual analysis, *Improvising Theory* clearly demonstrates that knowledge is not a set of prepackaged findings like a list of clubs in a phone book. Rather, knowledge is “improvised”: it results temporarily from an interaction of affect, ethics, and empirical practices and contingencies that is neither wholly self-generated nor teleologically justified. The implications of this heuristic approach for fieldwork are tremendous, as it must become a process of heightening one's “flexibility to question and reformulate ways of understanding the world” (p. 23) rather than of narrowing understanding of a culture down to a single, most representative, right way. By definition, such fieldwork cannot be taught by example anymore than by admonition. However, *Improvising Theory* is saturated with practical and innovative suggestions toward its realization. The articulation of the relationship between theory and method is enriched by the interdisciplinary nature of the conversation, whereby the

cultural anthropologist professor finds herself compelled to explain the “weirdness” (p. 95) of her discipline’s sensibility to the political scientist graduate student. The conjoint, questioning character of the text makes it highly relevant for other disciplines that engage ethnographic methods, as well as for courses on anthropological theory, ethics, and methods.

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## Global Indigenous Media: Cultures, Poetics, and Politics.

Pamela Wilson and Michelle Stewart, eds. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008. 376 pp.

## KRISTIN DOWELL

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For visual anthropologists and scholars of indigenous media, the new collected volume *Global Indigenous Media* offers a long-awaited text containing insightful and sophisticated analysis by indigenous media producers and interdisciplinary scholars of indigenous media with critical attention to the culturally specific ways in which indigenous media are deeply entangled in indigenous politics, activism, aesthetic forms, and projects of identity formation. Indigenous media defined by the editors in the introduction as “forms of media conceptualized, produced and/or created by Indigenous peoples across the globe” (p. 2) is examined as a form of expressive culture rooted in local indigenous communities while also increasingly generating a large impact in national and global media industries. This impressive volume covers a wide range of genres of indigenous media from media produced in video collectives (chs. 3, 8) to community-based radio (chs. 6, 7), to animations designed to increase Native language learning (ch. 4), to cinema (ch. 2), and to television (ch. 12). The book provides wide coverage of the geographic scope of indigenous from the Inuit video collective Arnait in Nunvut (ch. 3) to activist media in Chiapas (ch. 8), and Maori cinema (ch. 2) to Sámi media (ch. 10). What is evident from these chapters is that indigenous media is an incredibly vibrant vehicle for indigenous cultural engagement and political articulation.

*Global Indigenous Media* addresses the struggles facing indigenous media producers as they navigate the national politics of the settler states encompassing them and the policies of national organizations that often provide funding, training, and distribution for their media. The schol-

ars in this volume do not shy away from addressing the complex ways in which indigenous media projects are enmeshed in the larger politics of defining and expressing indigeneity and highlight the ways in which media serve as a political tool for expressing indigenous sovereignty in response to settler state politics. Divided into four sections analyzing aesthetics and style, activism and advocacy, cultural identity, and new digital technologies, the authors in this volume cover an array of issues raised in the production and circulation of indigenous media. How are indigenous media rooted in the local tribal traditions and cultural aesthetics? How is media technology appropriated in ways that speak to the needs of local indigenous communities? What possibilities do media open up for the ongoing efforts of indigenous communities to maintain, document, and revitalize cultural traditions? How do indigenous filmmakers navigate the bureaucratic regimes of governmental organizations that fund indigenous media while maintaining cultural autonomy in the production process? Who is the audience for indigenous media and in what arenas does it circulate? How do changing digital technologies alter or impact the kinds of work produced by indigenous media makers?

These questions are deftly answered by the authors in this volume who pay close attention to the national and global ways in which these media circulate, while also providing an ethnographically grounded attention to the cultural and local specificities of this media. Indigenous media scholarship—largely pioneered by Faye Ginsburg, whose concluding chapter in the volume examines the critical engagement of indigenous media makers in the debates surrounding the “digital divide”—is an interdisciplinary field drawing from visual anthropology, communication studies, film and cultural studies, and Native American and Indigenous studies, and these diverse fields are represented among the scholars included in this volume. One of the significant contributions of this volume is the consolidation of this interdisciplinary scholarship into a single text that is an invaluable resource for scholars and teachers in any of these disciplines. This volume will be particularly useful for visual anthropologists who seek to include work on indigenous media into their courses.

A challenge to those of us who study indigenous media is that this scholarship is often dispersed, sometimes taking voice in more ephemeral places such as film festival catalogs and often housed in oral histories or memories of key figures and media makers in this movement. This volume presents key works on indigenous media and provides crucial information regarding the rich and in-depth history of the emergence of indigenous media. For example, Amalia Cordova and Juan Francisco Salazar’s chapter on indigenous video in Latin America contains a vivid description of the genealogy and history of governmental organizations, NGOs, and community-based organizations

that have impacted the development of indigenous media initiatives and video collectives throughout Latin America, while emphasizing the challenges facing indigenous media makers in Latin America and providing a significant cross-cultural comparison to indigenous media projects in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Likewise, Kathleen Buddle's chapter tackles the gendered politics within Aboriginal community organizations as urban Aboriginal women "feminize public political space" (p. 130) on the airwaves through their activist radio programming illustrating that Aboriginal media practices are not a singular entity, but inflected with internal cultural as well as gender politics. This chapter also illuminates the importance of grassroots media organizations in building a sense of identity and community among urban Aboriginal women.

While it is impossible in the space here to highlight all of the scholars featured in the volume, each chapter in its own way addresses the aim of the overall volume to highlight the goals of indigenous media makers and cultural activists who are "fashioning new technologies to articulate and negotiate the meaning of Indigeneity in the twenty-first century" (p. 23). One small critique of the volume is that while film festivals are mentioned briefly in a few chapters, I would like to have seen a chapter devoted exclusively to an ethnographic analysis of the importance of the ever-growing international indigenous film festival circuit and its impact on building and strengthening global networks between indigenous media makers. Venues such as the Sundance Institute's Native American and Indigenous Program, the ImagineNative Film and Media Festival in Toronto, the National Museum of the American Indian's Native American Film and Video Festival, and the Message Sticks Festival in Sydney are all vibrant and active sites where international indigenous media is showcased and connections are nurtured between indigenous media makers from around the world. However, this volume is a brilliant exploration of the complexities of indigenous media around the world that will undoubtedly become a seminal work in visual anthropology. I highly recommend it for anthropologists interested in questions of the politics and poetics of indigeneity, indigenous engagements with the national and global politics of settler states, questions of indigenous citizenship and sovereignty, as well as indigenous aesthetics and cultural traditions taking shape in new digital technologies. Indigenous media makers have produced remarkable works from critically acclaimed art house cinema to community-based documentation of local languages and oral histories. The scholarship represented in *Global Indigenous Media* makes it evident that indigenous media makers articulate sovereignty through visual and cultural forms by defining and expressing indigeneity on their own terms and supporting indigenous cultural autonomy on and off screen.

**Being a Buddhist Nun: The Struggle for Enlightenment in the Himalayas.** *Kim Gutschow.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004. 360 pp.

**SARA SHNEIDERMAN**

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Nuns in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition are subordinate to their male counterparts—from the Dalai Lama down to the youngest monastic initiate—because monks maintain a self-replicating upper hand in the gendered economy of merit that undergirds Buddhist life in the Himalayas. So argues Kim Gutschow in this important contribution to the anthropology of Buddhism, which challenges the dominance of such gender-determined structures of inequality by documenting them in vivid ethnographic detail.

Gutschow's description of the lives of Buddhist nuns in Zangskar, a mountainous region of India's Jammu and Kashmir state, reads as a matter-of-fact account of the material realities that lead to women's socioeconomic exclusion from the top levels of Buddhist institutional life in practice rather than as an abstract theological critique of Buddhism's ambivalence toward gender. This approach does much to "parse a middle way" (p. 220) through the polarized terrain of extant scholarship on Buddhist women, much of which falls into one of two camps: "those who seek to deconstruct Buddhism for its innate sexism and those who search to recuperate its most usable aspect" (p. 220). *Being a Buddhist Nun* adds substantively to our ethnographic knowledge of gender, economics, and kinship in the Himalayas and South Asia, as well as to theoretical debates over the relationships between theological ideals and institutional practice, ritual and social power, and economic and symbolic capital.

Despite a long-standing scholarly and popular interest in the lives of Tibetan Buddhist nuns, which has generated several articles and memoirs (i.e., Anna Grimshaw's 1994 *Servants of the Buddha*)—not to mention films, websites, and nonprofit projects—this is the first full-length ethnography to at once engage with Himalayan nuns' experiences in depth and situate them within a broader social field that extends beyond the nunnery walls. Hanna Havnevik's 1989 monograph focuses on the structure of a nunnery within a South Indian Tibetan refugee community but does not explore the questions of economic and familial relationality with the surrounding monastic and lay communities that comprise Gutschow's primary focus. For this reason alone, Gutschow's book will quickly become required reading for students of the anthropology of Buddhism and the Himalayas, as well as for students of comparative religion who seek to understand the social dynamics that shape Buddhist lives, both male and female.

Two initial chapters locate Gutschow's work within the broader fields of Buddhist and South Asian Studies,

respectively. The latter contains valuable ruminations on the pernicious role of caste within Buddhist communities that are often wrongly presumed to be egalitarian. It also argues for the value of engaging with individual Himalayan communities on their own historical and political terms, rather than collapsing them into the overused and underspecified rubric of “Tibetan societies.”

Chapters 3 and 4 on “The Buddhist Economy of Merit” and “The Buddhist Traffic in Women” contain the heart of Gutschow’s argument, and display her ethnographic and analytical skill at its best. She demonstrates how the Buddhist ideology of merit—which in theory does not discriminate between rich and poor because the spiritual value of generosity is supposedly calibrated to relative rather than absolute means—in practice leads to the consolidation of wealth among a privileged few, whom in the case of Zangskar are always men. Because monks are perceived as occupying higher-status positions than nuns (because of a complex set of historical, social, and theological conditions), laypeople perceive the former as more productive fields of merit and, therefore, concentrate ever greater economic and ritual power in the hands of the already highest status men.

This concentration of wealth leads, in turn, to a more or less capitalist accumulation of land, cash, and ritual resources, which require an obedient working class to maintain and reproduce. Enter the nuns, who, because of an embodied sense of gendered subservience that is reinforced by kinship practices in which women are objects of exchange, end up serving primarily as minimally educated, proletarian “support staff” that enable the monks’ bourgeois assertions of ritual power to proceed. In what might be the most difficult part of the argument for committed Buddhists to swallow, Gutschow argues that monks collude with laymen as full participants in the “traffic of women” through which female labor is expropriated from the natal home, with the only difference between wives and nuns being that the former serve their in-laws while the latter serve the monastic institution.

This argument deemphasizes the ostensibly celibate aspect of nuns’ lives, which Gutschow later suggests is one of the conditions that (when actually maintained) may enable nuns to transform their subservient position into one of relative freedom and education when broader social conditions allow. The final two chapters show how substantial recent funding from international sources, coupled with increased attention from the Indian state and visible public statements from the Dalai Lama about the need to improve nuns’ status, have led to positive changes in both the material realities of Zangskari nuns’ lives, and their self-perception as effective ritual agents. However, this transformation is far from complete, and Gutschow is explicit in her support of the ongoing agenda of nuns’ empowerment.

This otherwise admirable engagement poses one question that remains unresolved. Gutschow returns repeatedly to the concept of misrecognition, arguing, for example, that “the lay donors and monastics caught up in the economy of merit systematically misrecognize this concentration of wealth” (p. 17), while “the relations between nuns and monks appear to reflect a blatant misrecognition of monastic purity and power” (p. 159). If all this is indeed the case, one wonders why Gutschow is so keen to support women within an institutional structure that relies on a continued misrecognition of their own agency for its very perpetuation. In other words, Gutschow seems to accept that there is something inherently meritorious about participation in Buddhist practices—which simply require a rebalancing of power to rectify the partial misrecognitions described above—rather than viewing the entire complex of Buddhist belief as a large-scale misrecognition that may present much more intractable obstacles to the socioeconomic advancement of the women whose lives she is so clearly committed to enhancing.

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**So Much Reform, So Little Change: The Persistence of Failure in Urban Schools.** Charles M. Payne. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2008. 300 pp.

## MICAH GILMER

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Part memoir, part social scientific study, *So Much Reform, So Little Change* draws on personal experience, quantitative crunches, and rich qualitative contributions to demonstrate the ways the everydayness of struggling schools undermines potential for change. Deftly making use of Weberian theories of bureaucracy and his own understandings of interpersonal breakdown, Charles Payne demonstrates the way change is undermined by incomprehensible organizational infrastructure and the “sheer inability of adults to cooperate with one another” (p. 6). Likewise, he effectively and at times affectively demonstrates the futility of the way educational reform is generally approached by those across the political spectrum. According to Payne, “both liberals and conservatives have spent a lot of time pursuing questions of limited utility . . . What’s the right program for these schools? What’s the right way to teach? What’s the information we need to get to teachers?”



(p. 6). These questions, issues Payne's prior research has at times been focused on, he now asserts "are not such important questions when there isn't much likelihood of being able to implement any of them well" (p. 6).

Three decades of experience in ultimately unsuccessful educational reform have made him skeptical of the magic bullet programs education departments crank out like party flyers. In a litany that emphasizes both the flurry of educational activity and its limited returns, Payne runs down just a few of the recent efforts, from the "standards-based reform movement and the restructuring movement that preceded it" to

policies calling for the end of social promotion; the transfer of authority from traditional school boards to mayors; the complete or partial reconstitutions of failing schools; state takeovers of failing districts; the \$500 million investment of the Annenberg Foundation in improving schools; the National Science Foundation's attempt to reshape science and math education in the cities; the small schools movement, freshman academies, and other forms of personalization of the educational experience; calls for much more intensive forms of professional development and instructional support, including instructional coaching . . . dozens of comprehensive school reform projects. [p. 3]

While many of these efforts have been at least partially successful, Payne asserts they have failed to fundamentally transform the educational system because of the institutional and even interpersonal barriers he describes in detail. The impact of the aggregate of these factors are systems that are severely handicapped. The kind of systems whose Eeyoric tendencies "makes it likely they will fail to recognize good fortune even when it is beating them about the ears" (p. 61). Yet, while Payne goes as far as to literally compare these systems to "depressed individuals," an in-depth analysis of the emotional impact of teaching and educational leadership appears to be beyond the scope of his project. While he talks about the messy, at times mean-spirited actions of teachers and administrators, he doesn't spend very much time talking about the complex of emotions that lead to such destructive behavior other than to describe them as the product of dysfunction.

One poignant story in particular highlights both Payne's profound respect for the emotional impact of teaching, and his propensity to turn from raw emotion to thoughts, beliefs, and other less affective notions more commonly explored in social scientific literature. He recounts a post-Katrina story in which civil rights hero Jerome Smith commented on whether the plan to make New Orleans a charter-school bonanza would work. "Depends on the hearts of people running it," Smith said. While Payne rightly notes that this comment "cut through to a more profound way of thinking," his paraphrasing of the mo-

ment in a small way reintellectualizes the emotional importance, the heartwork Smith described. "The Big Magic isn't in the charters themselves," Payne asserts, "so much is in the thinking and understanding of the people who implement them, in the approach they take, in the values they hold dear" (p. 189).

This subtle but significant shift from "hearts" to "thinking and understanding" is all the more significant in light of Payne's own warning earlier in the text. "We have to be careful about all reforms that are essentially cognitive," Payne argues, "reforms which take the form of saying that we just need to get some particular information into the heads of people in schools, and that will make a fundamental difference. It is an ahistorical, apolitical way of understanding the world" (p. 63).

While Payne at times reverts to the intellectual terrain that a social scientist finds most comfortable, his effort is a refreshing attempt to bridge the disconnect between the idea-driven world of educational reform and the affect-driven world of educational practice. As such, *So Much Reform* . . . provides a seminal account that should be not just recommended but also required reading for anyone interested in education and change. Just as effective educational reform demands that we not create a fetish for the new, the sexy, and the cerebral, it also compels a reexamination of some of the oldest, most ordinary ways of engaging youth. After all, change is not about flashing lights, big speeches, or new ideas. It's about building communities of support, places that nurture good people to do the heartwork of transforming our world.

**"Brothers" or Others? Propriety and Gender for Muslim Arab Sudanese in Egypt.** Anita H. Fábos. New York: Berghahn, 2007. 160 pp.

**AMAL HASSAN FADLALLA**

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In *"Brothers" or Others?* Anita Fábos gives a fresh look into the predicament of displacement that Muslim Arab Sudanese exiles face in Egypt. Sudanese and Egyptian relations have long been shaped by colonial and postcolonial political realities. Despite the tensions created by colonial histories, sentiment and rhetoric of brotherhood during the decolonization and nationalization periods have offered possibilities of unity. Fábos takes these relations back in time to show how colonial and postcolonial sociopolitical ties have influenced Sudanese migration to Egypt. Just as the "brotherly" sentiment among the people of the Nile Valley granted Sudanese migrants semicitizenship rights in the past, recent political tensions between the two nation-states have rendered Sudanese "others" who live "outside state citizenship expectations."

The main theme of the book focuses on Fábos's identification of *adab*, or propriety, a gendered "marker of moral personhood" that constitutes modesty, hospitality, and other idioms as a practical strategy by which Sudanese migrants and exiles in Egypt assert both closeness to and distinction from Egyptians. Such idioms allow Sudanese "a margin of flexibility" through which they can negotiate their placement in exile as they resist Egypt's hegemony and reconstruct their transforming social identities. *Adab* goes further, however, to draw the boundary between Sudanese who claim rooted identities against Egyptianized Sudanese. As a gendered moral marker, *adab* stems from the geographical and cultural ties of Arabism and Islamism that are mapped on spaces and places such as homes, public transportation, and mosques. These spatially marked cultural intimacies facilitate the incorporation of Muslim Sudanese into Egyptian society and Egyptian neighborhoods. The very source of cultural and moral closeness, however, provides a rich base for northern Sudanese to contest Egyptian social practices as lacking *adab* and proper moral behavior. Thus, the author concludes, *adab* is an ambiguous category through which northern Sudanese seek to root themselves in Arab Muslim culture to protect themselves from the claims of otherness they encounter in Egypt.

Fábos deployed her own positionality as a dual Swiss American citizen and as a "Sudanese wife" to enter the Sudanese community and to learn northern Sudanese *adab* practices in Egypt. Her insider–outsider position allowed her to examine the identity dilemmas that Sudanese exiles encounter on a daily basis. Working as an NGO consultant also enabled the author to conduct her study and to collect most of her data among Sudanese in Cairo within the context of increasing NGO politics that geared toward providing services to displaced refugees. Sudanese elite in Cairo secured funding for these NGOs from different donors to create their own communal public spaces within which they could discuss urgent issues related to Sudanese cultural politics and the difficulties they face in exile. Through these public forums, northern Sudanese elite attempt to renegotiate their hegemonic northernness in ways that respect gender, racial, and ethnic differences. Such newly formed public spaces also offer opportunities where cultural practices associated with *adab*, such as generosity and hospitality, are "taken public." Issues of corruption, misuse of NGO funds, and inability to secure jobs, for instance, are negotiated within the context of *adab*. NGOs, according to the author, offer Sudanese intellectuals the opportunity to practice their "skills in respectable surroundings," freeing them from the restrictive labor laws in Egypt.

Although such analysis of a mobile population is needed more than ever, it seems that the author's methodologies have constrained her ability to capture the dynamics of such mobility. Reading through the chapters of the book, I felt the author's discomfort in trying to grasp the

constrained cultural dynamics displayed in the scattered spaces within which refugees tend to express their voices. The multiple identities of Sudanese in Cairo, the gender and racial politics through which they negotiate a new Sudan, and the role of the Egyptian nation-state and its exclusionary policies toward Sudanese refugees, can hardly be understood within a limited cultural category such as *adab*. Although it is an important cultural category that can offer a glimpse into the reconstruction of Sudanese identities in exile, it is not sufficient to attend to the cultural politics that guide Sudanese practices abroad. The analyses of *adab* seem confusing at times, and tend to constrain the fluidity of identity expression, while also obscuring the significance of the multiple hegemonies Sudanese exiles face. Giving the *adab* category such a powerful weight over other cultural and political categories and practices is limiting.

Although the author alludes to the different histories and class statuses of Sudanese migrants, expatriates, and exiles and their distribution in Egyptian neighborhoods, her study downplays the racial tension created through the reconstruction of *adab* practices in Egypt. In one example she shows how some northern Sudanese use *adab* and propriety codes to distance themselves from other Sudanese ethnic exiles and refugees. But such racial tension also manifests itself in Egyptian media representations of Sudanese and in Egyptian official attitudes toward northern Sudanese in general and refugee groups from Darfur and Southern Sudan in particular. The Mustafa Mahmoud riots—dubbed a massacre by diasporan Sudanese—which Sudanese in Egypt staged against maltreatment by the Egyptian state and the United Nation High Commission for Refugees in 2005, is a significant example. How do such representations and attitudes reflect official state discourses and practices? How do they shape the discursive practices of Sudanese and Egyptians on the ground? And how do such racial tensions and attitudes also differ by class and history of residence? All of these are important questions that warrant further research and examination. The focus on *adab* as a discourse of ideal practice also glosses over the different ways in which Sudanese in Egypt challenge these propriety codes or deploy them strategically in different settings.

Emerging anthropological research on diaspora and transnationalism offers new insights and methodologies to help situate the practices of mobile populations in both national and international political histories. The author's focus on how Sudanese intellectuals bring *adab* into NGO settings, for instance, is valuable in understanding the multiple meanings of place making and community building. Further research, however, is also needed to show how such meanings, at both NGO and community levels, are used to negotiate and challenge nativist practices of nation-states. The expanding neoliberal role of NGOs and their humanitarian and human right politics—and how it shapes

migrants' discursive practices—warrant further research in the Egyptian context.

This book is a welcome contribution to such anthropological debate and to the scant work on Sudanese transnational mobility.

**Afro-Atlantic Dialogues: Anthropology in the Diaspora.**

Kevin A. Yelvington, ed. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 2006. 501 pp.

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The chapters in Kevin Yelvington's edited volume *Afro-Atlantic Dialogues* work together to decenter a view of African diasporas that relies in one way or another on notions of cultural essentialism (as in earlier diachronic approaches). Instead, Yelvington develops an analytic approach that works through the framework of dialogue. As Yelvington argues in his introduction, this dialogic approach requires "a critical concern with the historical fashioning of anthropology's categories" (p. 4), and it necessitates, moreover, an "interrogation of the anthropological self as much as the nature of the Other" (p. 4). In other words, this is a volume that is as much about epistemology as it is about the various diasporas that constitute black worlds, and one that interrogates the ways movement, interaction, and creativity have influenced anthropological scholarship on Afro-America. The focus on epistemology here is framed in relation to the power dynamics and inequities within the discipline of anthropology and within the subfields of African American and Caribbean studies. By this, I mean that questions about what we see and don't see are explored as much in terms of global geopolitics as they are in relation to institutional hubris or individual gatekeeping. Thinking through what we know about any world area and why we know it inevitably reveals these sorts of dynamics, and it is this kind of critical endeavor that ultimately pushes us to understand the production of knowledge as a relational field shaped not only by the specifics of who went where, when, and how but also by the reasons underlying our interest in these movements in the first place. Not all the chapters, papers originally written for an SAR Advanced Seminar in 1999 titled "From Africa to the Americas: New Directions in Afro-American Anthropology," present ethnographic or historical material that is new. Instead, many take the long view on their own or their field's scholarship, revisiting persistent themes and, in some cases, missed opportunities. As a result, what stands out as the volume's critical contribution is this emphasis on epistemology and its ultimate advocacy of methodological strategies that cross the boundaries of discipline and territory.

The volume is divided into three substantive sections: "Critical Histories of Afro-Americanist Anthropologies," "Dialogues in Practice," and "The Place of Blackness." A fourth section, "Critical Histories/Critical Theories," consists of summary comments by Faye Harrison. Where the first section focuses on reenvisioning the theoretical frameworks that have been used to think through Black Atlantic worlds within anthropology and on developing the dialogue framework, the second provides examples of how this framework might look in action. Yelvington's exploration, in the first section, of the ways Melville Herskovits's social and intellectual relationships with scholars within the Caribbean (Jean Price-Mars, Fernando Ortiz, and Arthur Ramos) influenced not only the institutional development of the field of Afro-American Anthropology but also the careers of individual social scientists is particularly instructive in terms of how social networks and theoretical positioning are interrelated. His argument that the production of knowledge is transnational in scope, and that therefore the networks scholars forge with others working in and on regions also create dialogues that are integral to the shaping of fields, is echoed by Sally Price. Her chapter on how the visual arts have been conceptualized throughout the African diaspora over time notes that thinking across territorial, disciplinary, and classed-cultural boundaries within the art world has encouraged an approach to continuity that takes seriously levels of both material and social interaction that might shape similarity and difference across diaspora space. This issue is tackled in a somewhat different way by Richard Price, who revisits the controversies surrounding the publication of *Birth of African-American Culture* to argue that we must think "event" and "history" together with "discourse" and "ideology," and further that we must find innovative ways to represent these concepts simultaneously (p. 136), something the chapters in the second section successfully do.

Randy Matory, John Pulis, Joko Sengova, and Theresa Singleton each variously use historical, ethnographic, linguistic, and archaeological tools to think through how movements and circulations within diasporic space create new forms of cultural practice. They all also argue that parsing the particulars of these circulations must lead us not only to rethink origin narratives but also to reimagine some of our commonly held beliefs about creolization, syncretism, and transatlantic borrowing. Finally, the third section of the volume most explicitly addresses the public impact of what anthropologists do, although there are elements of this in all the chapters. Critically, here, the focus is on the relationships between place, race, and time, and on how the presences and absences of blackness within particular contexts—17th- and 18th-century New York City (Sabihya Prince); museum exhibits representing Puerto Rico (Arlene Torres); recent transformations in the relative salience of blackness and "Africanness" among

Afro-Colombian activists (Peter Wade)—reveal how nationalist narratives are framed in relation to racialized and classed social orders. In all three chapters it is not just representation that is at stake but also the ways representations might be used to buttress or debunk notions of cultural essentialism.

Throughout the volume, the main focus is on how best to interpret the relationship between creativity and continuity within the African diaspora, the issue that for the better part of a century has preoccupied scholars, artists, and social and political activists. In this way, *Afro-Atlantic Dialogues* privileges particular anthropological paradigms that have been dominant within the field but gives shorter shrift to some of the very important and transformative work that has characterized recent research within other disciplines. I'm thinking here especially of moves within historical and feminist scholarship to bring together the fields of transnationalism and diaspora studies to interrogate the ways diasporic dialogues shift over time, and of work in literary criticism that attempts to think through diaspora in relation to difference. In each of these bodies of literature, gender tends to hold greater space as an analytic category than it does in this volume (a point also made by Faye Harrison in her remarks), yet the emphasis on the constructedness of diasporic relations over time is similar. Moreover, Harrison's point that more attention should also be given to how "contemporary diasporic situations intersect and interplay" resulting in the development of "neo-racisms" (p. 384) is well taken, and more recent ethnographic work has also been more explicitly attuned to this issue. Overall, however, as both analytic exercise and polemical argument, *Afro-Atlantic Dialogues* is a theoretically, historically, and ethnographically rich collection well suited for both advanced undergraduate and graduate courses on the history of anthropology and the African Diaspora, as well as those dealing with issues related to race, nationalism, state formation, and empire.

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**The City's Outback.** Gillian Cowlshaw. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2009. 272 pp.

### EMMA KOWAL

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Gillian Cowlshaw is a major voice in Australian anthropology. Her previous three books have been widely read and have profoundly influenced the way social scientists think

about indigenous Australians' relations with the dominant society (Cowlshaw 1988, 1999, 2004), as have her many articles, chapters, and two edited collections. The current volume is no exception and also offers much to a general anthropological audience. Her books trace her career trajectory from the remote Aboriginal community Bulman in the Northern Territory, to the rural Aboriginal community in the New South Wales town of Bourke, and now to the urban Aboriginal community in Mount Druitt, an impoverished suburb in Sydney's west. Urban indigenous communities are where the majority of indigenous Australians live, but these communities have been of only marginal interest to anthropologists.

From the start, Cowlshaw is uncomfortable with urban ethnography. She describes entering the field only reluctantly, on the insistence of Frank Doolan, an Aboriginal activist-poet she knew from Bourke who now lives in Mount Druitt. In the urban setting, Aboriginal people live interspersed with their white neighbors, and most do not frequent Aboriginal organizations or "community" spaces. Frank helps her find Aboriginal research assistants, and she sets off recording the stories of Aboriginal people they introduce her to, stories of multiple generations of institutionalization, of families dispersed, of alcohol and jail, of struggles with the public housing authorities, of cruel foster parents, and of violent death. She transcribes them, prints them up nicely, and attempts to return them to her informants—an ethnographer's gift—although sometimes a deserted house of broken furniture was all she could find.

This is a remarkably honest book that sets out to be "quarrelsome and awkward" (p. 226) as a method of producing "ambiguous knowledge" (p. 12). Explorations of the shattered and sometimes resilient lives of Mount Druitt residents are interspersed with reflections on the themes that have preoccupied Cowlshaw throughout her career: whether the Aboriginal struggle for recognition can overcome the traps of marginality and authenticity and be a source of dignity and empowerment; why white sympathy and attempts at reparation are ineffective and, perhaps, harmful to indigenous people; and why some people are resilient in the face of structural violence and others seem trapped in a cycle of violence and helplessness.

Many of her thoughts on the page are an implicit process of comparison between Aboriginal people in Mount Druitt with those in rural and remote Australia, the sites of her previous research. This is a comparison that many non-indigenous Australians make, explicitly or in their mental processes, and her honest anthropological reflections get beyond both racism and the fear of being racist to ask more fundamental questions: How can we understand an Aboriginal community that does not appear to have a common culture? What does indigeneity mean in a place where some indigenous people perform it consciously for consumption, some disregard it, and some simply struggle to overcome a

legacy of marginalization? She shows, for example, how the attachment of progressive Australians to respecting “Aboriginal culture” and rejecting “assimilation” contributes to the experience of indigeneity at Mount Druitt as a lack of culture. The book also marks a shift in the anthropology of Aboriginal Australians that is increasingly drawing on the literature of social suffering to understand the contemporary Aboriginal condition (Cowlshaw mentions Bourgois, Scheper-Hughes, and Feldman).

Above all, the book is a meditation on ethnography, this strange profession of “loitering with intent in other people’s lives” (p. 221). She vividly depicts the mutual seduction of ethnographer and field site, as both make promises to the other and assess their options. The descriptions in “Finding Informants” (ch. 2) of the daily practices of urban ethnography and the negotiations between Cowlshaw and her co-researchers are great reading and a brilliant teaching tool. Her reflexive, somewhat self-deprecating style invites the reader to experience the necessary banality of ethnographic research and the challenge of conducting social analysis across a social divide:

Fieldwork is notoriously messy, fraught, painful and exhilarating, but it also entails serious boredom, and some days are “wasted” trying to find people, travelling to a cancelled event, sitting around listening to banalities and repetitions that must be endured, for they do have significance. One day I run into Mooney near the Emerton shops and he casually informs me that he is an alcoholic; I note a puffiness that mars his youthful good looks. He confides that he is after a young woman, one of a pair hanging around the open area where he and his mates are drinking. Perhaps his enviable freedom is also onerous, his pleasure seeking haunted by something darker, like a sense of futility. But then I would say that, wouldn’t I? [p. 130]

The ethics of producing knowledge about the other is a recurring theme of the book. From the outset, she takes issue with indigenous scholars who question the ability of nonindigenous researchers to know the indigenous other, locating both indigenous and nonindigenous scholars in the power structures of the academy that can be recognized but not avoided. At the same time, the effects of her whiteness and privilege on the knowledge she produces are the subject of frequent reflection, as the quote above illustrates. She is also attentive to what her identification with her informants may obscure, such as their commonalities with other marginalized ethnic populations in Mount Druitt.

One resolution she offers is the need for white anthropologists to study their own kind. The white people that interact with Aboriginal people (as partners, bureaucrats, and members of a reconciliation group) hover on the edges of the ethnography. Cowlshaw recognizes that these non-indigenous agents, which cannot be disentangled from in-

digenous lives, deserve anthropological attention, and her own “ambivalent reluctance” (p. 126) at taking on that task is the basis for further reflection on the anthropological attraction and repulsion toward the radically different.

Overall, *The City’s Outback* is an outstanding book about marginality and difference, and the contribution that anthropology needs to make.

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**The Language of Law School: Learning to “Think Like a Lawyer.”** *Elizabeth Mertz*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. xvii + 308 pp.

## HADI NICHOLAS DEEB

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Elizabeth Mertz’s *The Language of Law School: Learning to “Think Like a Lawyer”* is a compelling account of the training that socializes thousands of students a year into a profession whose role in ordering social relations can hardly be overstated. Whether the reader’s own field is anthropology (or another social science), education, or law, Mertz’s layered analysis tacks between the familiar and the new to build a thorough case for how the linguistic dynamics of first-year legal education transform both social context and students. She then examines that transformation for what it means—for better and worse—in light of the political economy of democratic capitalism and the diversity of university status, geography, teaching experience, race, and gender in the United States. These two main parts (2 and 3, respectively) are bookended by an introduction concerning theory and methods and a capstone conclusion that revisits, from a solidly anthropological point of view, the importance and complexities of context.

Mertz’s first main argument expands on and integrates shorter pieces previously published to demonstrate how first-year contract law course professors impart a core language ideology that imbues legal texts simultaneously with supreme authority and fundamental contestability. By example and by pedagogic coercion in classroom discussions of case law—Mertz deftly unpacks how even professors with informal styles still orient toward a legendary ideal type of Socratic dialogue (think *The Paper Chase* or *Legally Blonde*)—professors teach students that what matters is an

ability to run the underlying social context of a case through the “metalinguistic filters” (p. 62) of legal doctrine and procedure continuously until (and even after) an authority pronounces. Through roleplaying and other deictic and voicing maneuvers, professors sediment this “reading like a lawyer” into “thinking like a lawyer” (p. 97) in their charges’ own legal personae.

This analysis is powerful and powerfully supported. A phalanx of legal scholars has exposed the various ways that law does violence to human experience. But Mertz demonstrates precisely how the discursive mechanisms so central to effectuating law are reproduced incipiently. To do so, she deploys detailed transcripts of an entire semester of eight first-year contracts classes, supplemented by interviews.

Mertz shows convincingly that the filtering process of law school talk meshes with an ambient microeconomics-derived rational actor model to shape students’ vision of themselves and the parties they ventriloquize as primarily—even solely—strategic, preference-maximizing agents. (I would embrace her circumspect suggestion that this marriage is not limited to the subject matter of contracts.) Important questions about epistemology—a term Mertz prefers as more encompassing than power—are erased in the process, although Mertz is careful to note that both textual mutability in law and market commodification in capitalism can also liberate by disciplining bias.

One question to pursue is whether or not this compatibility is accidental or historically unique. In my own contracts course during the exuberant heyday of the “economic analysis of law” a decade ago (Mertz does not provide data collection dates but based on earlier articles they appear to be the 1990s), a classmate disposed of a hypothetical by smartly asserting that a man with a gallon of water in a desert can rightly charge a thirsty wayfarer as many thousands as the market will bear. As Mertz points out, the kind of analysis and counterarguments that anthropologists and their colleagues in other disciplines (not excluding economics itself) would marshal would have been characterized immediately as secondary so-called policy, not pristinely legal, considerations. This vise is particularly tight under the current intellectual regime, but what might it share with, say, Robert Cover’s (1975) account of the silencing of abolitionist judges by positivist formalism in the 19th century, itself perhaps a strand of modernity’s scientific discipline of discursive rectitude, or with more ancient dilemmas of law and undemocratic power?

In the second main piece of the book, Mertz asks whether the force of law school discourse has a racial or gendered dimension. The small sample of eight professors affords her only tentative generalizations, such as that the key factor in increasing participation by students of color seems to be whether their professors also are of color (it was not clear whether racial classification was made through self-identification or observation, each of which might bear

differently on the findings). Several hundred students permit a more substantial quantitative and qualitative analysis. Mertz’s principal conclusion that white male students dominate participation may be unsurprising.

However, Mertz seems less comfortable using the essentialism-prone categorizations of race and gender necessary to engage the existing literature on pedagogy than prying from them striking findings by means of the subtler linguistic analysis in the earlier part of the book. For example, women tend to participate more in longer than shorter question-and-answer sequences, which suggests that the more formal (and traditional) a teacher’s method, the greater is female participation. Mertz discusses the nuances; the bottom line is that the “fine-grained” (p. 209) analysis she painstakingly undertakes through linguistic anthropology can both bolster and undermine received wisdom.

Another question to explore further, then, is whether (and how) the distortion of such subtleties in students’ experiences articulates with that of the subject matter of specific issues and cases as both are run through the metalinguistic filters of law school. Law students will become advocates, judges, legislators, educators, parents, and members of communities. How might socialization and legal analysis intertwine to reproduce the enduring contentiousness, both in legal reasoning and society at large, of icons such as *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Roe v. Wade*, as well as many other casebook entextualizations, in ways more complex than a categorical lens of race or gender reveals? This longitudinal process is worth investigating to understand better the danger of “alienation: of legal decision making from ethics and of lawyers from socially shared values” (p. 220) and, normatively, to defend the democracy that Mertz endorses from strangulation in one of its own cribs.

In my first week of law school, my property law professor recited the influential jurist Karl Llewellyn’s (1951) verse for first-year students, *The Bramble Bush*, in which a man scratches out his eyes in thorns and then scratches them back in again with more. *The Language of Law School* pins down the ideological patterns and force of this proud allegory for learning to think like a lawyer. One criticism is that Mertz’s own language consistently relegates “morality” to extralegal context, although the bramble bush of socialization that Mertz penetrates itself is indexed to moral inflections—again, for better and worse. The understandably expedient shorthand is qualified in a note that acknowledges that the referentialist pretensions to neutrality of legal ideology in fact are value laden, but it leaves itself open to a reading that reinforces that ideology.

*The Language of Law School* would be a solid addition to anthropology courses and studies about education and socialization, as well as those that address areas permeated by U.S. legal perspectives, including power, institutions,

globalization of various kinds, finance, and economics. It also offers rich mines for future research to plumb, among them the questions noted above, the theoretical possibilities for interdiscursive dialogue, a corpus of institutional talk to enhance microdiscursive systematization, and an enticement to incorporate embodied and environmental semiotics with the linguistic dynamics. This book on legal pedagogy itself deserves a place in the curricula of anthropology, not to mention education and law, and of graduate programs.

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**Land of Beautiful Vision: Making a Buddhist Sacred Place in New Zealand.** Sally McAra. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007. 208 pp.

### JONATHAN H. SHANNON

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In *Land of Beautiful Vision* Sally McAra explores how a community of Buddhist converts organizes itself in contemporary New Zealand. She asks, how do people imagine and reimagine their connections to place in an era marked by mobility and nomadic subjectivities? What is the role of settler history in forming the conjuncture of white (Pākehā) and indigenous (Māori) spiritual traditions and relationships to place in modern New Zealand? What is the role of material culture in negotiating the vernacularization of a universalist spiritual tradition? She addresses these and other issues through a compelling mixture of narrative analysis, reflexive ethnography, and historical research to present a thorough picture of the contradictions as well as hopes involved in the creation of a community of Buddhist practitioners in New Zealand. In the process her study sheds light on what happens to the people and the locale to which Buddhism is brought, as well as what happens to Buddhist practices when transplanted into a New Zealand spiritual landscape already inhabited with spirits and a charged history of colonial and postcolonial transformations.

Chapter 1, "A New Tradition," situates the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (referred to throughout somewhat infelicitously as FWBO) in the context of Buddhist practices in Europe and Asia. She traces the origins of the

group in the British convert Sangharakshita (né Dennis Lingwood) and its subsequent growth to become among the largest Buddhist communities in Britain. The order is steeped in notions of personal growth and self awareness as pathways to Enlightenment, befitting, as the author notes, the high modernist character of many groups competing in the contemporary spiritual marketplace. The author includes herself in this chapter as a fellow seeker, a fourth-generation "Pākehā" (European New Zealander) who maintains an open and eclectic attachment to Buddhist practice and was for a time a member of the FWBO group.

In chapter 2, "Unplugging from the Grid," McAra outlines the character of religious practice and the role of Buddhism in New Zealand, then traces the complex arc of the establishment of the FWBO community center called Sudarshanaloka outside of the city of Auckland. She reveals the contradictions inherent in the plan to create a space of spiritual transformation in a land already inhabited by indigenous spirits. For the FWBO members, the relationship with the land is both central to their creation of a spiritual home and a highly charged arena for playing out colonial and postcolonial tensions in New Zealand society. These themes are further explored in chapter 3, "A Spiritual Home," which examines the sometimes tense relationships between the FWBO centers in Britain and New Zealand, and between European New Zealanders (who often self-identify as Pākehā) and indigenous New Zealanders (Māori), especially in terms of their relationships to place and the larger question of whether Pākehā can ever truly be considered as "natives." Thus, Sudarshanaloka becomes a locus for struggles over what it means not only to be a Buddhist in New Zealand but also a Pākehā because most Buddhist in New Zealand are of settler background. McAra implies that in many ways the assertion of a national Pākehā identity through attachment to the land—a form of settler indigenization—is a direct response to Māori attempts to reclaim their rights to the land. The FWBO center thus becomes a site for the negotiation of these contradictions.

The heart of the text lies in chapters 4 ("Unsettling Place") and 5 ("The Stūpa Is Dhardo"). Here McAra explores the spiritual and ecological sensitivities of the growing community. Her argument centers on the establishment of Sudarshanaloka and the reconceptualization of the land as Buddhist space. Given the despoiling of the land in colonial and postcolonial times, the FWBO group saw the dedication of their center as a way of healing both the land and those who practice there. Her thick description of the local spiritual ecology and her analysis of narratives of belonging and emplacement reveal the numerous contradictions of transplanting a universalist practice into a context of highly localized spirits and ecologies. One striking paradox arises from the juxtaposition of narratives of ecological sensitivity with the use of heavy machinery to develop the area and

open it to users. She argues that talk about spirits and healing of the land is possibly an attempt by FWBO adherents to justify and legitimate their existence there—to indigenize themselves and their spiritual practice. Her discussion of the construction of a massive *stūpa* on lands containing sacred logs and animated by Māori spirits shows both the importance of material culture in Buddhist practice and ideology, and the social efficacy of the *stūpa* in transforming the community and anchoring participants to the land. The *stūpa* was the focal point of their efforts to both indigenize their practice in New Zealand and to differentiate themselves from the FWBO centers in Britain.

Both of these themes are explored in greater detail in chapters 6 (“Interanimation”) and 7 (“‘Re-Visioning’ Place”), which document the FWBO community’s efforts to construct a “land of beautiful vision,” a sacred place for both them and Māori spirits. Drawing on Victor Turner, Barbara Myerhoff, Keith Basso, and others, McAra shows how the transformation of the land effected a transformation of understandings of selfhood for the participants (herself included). Attentive to the contradictions this entails, McAra reflects on the limitations of the desire to belong, the risk of mythification of the community’s narrative, and how dreams of “transculturality” through religious bricolage always mask power dynamics and internal struggles for controlling the definition of place.

The book’s many strengths are its clarity of analysis and accessible style, making it appropriate reading for undergraduate courses in religious studies and cultural anthropology, and as a resource for advanced undergraduate and graduate students interested in the particulars of mobile communities of faith and issues of transnationalism, the materiality of signs, and reflexive ethnography. This reader would have hoped for a more integrated study of the role of gender in forming the order, and how that originary dynamic was transplanted and transformed in the context of New Zealand societies, both Pākehā and Māori, having different ideologies, especially when it comes to the concept of stewardship of land and ecosystems. Nonetheless, this volume will be a welcome addition to the growing (and often politically fraught) conversations about the role of religion and spirituality in contemporary society.

**Networking Futures: The Movements against Corporate Globalization.** Jeffrey S. Juris. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008. 378 pp.

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While there have been various thought pieces on the new conditions for ethnography in a globalizing world, the new

forms are still emerging from studies whose inherently supralocal questions are requiring its researchers to engage fieldwork in innovative ways. *Networking Futures* is an attempt to climb inside transnational activist networks animated by anticorporate and related ideologies. The self-consciously global scope of these movements is reflected in their attempt to, in the words of the People’s Global Action (PGA) slogan, broaden their struggle to “be as transnational as capital” (p. 7). Juris seeks to describe this ambition as an experiential narrative of “direct action” (principally protests), and in terms of an organizational sociology of how members of key organizations debate and, thereby, shape the activist networks that constitute the very existence of the larger movements.

Juris introduces himself as a “militant ethnographer,” meaning that his work is “not only politically engaged but also collaborative” (p. 20). He wishes his work to be useful to activists, whose company he shared as compatriot for more than two years between the World Trade Organization (WTO) protests in Seattle in 1999 and the anti-corporate globalization movements out of Barcelona in the early 2000s. This position is less remarkable for its giving rise to political bias, of which I anticipated much more than I found, than for the excellent access it conferred on the ethnographer. The author’s sympathy to the organizational challenges of the activists’ movements—much more explicitly than to their ideological purposes, which is hardly discussed—permits the reader insight into an unusual dimension of activist life, namely, how they solve the problem of horizontal, democratic expansion of their organizations without turning into mirror images of the hierarchical behemoths they wish perhaps most to oppose: governments and corporations. The contradiction is mirrored by the simultaneous aspiration to be both global and antiglobalizationist (at least in the current political economic iteration of it) at once.

The exposition of this organizational sociology from an insider’s perspective illuminates several praxiological features of the movement. In successive chapters the book reports on and theorizes from a tolerable height the features of grassroots mobilizing, the theatrical aspects of direct-action protest, the effects of police crackdowns against the most anarchist fringes of the movement, and the enabling role of digital technologies in the hopes the activists have for catalyzing political transformations. The principal investigation sites are meetings, protests, social gatherings, and conventions at which members of neighboring or in some cases competing networked organizations rub up against each other and debate ensues. Indeed, debate, more than any other form of sociality, appears from the evidence presented in this book to be the most elemental constituent of the emergent networks of social movements against the globalization of conventionally empowered institutions.



One of the remarkable features of the continual planning and debate sessions that seemingly constitute the networks, at least in Juris's depiction of them, is how staid they appear to be. In their speech, the organizers more resemble bureaucrats focused on institutional forms than activist ideologues, street protesting hotheads, or fiery, leftist intellectuals. Juris's activist informants are constantly saying things such as: "[we work] as a network, through horizontal assemblies, and with local autonomy in order to reach people with an open and less dogmatic style" (p. 69). Or, "We should not become a homogenizing structure. We have a series of coordinating tools, and we can continue coming together when we have things to discuss. I would sacrifice 'unity' to continue building the movement of movements" (p. 111). Or "We all found that imagining transparent, non-hierarchical, and decentralized structures for a network of this type was as thrilling as it was difficult" (p. 225). Even on the edges of street protest, the movement's goals seem far more focused on solidarity and purpose affirmation than on communicating a clear rationale for action.

In light of the preponderance of evidence that conforms to this kind, one could read this book and mistakenly come to think that these groups organize and ex-

ist for the sake of continuing and growing the movement rather than in pursuit of worldly political objectives. The near omission of how the networks and direct actions in question engage with specific corporations, governments, or trade policies diminishes the utility and interest of the book, particularly for American audiences who are likely less informed than people elsewhere about the issues that sparked antiglobalization movements in the first place. Discussion of activists' own understandings of the issues, their recruitment and personal characteristics, or what they have so much at stake that keeps them involved in this probably costly (no mention of how all this is financed) and sometimes hazardous activity, are all given short shrift.

These omissions may be laid at the feet of the emphasis on structural analysis of the networks themselves qua social forms, and because this contribution is unusual and substantial I would be loath to offer too much criticism on this basis. *Networking Futures* charts a map for understanding how "anti-corporate globalization movements are perhaps best understood as social laboratories, generating new cultural practices and political imaginaries for a digital age" (p. 297). This is an important contribution.