



Book Reviews

Image Brokers: Visualizing World News in the Age of Digital Circulation. Zeynep Devrim Gürsel. Oakland: University of California Press, 2016. 424 pp.

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The years between the war in Bosnia and the start of the US invasion of Iraq were not, as many photographers, magazine editors, and media scholars feared, the last gasp of professional photojournalism. But it was a period of profound transformation. The technologies of image production and, even more importantly, image circulation redefined major features on the landscape of visual news gathering. The ever more complex linkages between professional reportage and other image making—advertising, art and entertainment, amateur snapshots, to name just a few examples—were disconcerting for many image makers and image consumers. But what looked like the death of photojournalism as it was practiced in the age of film was in fact its digitization, broadly defined: a fracturing into pieces that circulate globally, combining in sometimes unpredictable and highly contingent ways.

This is the moment and the structure that Zeynep Devrim Gürsel beautifully captures in *Image Brokers*, her ethnography of key nodes in this emergent world of digital visual journalism. *Image Brokers* is not about photographers as image makers per se, although the book is populated with them. It is, rather, about the array of players, institutions, and events engaged in what Gürsel calls world making through images: the photo editors, marketers, executives, prize jurors, and teachers who occupy this digital universe and make meaningful judgments about what the world looks like through photographs.

Brokering news images involves countless individual decisions at many levels. Gürsel describes how editors at the New York office of Global Views Inc., a visual content provider with a news division (formed largely through the purchase of smaller news agencies), decide the ethics and legality of showing the faces of Iraqi prisoners of war. At the Paris headquarters of Agence France-Presse, a photo editor rejects photographs of Palestinians in Lebanon as illustrations of International Refugee Day because “the refugee camps in Lebanon are cities now” (135) and they don’t fit

the visual stereotype of a desperate rural camp. At World Press Photo’s Amsterdam headquarters, the competition staff selects its jury pool with careful attention to diversity but does so to create a “neutral” panel that will adhere to an unspoken, universal code of professional ethics. The end result of these decisions is the stuff of a good deal of anthropologists’ critique and the fodder for many introductory anthropology courses. Whatever these images might say about the news of the day, they say at least as much about the preconceptions and worldviews of those whose hands they pass through. The unique contribution of *Image Brokers*, however, is Gürsel’s attention to the micro-dynamics that make this visual economy function.

Gürsel knows how to tell a good story, and *Image Brokers* is both smartly organized and powerfully written. After a contextualizing introduction and history chapter, the book is divided into two parts. The first deals with the institutions that literally broker images—the agencies, wire services, and magazines that traffic in photojournalism’s products. The second part’s chapters on photojournalism workshops, competitions, and festivals dive more deeply into how photojournalism itself is brokered, how its ways of knowing and seeing are negotiated and transmitted through the photojournalism world. There is a good deal of smart theoretical work here, although the two parts handle that work differently (in part 1, much of the explicit theoretical engagement is found in the footnotes, whereas it becomes more prominent in the text in part 2). The work’s strength, however, lies in the subtle way that Gürsel captures the nuances of this form of world making: the tensions of the newsroom, the market pressures on magazine editors, the blurred lines between ethics, commerce, and aesthetics.

As with any ethnography, there are trade-offs. Gürsel negotiated extraordinary access to some of the most important offices in the photojournalism world. The price was a book that relies heavily on anonymized sources and composite portraits, a reasonable bargain in this case and one that Gürsel does not mask. A more subtle result of these elite field sites can be seen in the fact that the vision of photojournalism that they produce is dominated by international conflict: September 11 and its aftermath, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the echoes of the Vietnam War, and the amorphous War on Terror. While there is a solid argument to be made that international war coverage defines (for better or for worse) other kinds of news

coverage, there nevertheless remains a local world of photojournalism. That image world is subject to brokering in a way that does not map seamlessly onto the more rarified world of global photojournalism. While there are glimpses of that world here (as in Gürsel's account of an emerging photo agency in Turkey), there remains plenty of space for a contemporary account of the fate of community photojournalism.

There is a more debatable omission from *Image Brokers*, an omission for which Gürsel provides a reasonable but not altogether convincing defense: the book has fewer than ten illustrations. Gürsel is forthcoming about her constraints, arguing that to reproduce the images that pass through the book would betray the anonymity of the photographers, editors, and agencies with which she worked. This is a fair point, but it is not hard to imagine some reasonable work-arounds. For example, virtually all the events described in *Image Brokers* were captured by multiple photographers, including many whose names and images are well known; careful captioning could have allowed some of these images to serve as effective substitutes. The absence is noteworthy on two counts. First, Gürsel is an astute reader of photographs, a skill for which anthropologists and anthropology students still have few mentors and guides. (In the interest of full disclosure, I should note that Gürsel has been a thoughtful critic of my own photographic work.) Second, a rich collection of images would have given students considerably more context for many of the nuanced editorial discussions that Gürsel recounts, making this a far more effective teaching tool. Even some of the iconic photographs that she references will be unknown to undergraduate readers, and it seems a missed opportunity not to give readers access to the material that would help them to see (literally) the world making of photojournalistic images.

That said, *Image Brokers* is a satisfying and important book. For scholars of the media, of still photographic images, or of the ethnography of global institutions, this is a seminal work. With some guidance and smart pairings, it is a text that could easily find an undergraduate audience in communications, journalism, or anthropology. Gürsel makes a compelling case that knowing and making the world are increasingly visual enterprises. Understanding the living image world of photojournalism will therefore become only more important.

Reporting for China: How Chinese Correspondents Work with the World. Pál Nyíri. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017. 216 pp.

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Reporting for China is a fascinating and imaginatively conceived study of Chinese correspondents who work abroad. Pál Nyíri samples the outlooks and work experiences of a multiplicity of practicing journalists, following them around the globe in their professional peregrinations as they mediate overseas news, information, and lifestyles for Chinese audiences. Readers beleaguered by recent US sparring over fake news and alternative facts will find in this study a refreshingly concrete exploration of the tension, unblinkingly relayed by Nyíri, created by the fact that “the universalistic discourse of journalistic professionalism overlaps, to a large extent, with the belief that media is part of politics” (163).

A multisited research design that will inspire scholars interested in tracking global mobilities yields interview and conversational data from more than seventy Chinese correspondents, stringers, and foreign desk editors in two North American, eight European, one Middle Eastern, and three African cities as well as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. Indeed, Nyíri's approach exemplifies what I have called itinerant ethnography, in which particular sites matter less for their specificities and more because the subjects' mobilities between them put these sites into some sort of relationship. Nyíri takes to the road himself, crisscrossing the world in pursuit of a broadly international sample at the same time that he pays attention to how participants in his research navigate their work in vastly different cities on different continents. Emerging as the culmination of his two decades of research on Chinese “entrepreneurial migration” (5), his monograph shows us how peculiar are journalistic professionals in their complex and cosmopolitan vocations replete with information brokering, storytelling, the need to advance Chinese nationalism and satisfy market demand, and several other agendas.

One of Nyíri's key findings is that such diverse journalistic missions are far from contradictory. By demonstrating how journalists negotiate a multiplicity of motives, he pushes back against the unidimensional reading of Chinese journalism as a mechanistic state project marked by tight censorship and tantamount to top-down propaganda. His “interlocutors included reporters for news agencies, television, radio, print and online media, spanning a range of positions from the Communist Party's mouthpiece *People's Daily* to the then still liberal *Southern Weekend*” (7), and we learn of their unique trajectories through their individual career biographies. The working journalists he describes (all protected by pseudonyms and somewhat disguised locations) are agentive and pragmatic, committed and passionate, discerning and strategic. Highlighting these qualities through the conversations he has with them, Nyíri destabilizes the notion of “studying up” that might apply if his object had been major news organizations themselves and replaces it with something like “studying across,” in which we get a strong sense of his respectful exchanges with

persons who appear more like colleagues than research subjects.

A striking insight generated by these interchanges is that an ideological common ground for Chinese journalists is their assumption that Western media has chronically represented China in negative ways, and that they must therefore counter that hostile imaging. This in turn extends into more recent and more ambivalent projects of promoting soft power, in which their reporting is also intended to enable China to successfully compete in struggles over cultural and political prestige on a global scale. This does not render them automatons in service of Chinese state power; to the contrary, as Nyíri recounts: “Many central media correspondents agree with the idea of ‘positive reporting’ and bristle at being seen as brainwashed puppets” (156). Accordingly, common sense and experience play a significant role in intuiting and determining what to report versus what counts as sensitive, and hence direct censorship is less controlling than might be assumed.

That journalists remain committed nationalists, even as they chafe at the constraints they face, is one of the crucial elements of Nyíri’s intervention in representation, one that has an almost decolonizing effect with the inclusion of correspondent quips such as this: “Aren’t your Western media brainwashed too?” (151). Taking aim at “Western analyses of Chinese media [in which] the focus on censorship tends to overwhelm all other concerns” (144), he revisits the much-touted ideal of balance, pointing out that “it was also understood that ‘balance’ meant different things depending on whether or not the Chinese government had an explicit point of view or specific instructions on the subject” (162). Departing from heroic models of resistance in which cosmopolitanized agents struggle to defy government censorship, he instead shows us how they manage multiple pressures, all the while striving to fashion publishable, newsworthy work that will garner substantial audiences. The reader gets an intimate sense of how complicated are the myriad demands that weigh on Chinese reporters.

Another of these demands, one that distinguishes their work, is what is called the China peg—the idea that Chinese audiences will be interested only in stories that make explicit their connection to China or to Chinese people and to audiences’ concerns as Chinese. Not identical to nationalism, the China peg also enfolds the idea that there is a Chinese angle on news stories and even a Chinese way of thinking that would be captured in the output of successful journalists who are able to make their work more palatable than Western reporting.

The distinctiveness of the China peg underscores one of the limitations of Nyíri’s study. He takes perhaps too much for granted about how the field of journalism works. The Chinese characteristics of this professional world would have stood out in greater relief had he defamiliarized

the entire profession of international journalism to a greater extent. A stronger anthropology or sociology of work approach—one that unmask the quotidian elements of occupations—would have strengthened our ability to see clearly just what it is that *Chinese* correspondents must maneuver in the early decades of the 21st century. Nonetheless, the book offers, in a very accessible style, a nuanced and vivid account of a domain that has long been subject to overly facile assumptions about what freedom of speech actually entails and how it comes to be curtailed.

The Resonance of Unseen Things: Poetics, Power, Captivity, and UFOs in the American Uncanny. Susan Lepselter. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016. 192 pp.

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Susan Lepselter’s *The Resonance of Unseen Things* is as extraordinary as its subject matter. There is nothing like it even among the most experimental of ethnographies. Its subject is not a group of people, a place, or even a practice. Lepselter features those things as readers travel through Texas, New Mexico, and Nevada, from public sites to secret military areas, from Earth to life on other planets. But they are not what this book is about, and neither is the ensemble of eccentric characters whose stories of UFO sightings and alien abductions animate this vivid account of life “in the weird” (111). What this ethnography is about, in Lepselter’s own words, is the American uncanny. Her ambitious object of study is not a network of UFO believers but rather a poetic—a structure of feeling—that constitutes a specifically nationalist American sensibility.

In order to make visible this poetic of the uncanny, Lepselter traces some of its major tropes—freedom and captivity—across an array of narratives, both strange and ordinary, that span time and collective memory. These include first-person accounts of alien encounters, shared at UFO tourist sites and among members of support groups, as well as conspiracy theories about government secrets discussed over beers after work, old colonial myths of pioneer life in the Wild West, tales of Indian abductions and white vulnerability, experiences of loss, displacement, migration, and mistrust of the government. Tracing recurrent manifestations of the uncanny through seemingly unrelated stories, Lepselter reveals the tensions and ambiguities that are by-products of American nationalism and its power-imbued identity formations. The result is a breathtaking experiment in humanistic anthropology.

The author's hypnotic writing style defies genre conventions and scholastic expectations to conjure up for the reader a sensory experience of the uncanny. Here poetry replaces prose as the preferred medium for translating the uncanny feelings that are her subjects. Lepselter's uses of poetry are both epistemological and methodological: she actually transcribes her interlocutors' statements not as sentences or block quotes but as verses, clustered into stanzas, whose rhythms, repetitions, and alliterations evoke an interpretive field far wider than their literal meanings. Like the words of a woman from a UFO support group:

I was just coming to consciousness
 Just like when you wake up.
 And I was kind of playing,
 And it was kind of like being weightless.
 Kind of like one of those astronauts,
 in one of those anti-gravity rooms.
 Only I was in my living room . . .
 And then I came to full awakesness.
 And the first thing I asked myself was,
 Am I in my material body?
 And immediately the answer came to me:
 Yes, you are. (124)

Lepselter's seductive writing style epitomizes a critique of certainty and objectivity in academic work. Making sense of fragments is how ethnographic knowledge comes to be, but it is also how her interlocutors come to know about UFOs. So her book chapters, which resist any predictable organizational structure, become literal manifestations of that apophenia—the experience of noticing connections among random and unrelated things—characteristic of her interlocutors' conspiratorial and supernatural beliefs. The chapters echo and amplify each other's themes: paralysis and mobility, dreamscapes and harsh realities, space and time. Lepselter's world-making ethnography deploys apophenia brilliantly to achieve the classic anthropological goal of making the exotic familiar. For instance, "the uncanny alien invasion," she argues, "resonates with the memory of historical colonization. But in the UFO framework, citizens of Earth were the natives now, conquered by high-tech alien pioneers from space" (83). Through apophenia, uncanny coincidences and historical echoes resonate across fantastic narratives of white settler colonialism, of awesome military technologies, of social malaise and nostalgia like rhymes in a poem, confidently holding together fragments of sensory experiences that add up to knowledge and truth.

The book is full of bizarre situations (see the couple who got tired of the modern world and relocated to the Southwest, riding in a covered wagon and wearing pioneer-era clothing), which Lepselter breaks down with compassion into their constitutive elements as quintessentially American narratives about dispossession and remaking

oneself. She accomplishes this task, however, by largely disembodying her interlocutors, focusing on the aesthetic resonance of the narratives rather than the social identities of the storytellers. The author is intentional about this choice. Explaining that no singular social category defines the people in her study, most of whom are white but come from various economic backgrounds, she writes that "using social categories to analyze things like class position, here, would mislead from what I'm trying to say about the unfinalized structures of feeling and imagination that emerge in uncanny talk" (156). Indeed, reading through the book, I found it hard to get a sense of who these people are. Their politics defy facile distinctions between left and right; they can support militia forces and transgender rights in the same breath out of an existential resistance against the powers that be. Race goes mostly unmentioned, except when it becomes prominent in the rare but highly significant account of an interracial (African American and white) couple famous in UFO lore because they were among the first to experience alien abduction and tell about it. There is a parallel to that famous case in Lepselter's own fieldwork encounter with another interracial (also African American and white) couple, whose present-day dealings with both aliens and one very human police officer make the resonance of racism unmistakable in the American uncanny.

To eschew the analysis of social categories is an unusual move in anthropology. The scholarship on conspiracy theories in particular has insisted on their legitimacy as oppositional modes of knowledge production especially for marginalized groups. In this case, uncanny talk emerges from a lived sense of displacement from a dominant social order. Even if the latter cannot be reduced to class or race relations alone, the vernacular American poetic of the uncanny nonetheless reinscribes embodied categories of difference within the ambivalent racial logics of American nationalism. To attend to the embodiment of uncanny narratives, then, also through discourses of whiteness and color blindness could only make Lepselter's argument about the diffuse ordinariness of the uncanny in American imaginaries more compelling.

In this expertly spun tale of nationalism and affect, Americanists will find a haunting account of the residues of genocide and settler colonialism in present-day United States. Anthropologists will read Lepselter's work for its groundbreaking methodology and compassionate ethics. This book's most significant contribution, however, will undoubtedly be to humanistic anthropology. The last decade has seen a growing interest in ethnography from humanities fields and a renewed interest in the literary from within anthropology. Lepselter's beautifully uncanny ethnography opens up an interpretive space beyond the suspension of disbelief, where apophenia is not a cognitive distortion but a critical epistemological resource for seeing what power has hidden from view. This is a must-read for anyone

thinking seriously about genre and representation and about ethnographic writing as an interdisciplinary intellectual project.

Real Pigs: Shifting Values in the Field of Local Pork. Brad Weiss. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016. 312 pp.

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Real Pigs is a multisited, multiyear ethnography of the cultural production of authenticity among those involved in small-scale, niche-meat, pasture-raised pork in the Piedmont region of North Carolina. Brad Weiss brings voice to the many stakeholders engaged in this process—farmers, butchers, chefs, and pork connoisseurs—in a wide range of spaces from farms and farmers markets to restaurants and butcher shops. While much has been written about food systems and small-scale agriculture, *Real Pigs* is a striking portrait of contemporary debates about food systems from the perspectives of those mostly deeply engaged in one particular system. Weiss’s goal is to “describe and analyze the ways that many people’s commitments to the reinvention of food are realized and contested through what they consider to be . . . *Real Pigs*—that is, lively pigs that yield delicious pork, all possessed of an authentic character” (4).

Weiss does this in six chapters, each infused with relevant ethnographic accounts, supplemented by robust profiles drawn from interviews with a diverse group of key research participants in the hog and pork industry. He lays out the motivating questions and their theoretical foundation in the beginning of each of these chapters, followed by historic, demographic, and other relevant information and rounded out with a broad range of ethnographic examples from his research. Each chapter offers parallel pursuits toward connecting relevant anthropological theory, girded and contextualized with ethnographic detail from a plethora of hog-oriented stakeholders. Topics of authenticity, materiality, embodiment, circulation, symbolism, and practice are interwoven with ethnographic recollections, evidence, and transcribed interviews in the participant profiles. In his introductory chapter, Weiss lays out the primary arguments for the book as well as its organization. The concluding chapter recaps larger arguments of “pigness” and authenticity and urges readers to envision a more inclusive possibility for the future of food systems that would bolster the goals of social justice by broadening who benefits from such small-scale production through broadening its appeal across the boundaries of race and class.

In his first chapter, “Pigs on the Ground,” Weiss provides a historical overview of hog production in North

Carolina, including large-scale industrialization and its resultant economic and environmental impacts. This overview articulates, in some sense, the motivation for the (re)formation of pasture-raised pork in the region. In “Pigs in a Local Place,” he then turns to the perception and creation of place through the concept of terroir in, specifically, the Piedmont area of North Carolina. Weiss probes the linkage between place and taste as a function of localness and finds that local is not “simply a geographical designation, but a representation of a mode of producing places imbued with the concrete sensory qualities” (85) found in the social construction of pasture-raised pork. And through this we come to understand that hogs grown out in local pastures are concretely and functionally a contradistinction to industrial pork.

Then, in “Heritage, Hybrids, Breeds, and Brands,” Weiss details the recursive process in the social construction of animal breeds, specifically that of hogs in the material form. He considers how we understand what heritage pork means both ideologically as well as in practice and how that process is complex and often contradictory. “Pigs in Parts” shows that butchering can be interpreted as a performance that reifies and creates the larger sociocultural construct of local pork, including how specific cuts of pork are mediated through the attribution of taste, quality, and so on—for example, the differently marked cultural understandings of the edibility or desirability of snouts, headcheese, or loin. Weiss connects this and the embodied practices of butchers in their performance as skilled artisans to the process of constructing morality and respect toward the animals and communicating these ethical practices in butchery programs. In “A Taste for Fat,” he dives more deeply into notions of taste discernment specific to pig fat, and we come to understand the material and symbolic forms that pork fat renders. “Farm to Fork, Snout to Tail” focuses on locavore ethnos-driven cuisine as it plays out in culinary pursuits at restaurants and in individual choices.

Throughout the book, Weiss engages with a handful of critical themes that explore various theoretical frameworks of analysis. For example, one theme, which is clearly a discursive feature found across his field sites, shows how the concept of connectedness relates to the construction of pork production and consumption. This theme is addressed from various viewpoints, including the perception of connections between farmers and consumers, farmers and animals, animals and consumers, and to some extent animals and processors. By evaluating these multiple points of view, readers (and ethnographers) also come to a deeper understanding of particular practices through the active engagement of various theoretical positions. Finally, these analytical frameworks allow for the exploration of parallel and contradictory perspectives. In essence, this theme and others (e.g., local, authenticity, taste) provide a variety of insights gleaned from Weiss’s research that allow for a richer

accounting of heritage pork. Weiss strives to “demonstrate how the political economic implications of farm-to-fork and snout-to-tail activities are articulated precisely in terms of the concrete qualities that constitute an economy of qualities that incorporates not only things edible but an array of people, animals, objects, and the relations among them that constitute the contemporary American food system and its possible alternatives” (220–21).

Real Pigs is well organized and well written; the balance between profiles and analysis makes it a compelling read. It will be relevant to those who research food systems at various levels, as well as general readers interested in the local food movement and meat cultures. It could also work well in courses with a focus on the practice of ethnography. Although Weiss respects and appreciates his research participants and acknowledges his own position in this food system, he clearly addresses the conflicts in the social construction of local pork. And I appreciate the inclusion of photographs throughout the text; these keep a face (human and hog) in the forefront of the reader’s mind.

My Life with Things: The Consumer Diaries. *Elizabeth Chin.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016. 248 pp.

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In *My Life with Things*, Elizabeth Chin, an anthropologist and professor of media design practices, sets out to understand her own relationship to things and to probe the uncomfortable tension between her love of and longing for consumer goods and her anticapitalist, anti-consumerist politics. As she puts it, “I think capitalism sucks, while simultaneously pouring huge amounts of psychic energy into choosing paint colors for rooms in my home” (11).

Chin organizes her exploration into four parts. In the introductory chapter, she describes her book’s origins and structure and links her project to existing scholarship on culture, consumption, and emotion, among other subjects. This discussion wanders across a rich array of topics, making smart and interesting points along the way and eventually arriving at a persuasive call for studies of consumption that attend more closely to context—who is doing the consuming and why and where they do it—as well as to issues of race and inequality. Chin sets out to meet this challenge in the unconventional work that follows.

Part 2, comprising more than half the book, is a series of diary entries, both raw and wry, meditating on specific objects and Chin’s relationship thereto. Readers learn that Chin loves nail polish, vintage table linens, oriental

rugs, and socks from Target, among many other things, and hates preschool birthday parties, going to the dentist, and the idea of hiring someone to clean her house. She longs for things she does not have—a bigger house, her grandmother’s piano—and feels ambivalent about those she does—in general, goods produced by exploited workers; specifically, tiny benches, too many clothes, the temporary tooth designed for a white man that once “colonized” her mouth. She tells how it felt to grow up poor among rich kids in a New Haven private school and how it feels now to be richer than most of the world’s inhabitants. She describes a miscarriage so candidly and graphically that my heart ached.

Chin’s refusal to draw a boundary between the personal and the scholarly generates many of the book’s greatest insights, but at times it makes for jarring reading. For example, interwoven throughout part 2 are descriptions, mostly speculative, of the sort of consumer Karl Marx might have been and how he reconciled his consumer activities with his communism. These forays introduce fresh insights into Marx’s life and work—including the price his family paid for his refusal to become a wage slave—but sit awkwardly beside Chin’s intensely personal diary entries.

Part 3, a brief chapter on ethnographic writing in general and Chin’s writing process in particular, echoes enough material from part 1 that the two might fruitfully have been condensed into a single chapter. Here Chin expands her critique of anthropology’s racism—past and present. When she decided to pursue a PhD in anthropology, her writer father accused her of joining a “racist, colonialist discipline” (193). At the time, she defended her choice, and the two did not speak for years. In the three decades since, Chin’s experiences navigating the discipline’s internal racial politics as an anthropologist of color have convinced her that “my dad was right . . . though I would never tell him so to his face” (194). She nonetheless remains committed to the value of ethnographic training and research, especially the “inherently political” and “tremendously important” (196) autoethnographic accounts produced by marginalized others.

The book’s final section, “This Never Happened,” is a fanciful account of an unnamed anthropologist who becomes a hoarder and is crushed by her obsession with consumption. Setting out to “spiritually engage” with items she has read about, the anthropologist develops an ability to “decommodify” objects, granting each “the ability to project the thoughts, feelings, and faces of those who had made it” (210) onto anyone who touches it and thus reversing the alienation and commodity fetishism that occur under capitalism.

“We tend to forget,” Chin writes early on, “that all the stuff we use, pine after, and shop for was made by someone and that more often or not, the people involved in bringing our stuff into being, whether that thing is a roll of toilet

paper or a McMansion, reap very little benefit or reward from that process” (33). This is true and terrible, but Chin perpetuates this forgetfulness by focusing, with a few brief exceptions, on her own relationship to things rather than on the still-unseen people behind the goods she owns or covets. In this regard, the book never quite overcomes its origins as a collection of interesting but ultimately disconnected musings on U.S. consumer culture and Chin’s fraught position therein.

Yet *My Life with Things* is successful as a memoir. Chin speaks honestly of her conflicted position as a privileged academic who earns more than the average U.S. family but nevertheless feels perpetually deprived. “There is something about the American consciousness,” she writes, “that makes almost all of us convinced that we’re poor while everyone else is living it up” (108). She testifies to the pinpricks of guilt, angst, and uncertainty that accompany even the most quotidian consumer choices. Does she buy the unhealthy treat that will bring her daughter joy? The antique rug produced by child laborers now long dead? The extra pair of glasses she wants but does not need? Chin does not always answer these questions, but she prods readers to think more deeply about parallel decisions in their own lives. Ultimately, this is her book’s greatest contribution and what recommends it despite its disjointedness. *My Life with Things* is thought-provoking in the best sense of the term. It poses new questions, approaches old ones in fresh ways, and tugs at the complex heart of people’s relationship to the things they have and the things they want.

Emergent Ecologies. Eben Kirksey. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015. 312 pp.

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In an age when humanity’s seemingly limitless transformative power is surpassed only by its profound alienation, Eben Kirksey asks, how do we love our cohabitants in the age of the Anthropocene? As economic prerogatives and ethical concerns collide when we deal with habitat fragmentation, genetic erosion, climate change, and invasive species, is there room for hope? *Emergent Ecologies* claims that we can be hopeful as it challenges disciplinary, theoretical, and methodological monocultures by insisting that historical accidents, chance encounters, and fruitful liaisons are as pervasive as they are spontaneous in shaping ecosystems and instigating unpredictable changes in and among sites and actors. Sometimes these factors are imagined as destructive, but they are also creative. Moreover, they have been with us for quite some time and will likely

multiply in the future. This is the basis for hope and also for love. It is a scary kind of love—raw and fierce in its lack of direction.

At the core of this book is the argument that we need to reframe our relation to the world around us. First, Kirksey asserts, these are constantly moving about and reformulating themselves and their associations, forging rhizomatous alliances that are greater than the sum of their neurons. Second, he disputes the notions of directionality and pristine-ness that are the intellectual foundations of landscape ecology and that drive the practical outcomes of restoration ecology. He questions the separation of humans from the rest of the natural world and their dominance of it as well as the need for marching ecosystems back to some form of originality, the battle of the natives against the invasives being a prime example. *Emergent Ecologies* raises the question, are the goals and strategies of mainstream conservation still relevant in today’s world, given that the density of travel, trade, migration, and globalization makes maintaining boundaries between purity and pollution impossible?

Employing a theoretical and methodological bricolage of multisited and multispecies ethnography, *Emergent Ecologies* challenges the equilibrium-based cybernetic models of culture and nature that dominated the 20th century. Some might argue—as I do—that these models have already been dismantled or have at least become vulnerable, and that most natural and social scientists no longer subscribe to the idea of rivets holding the system together. But in some respects the dominant model of a wounded landscape that needs to be remediated is still with us. Kirksey offers a useful postfunctionalist, poststructuralist, and posthumanist interpretation of currents in the Anthropocene by tracing its entangled actors, including parasitic invaders, as they mingle and merge to build possible futures.

In the various locations he studies, from the Panama Canal Zone to the riparian wilderness of Florida, Kirksey finds betrayal, exploitation, and desolation. But not hopelessness, for he also finds what he calls organic thinkers and tinkerers—the devoted actors engaged in the practical labor of caring for organisms that have no apparent value or direct use. By calling attention to the affective attachments that move all sorts of people to care for wild things, he deflates the long-entrenched assumption that conservation needs to be intentional and programmatic, and that it is best and only carried out by experts. At the same time, he sheds light on the small, marginal spaces in which biodiversity is nurtured.

At the center of *Emergent Ecologies’* bricolage are “ontological amphibians,” those slippery “insects, varieties of rice, and monkeys” (4) that decide in which direction to morph. With less limiting ontological cages—*Umwelten*—than previously assumed, they flourish precisely because they are flexible and capable of multiple entanglements.

These ontological amphibians serve as a scaffolding—if a bit of a complex one—to make the appreciation of emergence and empathy possible. Instead of idealizing pristine nature, Kirksey urges us to come to terms with nature as it is with all its “messy and neglected wrecks” (3). He encourages us to recognize ourselves in the other organisms that are capable of choreographing their lives, abandon our self-ascribed roles as stewards and managers, and fold into our diverse and wily world mates.

In this work, the message is the medium. One of the most lasting impressions of its labyrinthine ontologies is the decentering of our hopes—what strikes me as the relocation of the sacred. The sacred, Kirksey seems to convey, is found not in the plan or in the program or even in the ritual but in the “liminal critters” (72) that inhabit multispecies worlds. It is this shift from determinacy to indeterminacy—this depowering and diffuseness—that paradoxically imparts a sense of agency and optimism. As with many Eastern religions, Native American cosmologies, and even the margins of Western thought, *Emergent Ecologies* advocates for subjective spaces for regenerative cobeing and nondominance between humans and other creatures.

While the book represents a departure from mainstream conservation discourse, the author could have given more credit to its intellectual predecessors. For a long time, ethnobiology and ethnoecology have sought an emic understanding of people’s relationship to plants, animals, and other components of the environment. Employing ethnoscientific methodology, their practitioners document local behaviors and local ways of understanding, demonstrating the complexity and fine-tuning of informal knowledge systems. Though focused on human *Umwelten*, they acknowledge the mutual shaping of cognitive categories and the cultural significance embedded in them. In a more radical way, deep ecology rejected the dualism between humans and nature, promoting instead a people-in-planet environmental ethic—a shift in our frame of reference toward the life embedded in the landscape.

Even as *Emergent Ecologies* focuses on organic emergences and symbioses, it elides important evolutionary principles of natural selection, and this gave me a sense of unease. Teleology—imputing purpose and directionality to what we would normally regard as adaptation and coevolution—is palpable in the lifeways of the ontological amphibians that are “constantly moving among worlds, deciding which ontology they would like to inhabit” (5). Are we to read this masterful essay as a philosophical or a literary work, subject to a different set of expectations and accountabilities? If the answer is no or not entirely, then we need to take into account Bruno Latour’s incisive twist on seeking objectivity in the social sciences: we must render our subjects able to object to what we say about them and question our own assumptions and interpretations. Are Kirksey’s ontological amphibians able to object? In tracing the

“contingencies of unexpected connections” (5), how do we know whether viable interpretations are being drawn about them?

In my view, ontologies must consist not only of multiple becomings but also of multiple remembering. Here I invoke Alfred Romer’s rule that organisms change only enough to remain the same. According to Romer, the first amphibians—Devonian lungfish that were the predecessors of terrestrial vertebrates—were favored by natural selection because of their capacity to *return* to water if they were stranded on land as pools dried up and shrank. Are ontological amphibians dealing with dislocations by returning to a whole, albeit a newly crafted one, instead of randomly morphing without any form of coherence? Moreover, since we cannot dismiss the Anthropocene’s hold, we need to come to terms with multiple renderings. Kirksey himself alludes to this in writing about commodified animals as “flexible persons” that are often “incorporated into human lives, and addressed with kinship terms. But they can be demoted at any moment . . . as household income or personal circumstances shift” (135). Flexible personhood is likewise evident in the domestication, breeding, and genetic engineering of crops. Anthropogenic selection manifested in codependent corn and designer potatoes that would not survive without human intervention demonstrates just how limited other-than-human *Umwelten* can be. Kirksey’s metaphor of organic thinkers and tinkerers gardening in the wreckage is an apt and giving one, since gardening itself is a straining toward coherence and hopeful remembrance.

Sounding the Limits of Life: Essays in the Anthropology of Biology and Beyond. Stefan Helmreich. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016. 328 pp.

DOI: 10.1111/amet.12610

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Sounding the Limits of Life is a collection of 14 essays, many of which have been previously published but have been revised for this book. Given the richness and diversity of topics that the essays address, this reviewer will engage with their crosscutting themes, with the book’s structure, and mostly with the methodological and analytic contributions it makes. Stefan Helmreich tells us that the book explores “how one might think about the relation between the abstract, the empirical, the formal, and the material—a relation that in no way is always working in one direction, in one order” (xxii). Said exploration unfolds around three fundamental categories of our times: life, water, and sound.

But each of these categories has a different kind of pull in each of the essays. In some, sound waves are the object

of analysis, while in others sounding is a form of figuring things out. Water is in some essays the medium needed to propose new epistemologies (such as underwater archaeologies), while in other essays it is a theory machine, a material afforded the capacity to structure thought. Life figures as a set of relations while also being the very structure of information. Sometimes object of analysis, sometimes formalism, sometimes path to discovery, sometimes found object, life, sound, and water never settle on inherited wisdoms. Instead, the book directs us to the moments in which said wisdoms reach their internal limits and are reinvented. And this is one of the advantages of reading these essays together as a single collection. They bring into relief Helmreich's style of thought. We can see how he works assiduously to keep the meaning of fundamental categories changing, reminding us how easy it is to fall back into essentialisms (his analysis of the turn to new materialisms being a case in point).

For those interested in the study of scientists, politicians, experts, and bureaucrats, *Sounding the Limits of Life* offers a suggestive example of how to conduct that type of anthropological research. Helmreich refuses to reduce science to a worldview, culture, ideology, or even ontology. Instead, he is committed to science as a field action that is material and abstract at once. Leaving behind any foundationalist desires for all-encompassing meanings or explications, he is not looking to get to the bottom of things. He does not want to claim that science is an idea of process—setting hypotheses and testing them—or that it is a material technology—a set of laboratory practices or routines for collecting data. He cautions us that searching for foundations in the science of life, sound, and water is a doomed project because it obscures what is lively about scientific practice: its continuous making and transgressing of its own boundaries, both conceptual and material.

Instead of offering new foundations, Helmreich contributes something else. He takes us into the dynamics by which abstractions and materials dance together, following the ways in which they go beyond the limits they have created. That is, the book's purpose is not to anthropologically map the latest scientific definition of sound, water, or life, even if a superficial reading would take the more historical chapters as doing just that. Rather, its purpose is to sound out the processes by which those three orders acquire different forms according to different fields of inquiry, experimentation, and artistic exploration. The book traces how material and conceptual relations stretch, adapt, transform, or refigure life, sound, and water. And in the process Helmreich shows us how our own tools of anthropological analysis—semiosis, matter, abstraction, history, and classification, among others—are also being transformed.

Helmreich takes a similar nonfoundationalist approach when he attends to the racialized, gendered, and classed stakes of the techno-scientific worlds he

investigates. Class, race, and gender are not defined objects of analysis in and of themselves; they imbue the doings and makings of the practices and abstractions he investigates. In his analysis, race, gender, and class construe the limits of what is thinkable, touchable, and representable for sound artists, scientists, experimenters, and innovators.

If you are wondering how to read this book, where to begin, I can offer one suggestion: be a bit undisciplined. For instance, instead of starting with the introduction, I would begin with the epilogue. There you will find succinct openings that provide enough background to the kinds of analytic questions the essays explore. You will also find a condensed explanation of their central contributions, such as the notion of reverberation as a distinct temporality of analysis, categories and concepts as sets of contradictory forces, and ultimately sounding. The collection offers great resources for classes on the anthropology of science and knowledge, expert elites, environmental issues, and research methods. Different chapters can be used for different levels of training. "Cetology Now," with its playful riff on *Moby-Dick*, would work well in a first-year class to visualize how systems of classification reflect their historical times; "The Signature of Life," on the other hand, would be better suited for advanced undergraduates or graduate students who can engage with technical vocabularies more fluently.

When collections of essays include previously published work, the anthropological establishment often asks whether the repackaging is worth publication. In this case, Helmreich's introduction and epilogue are themselves rich contributions that stand on their own merits. But taken as a whole the collection also stands as a provocation about what we routinely count as convincing argument and compelling interpretation. Sitting on the verge of scientific transformations that promise to radically challenge what we understand as water, sound, and life, the essays are not mappings of events that have already occurred. For that reason, Helmreich cautions against the fetish of neologisms, of which the Anthropocene is one example, as diagnostic tools. Using that historical diagnostic as an entry point, he invites us to do away with the fetish of articulate language, given that the worlds that he charts are worlds where foundations are being undone. How to speak of those worlds when our language depends on those very foundations? Maybe sounding, a thinking through, rather than a form of precise articulate representation is a more empirically sound strategy. *Sounding the Limits of Life* is a thoughtful, stimulating voyage that challenges us to revisit our fetishes about knowledge and matter, form and content. Take that voyage according to your own creativity. Follow triangles, circles, or squares (hint: look at the table of contents), and then reroute. Read in one direction, then backward. You will enjoy riding the waves.

So, yes, this reviewer is pleased that this book exists as a thing in itself. It works well as a companion and a resource.

It is also a physical location that we can go to for reference and inspiration. It is a material thing that participates in the redefinition of abstractions as it sits in our hands while working with the formalisms that are at the core of our anthropological craft.

Animate Planet: Making Visceral Sense of Living in a High-Tech Ecologically Damaged World. Kath Weston. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017. 264 pp.

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Kath Weston's *Animate Planet* takes the reader on a journey around the globe to explore how what she calls ecological intimacies between people and the ecosystems that coconstitute them are created and sustained. She demonstrates that these ecological intimacies are also mediated by complex relations among the technologies that humans have created and the ecosystems they have collectively damaged and devastated. She is careful to point out that she is not arguing for the posthumanist ontological equivalence of living entities and machines but, rather, is focused on compositional intimacies wherein living and nonliving entities coconstitute and infiltrate each other. Although each chapter could stand alone as a separate case study, and all are reviewed below as such, they are united by a careful consideration of different ecologically comprised worlds. Collectively, the chapters also nudge the field of political ecology toward a greater exploration of the embodied and affective ties that bind humans and other living entities with the technologies of late capitalism.

In her first chapter, "Food: Biosecurity and Surveillance in the Food Chain," Weston considers how the surveillance technology known as radio frequency identification tags, which pet owners have praised for their ability to reunite people with their lost furry family members, is deployed to track farm animals destined to serve as a human food source and to locate them if they become vectors for diseases such as mad cow disease. She claims that by providing intimate knowledge of animals from a distance, these techno-intimacies in some ways stand in for the lost intimacies brought on by industrialization. However, she contends that rather than relying too heavily on surveillance technology in industrialized systems or embracing alternative artisanal foodways to reconnect with our food, we should instead be most concerned about the actual conditions of food production.

"Energy: The Unwanted Intimacy of Radiation Exposure in Japan" chronicles the lives of Japanese residents and

their entanglements with radioactive materials, as well as radioactivity equipment like Geiger counters and dosimeters, in a geographical space completely redefined by the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant meltdown. Weston was in Fukushima during the tsunami. She met people who later suffered through a previously unknown phenomenon—the radiation divorce—a neologism to describe the fracturing of marital ties when couples could not agree on what to do or where to go after the disaster. Weston also shows how regular people leveraged citizen science initiatives to engage in a sort of techno-struggle with the government and corporations, whose reassurances about safety countered people's own visceral sense of the radiation interpenetrating their bodies and environments that technology allowed them to measure and codify.

"Climate Change, Slippery on the Skin," written long before the United States federal government announced that it would withdraw from the Paris climate agreement, will perhaps resonate with readers now more than ever. Here Weston challenges all of us to take the climate skepticism of North Americans seriously, particularly when skeptics support their position with what she calls embodied empiricism—their personal experiences of the weather from which they extrapolate ideas of climate. "There is no such thing as climate change because it's not hotter outside this year than last year. I'm sweating just the same," would be one such example. Weston highlights the important role of the body in the empiricist tradition of natural and physical scientific inquiries, contending that if we mobilized embodied empiricist climate skeptics in much the same way that regular people in Japan came together through citizen science projects to track radiation hazards, there might be an opportunity not only to collect vast amounts of important climate data but also to engage skeptics in a different sort of understanding about the gravity of climate change.

In "Water: The Greatest Show on Parched Earth," Weston takes the reader to the Grand Venice, a water-themed shopping and business center in New Delhi—a city in which water from the faucet, if it trickles out at all, is laced with industrial chemicals and the monsoon rains that flood streets are soon followed by skin-scorching droughts. At the Grand Venice, Indians can take gondola rides, watch a mermaid show, and visit an aquarium to experience forms of bio-intimacy with water that seem to mock the mundane. Weston draws on the concepts of play and the grotesque to demonstrate how the shopping and business complex animates new intimacies with water in a place where everyday interactions with water are rightly characterized by fear. She uses an Indian argumentation strategy called *neti-neti* whose general structure is, "It's not this, you see. And it's not that. Neither is it the other thing" (156), as well as an alternative strategy, "yes-and thinking," to show how one can both accept the critiques of the Grand

Venice while also understanding its impact and appeal, particularly for people living in New Delhi.

In the concluding chapter, “Knowing What We Know, Why Are We Stuck? Political Ecologies of the Precarious,” Weston challenges the field of political ecology to move toward “a more embodied and affectively oriented understanding” (178) of ecological demise. To do this, she draws on a brief historical analysis of Fordist and post-Fordist labor markets and societies. She uses the iconic figure of the automobile to argue that many technological advances keep people mired in these political ecologies of the precarious by operating through affective registers that emphasize nostalgia, flexibility strategies, niche marketing, and just-in-time inventories of solutions. Concerning nostalgia, for example, Weston points out that the cherished new car smell caused by volatile organic compounds in automobiles not only had a pedagogical effect by teaching people to “love what might harm them” (182) but also opened up the opportunity for a “*substitute that offers salvation*” (185) through the marketing of new car scent products.

While reticent to adopt an antitechnology stance that fails to recognize the importance of affective registers and how they connect people to technology in contingent ways, Weston rightfully urges readers to be critical of approaches that resonate with ecomodernism—the approach to solving ecological crises through using technology to decouple humans from natural systems proposed by John Asafu-Adjaye and other scholars, scientists, and activists in their 2015 *Ecomodernist Manifesto*. Weston instead asks that we consider how it might be problematic to expect a technology like the automobile to “deliver the world from the very evils it appears to have wrought” (187). In concluding, she returns briefly to a topic she touched on in the opening chapter—the potential role of indigenous approaches in moving toward emerging embodied and affective ecologies not so indebted to capitalism and its products. Although this was not her central focus, it would be valuable to see Weston engage more thoroughly with this idea as well as with the scholarship of indigenous academics and writers.

Culturing Bioscience: A Case Study in the Anthropology of Science. Udo Krautwurst. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014. 224 pp.

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The term *bioscience*—which generally means “the scientific study of living things”—or, as we used to call it, “biology,” also conjures up a host of emerging technologies associated with molecular biology such as microarray studies of

genetic diseases, microanalysis of tissues, and treatments of obscure conditions in living organisms including human patients as well as the routine placement of prosthetic devices such as synthetic lenses in cataract surgery, to list but a few. These technologies promise better health, among other things, and better lives for those who have access to them. Although bioscience technology and industry have become integral parts of the world economy worth hundreds of billions of dollars per year, paying for these marvelous advances is costly, and cost (and profit) affects what research gets done, what research is shunted to the side, and what technologies remain on the shelf.

In *Culturing Bioscience*, Udo Krautwurst embeds himself in a modern university research center that is beginning a major new research activity. Rather than observe from the outside, Krautwurst becomes a participant-observer, a challenging role under any circumstances, but his challenge here also includes learning how to use the highly sophisticated technical instruments necessary for bioscience research. He must learn the rituals of the laboratory bench and the social climate, and he must understand the basic science of the research. He must be aware of the biases, feelings, and limitations that are part of being a participant-observer and that may influence his observations and conclusions as a social scientist. In describing this dilemma, he refers to the Newtonian model in which the observer of a phenomenon is outside of the system as distinguished from the quantum model (referring to quantum physics and the uncertainty principle) in which the act of participating may change the results.

This is all seemingly straightforward. Ethnography 101, if you will. But there is an unfortunate tendency among many anthropologists whose fieldwork site is in the laboratory, or whose “natives” are scientists, to feel the need to invent an entirely new language to translate their experiences to their readers. Is it possible that this tendency reveals a certain insecurity and defensiveness about the scientific merit of ethnographic research? Krautwurst seems particularly plagued by this tendency. So rather than introducing, for example, he is “intraducing” (9) new words with almost every sentence or phrase, starting with his title.

Culture has been a noun since the beginning of anthropology. The verb *to culture* in medicine refers to culturing organisms or cells such as bacteria in a culture medium, but it is not clear how the participle use in *Culturing Bioscience* relates to the author’s subject. This practice continues throughout the book as Krautwurst uses neologisms in ways that confound the reader. Many sentences have several interjected parenthetical expressions, detours, and references to points that have no clear relevance to the subject of the sentence. Thus Krautwurst tells us that it is important to understand “Wittgenstein’s ladder,” which is apparently a purposeful distortion of “his presentation of a phenomenon in such a way that you would *eventually* come

to understand the phenomenon better if you come to ignore the distorted process of presentation, even though this process of presentation helped enlarge understanding.” But then “the reader must throw away the ladder after climbing up it” (xii).

Immediately following this opening, Krautwurst gives an autobiographical account of the trials of teaching on a short-term contract while seeking a tenure-track position. Although suffering from the indeterminacy of this existence, he writes that “the effort to bring a biocluster of related business enterprises and institutions into being was happening under my nose and I just could not let such an opportunity pass by. The beginning of my research on the [Atlantic Centre for Comparative Biomedical Research] in late 2007 was evidently in the middle of something I was a part of” (xiii).

The next paragraph begins, “You might ask, at this point, what has this to do with *science*?” We are then treated to a brief excursion into a “Newtonian version of Science” for “ease of reference” that is “distinct from politics or economics, for example.” Newtonian Science is about “making representations of some phenomenon coincide with the phenomenon” (xiii). This concept is illuminated thus: “One of the main assumptions I am asking you to accept, if only provisionally, is that everything—and I do mean everything—has an influence on everything else. This means that everything is in some kind(s) of relationship(s) with everything else, often summarized by the term *relationality*. It does *not* mean, however, that any given phenomenon influences any other phenomenon to the same equal extent or in the same equal way. I’ll use a simplified shorthand—what I call *quantum science*—to contrast this version of science, based largely on the work of Karen Barad, with Newtonian Science. As I proceed through the book I’ll be asking you, the reader, to pull out Wittgenstein’s ladder from time to time as I speak of moving toward quantum science” (xiv).

This is followed by a summary of Barad’s 2007 book, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, and her theory of “agential realism.” Krautwurst advises us that “this manner of knowledge production is an important challenge to common Euro-American practices of constructing and maintaining boundaries and identities” and that “as such it is also anthropological in significant ways.” I am not convinced. But it may be that I no longer understand what anthropology is or what it has become.

Even though I have studied anthropology at the graduate level, have publications in peer-reviewed journals of anthropology, have attended and participated in many meetings of anthropologists, and hold an adjunct professorship in a department of anthropology, I regard myself as having only a marginal relationship to the discipline since my principal professional activity is as a physician and epidemiologist. Just the same, I have been an enthusiastic

reader of all kinds of anthropological literature since my days as an undergraduate anthropology minor 60 years ago. One of the things that attracted me to anthropology was the clear, lucid, vital writing of the classical anthropologists who helped me learn about the people they were studying.

Increasingly, however, I have been dismayed over the past 50 years by the style of writing in anthropology that is pedantic, obscure, and littered with meaningless neologisms that appear to be designed to impress the reader with the author’s intellectual brilliance and profundity rather than communicate thoughts and observations clearly. This book is, in my opinion, paradigmatic of this dreadful trend. But rather than merely dismiss it as nonsense and be done with it, I suggest instead that any graduate student planning on studying bioscience or medicine from an anthropological perspective might attempt to read it as a warning about what not to do.

Dispossession and the Environment: Rhetoric and Inequality in Papua New Guinea. *Paige West.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2016. 216 pp.

DOI: 10.1111/amet.12613

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In her latest book, Paige West argues that accumulation by dispossession is made possible by certain representational strategies deployed by international capital. Using ethnographic data from two decades of research in Papua New Guinea, she documents how external narratives of the primitive, underdeveloped, and savage inform colonial and postcolonial political and ecological exploitation and undermine indigenous sovereignty over land, knowledge, and other resources. Importantly, she highlights the potential for indigenous philosophies to rethink uneven development and place local knowledge at the center of our understanding. In doing so, she calls for a decolonized approach to anthropology that is theoretically and ethically inspired by the communities with which we work.

Building upon David Harvey, Rosa Luxemburg, Neil Smith, and Regis Tove Stella, West argues that capitalist and colonial powers benefit from uneven development needs by creating the right symbolic landscape in which to operate. Through representational strategies, new forms of capital are able to create the conditions necessary for accumulation. More specifically, rhetoric restructures the world of Papua New Guineans to define them as incapable, in need, and outside the natural order of things as a way to facilitate external control. Using the rich ethnographic cases that we have come to expect from West’s work, she finds these processes in some unusual places, including business

training workshops, field biology and conservation, and surfer tourism.

Driven by mass media fantasies of wild, untouched beaches with swells that have yet to be discovered, surfers seek authentic experiences that match these ideals. These virtualisms are continuously re-created as the tourist industry crafts sites of both surfer fantasies and idealized surfer lifestyles. These surfer fantasies reflect and create limits on the potential for the communities that are targeted. Locals are depicted as natural surfers whose lifestyle on the margins of capital is idealized, while they are also structurally limited in their capacity to create and manage such tourist destinations. Denied the right to invest in, own, and fully participate in a practice for which they are seen as natural, locals are dispossessed of the ability to engage with this new world.

The rhetoric of the savage slot is not limited to the tourist industry. West uses her experiences conducting ethnographic research at capacity-building workshops and seminars. By seeking to create “new persons, new forms of social reproduction, and new social networks” (83), the rhetoric of capacity building reinforces the idea that Papua New Guineans lack the capabilities necessary to operate contemporaneously within national and global markets. But it is not simply rhetoric. Capacity building is also sold as enabling development and growth among target communities, yet West shows how this same rhetoric results in dispossession. She documents how national environmental NGOs are overlooked for research funding because they seemingly lack the capacity to administer it—a fact confirmed by capacity-building efforts. Instead, international organizations receive and manage the funds, subcontracting to the same national NGOs that were deemed to be lacking competence. Thus the discourse of capacity building creates and maintains enduring structural inequalities.

In a chapter provocatively titled “Discovering the Already Known,” West contrasts Western scientific and Gimi (Eastern Highlands Province) epistemologies as they relate to discoveries about the environment. “Discovering” positions Western scientists as founders and owners of knowledge about Papua New Guinea’s flora and fauna. They are, in this, very much like surfers. Gimi philosophers, by contrast, see human and nonhuman as mutually creating each other. Instead of discovering extant species of tree kangaroo, for example, Gimi view their relationships with these animals as inviting each other into the world; Gimi exist only because they exist, and vice versa. Where many contemporary studies of multispecies ethnography stop in their analysis, West continues by highlighting the real-world implications of biological and conservation research. An animal’s “discovery” by Western biologists results in a dispossession that removes knowledge of it from the control of Gimi. These, West argues, are effective challenges to indigenous sovereignty.

West reminds us of the value of anthropology when she asks, “How do people live their world? How do different ways of living-in-their-world affect how people understand, engage with, and act toward others? What happens to people’s modes of living their worlds when people living their worlds in radically different ways interact?” (112). The contemporary ontological turn in the discipline, she argues, focuses attention on the first question while largely ignoring the second and third questions. But these are the very issues that are at stake in places like Papua New Guinea. The world of indigenous peoples is already always engaged with ongoing dispossessions that necessitate a response. West details Gimi philosophies and philosophers as they respond to, cajole, and provoke Western practices. For example, being in the world for Gimi is about exchanges with others as well as with flora, fauna, and the land on which all live. While this might provoke some scholars to imagine Gimi as natural stewards of their environment, international conservation efforts fit poorly within this local epistemology. Conservation rules restrict Gimi ways of interacting with animals and the forest and knowing and gaining strength from their land, and conservation efforts dispossess them of the sovereignty over their land that is then accumulated by Western scientists. At the same time, Gimi learn to revalue humans, animals, and places through market exchanges: selling labor, animal bodies, and access to researchers.

Equally insightful, the afterword offers a more personal reflection on the geographer Neil Smith, one of West’s theoretical interlocutors and mentors. Through this we come to understand more about how West sees ethnography. She refers to the creative potential of contact that she calls rubbings at one point in the text. According to Gimi philosophy, knowledge and understanding are achieved through how ideas rub against one another. This is apparent in how we bump into each other as scholars, how we rub our ideas against the ideas of Gimi philosophers and New Ireland surfers, and how we try to understand what happens when people in places like Papua New Guinea rub up against western capitalists, NGOs, governments, and so on. Sometimes, enough rubs off that we can pen an account about development as smart and effective as West’s.

Rebuilding Shattered Worlds: Creating Community by Voicing the Past. *Andrea L. Smith and Anna Eisenstein.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016. 210 pp.

DOI: 10.1111/amet.12614

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If a neighborhood is destroyed in the name of urban renewal, does its community cease to exist? In this deft

ethnography, Andrea Smith and Anna Eisenstein explore the interplay of social memory, place, segregation, and language in Easton, a small city in eastern Pennsylvania. Spurred on by Title I of the U.S Housing Act of 1949, local housing authorities dramatically altered physical landscapes as well as cultures of practice, both of which the authors critically consider in this ethnography of remembrance. As with the proverbial tree falling in the forest, Smith and Eisenstein argue that places and people coconstitute each other through ongoing emergent processes. Details of such practices and processes are understood only partially, contributing to the *raison d'être* for this six-chapter volume.

Written by and for academicians and students of anthropology, *Rebuilding Shattered Worlds* augments a growing literature of the semiotics of collective remembering, a process and product “distributed . . . across individuals . . . [and] between agents and the cultural tools they employ to think, remember, and carry out other forms of action” (19). Smith and Eisenstein target professionals and graduate students in anthropology, sociology, ethnic studies, urban studies, history, and cultural heritage management. Given the book’s sophistication, it is also remarkable that theirs is a collaborative project between a mentor and an undergraduate. It shows what can be done by anthropologists who teach through research practice at undergraduate institutions.

Using ethnography and ethnohistory, Smith and Eisenstein investigate the social, cultural, and to a lesser degree material processes and practices of place making amid the destruction of a historically integrated interethnic neighborhood known as Syrian Town. Assuming a life history approach, the authors conduct a six-year ethnographic journey that begins with the gathering of dispersed ethnographic and ethnohistoric memories and moves toward the reconstruction and interpretation of the materiality of collective memories in one small community. They critically consider the dialectic of social, historical, and material dimensions of the eradication of a neighborhood through the themes of place loss, the language of blight, narrative diversity, voices from the past, the material of memory, and nostalgia as an engine of change. While lacking the diachronic depth of displacement narratives inherent to a settler society, the thorough descriptions and exposition of narratives relating to Syrian Town help to breathe life into or reassemble the social, to use Bruno Latour’s term, in a neighborhood dramatically eradicated in the name of improving the urban landscape.

Employing the lenses of social memory, the anthropology of space, and narrative performances, the authors relay discourses of displacement and loss that contrast with the official language of blight used to justify the destruction. The neighborhood was settled by German-speaking descendants of earlier immigrants, recent immigrants from

Wales and Ireland and England, African Americans, southern Italians, Russian Jews fleeing the pogroms of the Russian Empire, and most surprising of all Maronite Catholics of the Levant, who came to be known as Syrians and who gave the neighborhood its informal name.

Looking back, one elder reports that “urban renewal was a disaster, very much a disaster, and it devastated our people, tore us apart” (53). Another man compared the quality of the homes being torn down with those they were expected to move into: “Between 15th and 16th Streets there were townhouses, very small, one, two, three bedrooms—they wanted us to move there. The home we used to live in . . . where the windows were, they had marble. We had solid oak steps going up, three stories plus a full basement. They were built with double brick—they were fantastic buildings” (40). While official reports justified renewal under the guise of failing material conditions, Smith and Eisenstein suggest a more sinister underbelly to these authorized narratives.

Perhaps coincidentally, sociocultural anthropologist Edward Spicer, from Cheltenham, Pennsylvania, just over an hour away from the city in which this ethnography is situated, raised similar questions around the topic of identity construction in the last quarter of the 20th century. Interested in the potential resilience of identity categories, Spicer explored conditions that potentially exacerbated or palliated fault lines between and among human populations. He indicated that competition increased and human groups expressed a tendency to emphasize differences along ethnic lines in response to perceived threats, such as limited resources. By contrast, fault lines between and among groups appeared to diminish under conditions in which fear dissipated. Today anthropologists continue to grapple with questions about representation and identity construction.

In *Rebuilding Shattered Worlds*, Smith and Eisenstein note an unexpected *communitas* among the original inhabitants of Syrian Town, suggesting that at least some of the ethnic and racial categorical distinctions identified in academia are not synonymous with individual communities of practice. The former residents describe the neighborhood as “close-knit,” as a “happy family” in which ethnic and racial distinctions did not appear to create fracture lines in the social body: “In those days, the Lebanese, the Jews, the Italians, the Afro-Americans . . . all lived mixed, one right after the other. Now, we went to each other’s funerals, we went to each other’s weddings, we were there for each other . . . and that is something that I will never forget” (64).

Using Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory and Norma Mendoza-Denton’s concept of distributed memory, Smith and Eisenstein contribute to a diverse cross section of theoretical concerns about language, place, and identity. In the process, they raise a series of important issues, not

the least being the concept that sociologist Saskia Sassen in *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* calls the logic of expulsion. Sassen indicates that this logic is a “leitmotif of the contemporary world order” (5). Applied to “people, enterprises, and places expelled from the core social and economic orders of our time” (5), the spatial privileging of a limited few creates a wake of violence and devastation. The brunt of such dividing practices is borne by human populations made vulnerable due to ethnicity, race, religion, or class. Although not particularly emphasized in this writing, other species and the physical environment as a whole are equally defenseless against this metanarrative of the logic of expulsion—an area ripe for examination in the 21st century.

Smith and Eisenstein make a compelling case for the potential limitations of urban renewal projects, the resilience of social memory, and the fortitude of communities of practice in the midst of top-down place regulations. The Easton neighborhood eliminated through the all too common practice of gentrification serves as fertile ground for exploring the creation and maintenance of community as well as social memory processes and practices.

Rebranding Islam: Piety, Prosperity, and a Self-Help Guru.

James Bourk Hoesterey. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016. 296 pp.

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Given all the attention that has been paid to Islamic politics, it is easy to overlook the ways in which Islam has increasingly come to infuse the consumer practices and everyday lifestyles of Muslims around the globe. James Hoesterey's *Rebranding Islam* is an engaging study of Islamic branding through mass marketing and media communications at a particular juncture in Indonesian history. While the story he tells is specific to Indonesia, he also provides broader insights into how consumerism, piety, neoliberalism, and politics can be interwoven in contemporary society, regardless of the setting.

In the first decade of the new millennium, Indonesia was transitioning somewhat uneasily from authoritarianism to a political and economic landscape shaped by democratization, privatization, and Islamization. While hopes were high following the collapse of the decades-long Suharto dictatorship, the course of the country's future was uncertain. In documenting the rise and fall of a Muslim television preacher and entrepreneur who, at the height of his popularity, enjoyed superstar status and a vast business empire, Hoesterey shows how the charismatic,

media-savvy Abdullah Gymnastiar—widely known as Aa (“Elder Brother”) Gym—tapped into the aspirations, anxieties, and consumer desires of millions of Indonesians during this period. He did so by serving up an appealing, easily digested mixture of Sufi-inspired Islamic ethical guidance, Western-style popular psychology, and business management strategies to his enthralled followers.

Although he was not formally trained in Islamic theology or jurisprudence and barely knew any Arabic, Aa Gym's perceived religious authority stemmed from his ability to adapt the transnational self-help industry to Muslim sensibilities at a time when many Indonesians were convinced that Islamic ethics could set them, individually and collectively, on a path that was spiritually righteous, personally fulfilling, and financially prosperous. Wearing his signature turban while posing in front of a fighter jet in a flight suit, crooning a love song to his blushing wife before a crowd of admiring visitors to his sprawling complex, or delivering corporate training seminars, Aa Gym offered upwardly mobile Indonesians a way to combine Islamic morality and family values with the can-do attitudes of entrepreneurial self-reliance and determination, using his own rags-to-riches life story as an example for others to follow.

Hoesterey shadowed Aa Gym and interacted closely with his entourage and followers for more than two years. His detailed examination of Aa Gym's successes as a public figure and his relationships with his devotees provides unique perspectives on how religion intersects with capitalism, politics, transnational understandings of expertise, and gender. While Aa Gym is a remarkable person, his story sheds light on more ordinary aspects of modern life. Hoesterey makes it clear, for instance, that he does not find it analytically useful to bracket off an “authentic” form of Islam from its commodified versions; the more Islam has saturated the mundane lifestyles of its adherents, the less such a distinction makes sense. Believers may absorb Islamic ethics or embrace a Muslim identity as much through the media that they interact with or the products that they buy as through the lessons that they learn at the mosque. At the same time, religious branding is just one form of marketing in a larger field of contemporary exchange relationships, similar to secular forms of marketing.

Hoesterey is especially interested in the affective and economic exchange relationships that developed between Aa Gym and his followers and how his strategy of branding became the basis for his religious authority and rapid rise to fame. Aa Gym attached his personal brand name, Manajemen Qolbu (“Heart Management”) or MQ, to a wide range of businesses from entrepreneurial training seminars and spiritual tourism to mass media, halal cosmetics, and cola. His admirers and consuming public, the majority of whom were women, placed their faith in his

personal brand because of his ability to project an image of himself as a devoted husband and father, a successful businessman, a pious Muslim, and the master of his own heart. As Hoesterey points out, however, consumers can be fickle. The revelation of a personal secret about his married life badly tarnished Aa Gym's brand image and led to the extraordinarily swift collapse of his popularity and his business empire as his disillusioned followers—particularly women—hastily abandoned him and stopped buying his products.

Aa Gym's rise and fall reveals much not only about religious branding and exchange but also about the changing nature of religious authority, Muslim subjectivity and ethical self-cultivation, and the politics of public piety. He was among a new generation of Muslim trainers and self-help gurus who have drawn on multiple genealogies of knowledge, including New Age psychology and transnational scientific expertise, along with the discursive traditions of Islamic theology and philosophy to transform scientific knowledge into religious wisdom, wrapped in a cutting-edge package of expert advice designed to appeal to middle-class Muslims. Aa Gym, who often avoided politics, publicly pressured Indonesia's president and other politicians to serve as the guardians of Islamic morality by supporting a highly controversial antipornography bill that was pending in the legislature. Hoesterey argues that he mobilized his status as a media star and his marketing skills "to endow the state itself with a moral affect of shame" (152), understood as a religiously sanctioned sense of propriety.

Rebranding Islam is a fascinating, well-written book that will make its mark on the scholarship of Islam, anthropology, religious studies, and Indonesia, but it should also be of interest to a wider audience. Like some of the other important work on Islam that has appeared in recent years, it vividly demonstrates how Islam in the modern world can be commodified, marketed, and consumed by a media-hungry public, blurring the lines between what we might call religion and the culture of global capitalism.

Shi'i Cosmopolitanisms in Africa: Lebanese Migration and Religious Conversion in Senegal. *Mara A. Leichtman.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015. 320 pp.

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In popular and media portrayals of Islam, images of fundamentalism and global terrorism obscure more everyday understandings of the varied lives of Muslims around

the world. Mara Leichtman's engaging book on Shi'ism in Senegal is a refreshing antidote. She focuses on two populations—Shi'i migrants from Lebanon and Senegalese converts to Shi'ism—and how they engage with each other, with Senegalese Sufis (the majority in Senegal), and with the *umma*, the global community of Muslims. Leichtman explains that she was pressured to write two books instead of one, each focusing on one of the two populations. While following this advice might have made for a simpler read, resisting it led to a richer book that more accurately reflects the lives of Leichtman's informants and many of the world's Muslims today.

The research, which spanned 13 years and four continents, was as complex as the book itself: Leichtman conducted fieldwork in Lebanon and Senegal and interviewed members of Shi'i organizations in England and France. The book moves, often in a single page, from Senegal to Lebanon and back to Senegal, mirroring the dynamic, multifaceted nature of transnationals' lives. Although Leichtman wanted to diverge from the "traditional anthropological community study model" (236–37), readers still gain in-depth historical and ethnographic understandings of the two featured populations. The book thus feels like a double community study of the relationship between members of the two groups and how they construct and perform differing ways of being Shi'i.

Lebanese began arriving in Senegal in the late 1800s to work as intermediaries between the French and the Senegalese in the peanut trade. By the early 2000s, the community had grown to between 25,000 and 30,000, and many members were at least second-generation migrants; many of these did not speak Arabic and had never been to Lebanon. Lebanese in Senegal, who consider themselves to have a "cosmopolitan outlook" (88), have been "defined as much by others as by self-definition" (40). Senegalese call them Arabs, consider them white, and envy their high economic status. French colonials, in contrast, see them as somewhere between Africans and Europeans, neither black nor white. Lebanese are still considered outsiders even when they are Senegalese citizens and speak French and Wolof fluently. Due to their liminal position, economic success, and insularity, they are viewed as "parasites" (69) and often blamed for Senegal's problems. They cope by uniting as an ethnic and religious group. Shi'ism became less of a religion than an ethnicity, what every Lebanese person was unless otherwise marked.

Senegalese Shi'i converts comprise primarily educated, relatively affluent men who, unlike most Lebanese in Senegal, know classical Arabic and have studied in the Middle East. Conversion to Shi'ism is for them a cosmopolitan, intellectual project connected to travel and literacy. It is, as one of Leichtman's informants explained, a move away from an Islam that exists only for marriage, tea drinking, and greetings to a more "active Islam" (173). To

converts, Shi'ism offers a more authentic way of being Muslim: a new religious consciousness and a set of practices that allow them to distinguish, perhaps for the first time, religion as an inherited culture from religion as something that individuals achieve. It also provides an escape from local constraints—colonialism's legacy, race and ethnicity, worsening economic conditions—and the opportunity to participate in a global religious movement that is marked as an alternative to Westernization. Leichtman argues that for Senegalese converts Shi'ism is “inextricably linked to national identity and a secular struggle for equality, human rights . . . and self-determination” (141). For converts, it is the key to a modern Senegal and a better world.

Such a view of Shi'ism seems somewhat paradoxical. Despite more than a century of Lebanese presence in Dakar, Senegalese had very little understanding of Shi'ism until the late 1970s and held stereotypical views of Shi'a as atheists who followed a different Qur'an and denied that Mohammed was the Prophet. The Iranian Revolution increased awareness, challenged previously held stereotypes, and inspired conversion among Senegalese because of its anticolonialist implications.

To trace this trend, Leichtman offers a biography of Shaykh al-Zayn, Senegal's first Shi'i leader, who established the first Shi'i religious center in Africa. A charismatic man, he brought formal Islamic education to the Lebanese community in Senegal and was credited with bringing members “back to Islam' as well as (spiritually if not physically) back to Lebanon” (113). In minimizing differences between Sunni and Shi'i Muslims, he also attracted Senegalese followers. Leichtman also delves into various Shi'i practices that were attractive to Senegalese. One example includes *zawaj mut'a*, a pre-Islamic custom in which a man and a woman establish a temporary marriage. While both Lebanese and Senegalese engage in this practice, they attach different meanings to it: Lebanese consider it a form of pleasure, while Senegalese see it as a creative solution to the modern-day dilemma of delayed marriage brought about by the country's worsening economic situation. Senegalese women, for their part, see the practice as preventing adultery and prostitution and reducing abortion and AIDS. They link it to economic development and women's rights, since women can end temporary unions without the stigma of divorce.

Leichtman takes a fresh look at some big anthropological ideas, such as cosmopolitanism and conversion, and challenges binary understandings of both. Shi'i cosmopolitanisms, according to her, incorporate both local and global Muslim traditions and are at once universalizing and rooted in particular local cultures. Conversion in Senegal, in her model, is not a unidirectional process, nor does it initiate a complete break with the past or with one's religion of origin, as Shi'i converts usually keep one foot in Sufi Islam. Leichtman also challenges popular and scholarly

understandings of reformist movements as involving significant pressure or force: although Senegalese Shi'a consider their views true, they do not pressure others to accept them, nor do they prevent Sufis from practicing or learning about their own beliefs and customs in Shi'i spaces.

Shi'i Cosmopolitanisms in Africa is valuable because Shi'a in Africa are largely overlooked. Also of significance is the fact that Leichtman reflects occasionally on the interpersonal dynamics of fieldwork and the challenges of working with multiple communities. For example, readers learn that her project forced her to confront her Jewish identity, that people initially assumed she was a spy, and that her Senegalese informants were horrified when a Lebanese man asked her to become his temporary wife. Finally, the book should be commended for its historical depth. Leichtman provides detailed but clear summaries of the history of Lebanon and Lebanese migration to Africa as well as French colonialism and Islam in West Africa. The book would be very useful in graduate and advanced undergraduate courses not only in anthropology and African and Africana studies but in history and religious studies as well.

For Love of the Prophet: An Ethnography of Sudan's Islamic State. *Noah Salomon.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016. 264 pp.

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Noah Salomon's provocative, well-researched, and profoundly thoughtful monograph on one of the only two Islamic states in existence (and the only Sunni one) is bound to be the subject of probing and oftentimes acrimonious discussions for some time to come. It will provoke discussion not only because very little has been written in English about the regime, but because Salomon sees himself inside of it, not in the sense of the ethnographer “gone native” but as someone who grasps and appreciates the ongoing experiment in the Islamization of the state. He presents Islamic politics as a central, not a marginal, discourse, one that does not focus on a reaction to the West but emerges out of Sudan's social and cultural conditions.

Although Salomon writes beautifully, sometimes poetically, this book is a complicated read, for one thing because it is sorely in need of an Arabic glossary but also because he enters into several debates about the architecture of the state and public space that deploy a range of scholars, both from the anthropological community and from the wider world of political theory. The book is also oddly structured. After the evocative introductory chapter,

Salomon divides the volume into five chapters and an extraneous epilogue (discussed below) under three section titles: “Interventions,” “Itineraries,” and “Inquiries.” I found these designations esoteric and unnecessary. The photos and illustrations, generally of mediocre quality, do not add much to the text.

For me, someone who has been a student of Sudan since 1961, among the most exciting elements of the book are Salomon’s challenges to the distinctions that are often drawn between Islamic and secular states and between the state and the public sphere. It will come as a surprise to some readers (as Salomon convincingly argues) that the current regime is a continuation of British colonialism and not a sharp break with the past or a harking back to the Mahdiyya or the kingdom of Sinnar. Current theistic rule is an outcome of state-led secularist efforts, not a reaction to them. The British tried to centralize Islam under one authority, therefore pulling religion out of the private sphere in order to eliminate the everyday Islam that “was the heart of Sudanese Islam” (37) and therefore dangerous to the British. Nevertheless, Sufistic movements remained popular among the people, especially so after the Islamic revolution of 1989. Salomon quotes from an interview he did with the father of contemporary Sudanese Islamism, Hasan al-Turabi, who said that “people became obsessed with politics” (92) to the point of forgetting culture, education, and mosques. Turabi argued that because his National Islamic Front concentrated on government offices, the army, and apparatuses of the state, such a top-heavy strategy left society (i.e., not the government or the army) unguarded, allowing Sufism and Salafism to fill the vacuum.

The public sphere or “the street” or civil society is in most states a space that stands potentially outside the state. Salomon makes two seemingly contradictory assertions about this relationship. On the one hand, the current state “muddied the boundary between state and society in order to make itself seem less foreign” (11–12), while on the other hand actors within civil society tried to “maintain comfortable distance from the regime” (12).

Salomon claims that his main agenda is “understanding the life of the Islamic state, as put into practice in Sudan” (6). Such a claim caused me to anticipate that he would be reading the Islamic state through dialogues with ordinary people, given that he asserts that one does not find the Islamic state where one might expect—with the government and its apparatuses—but in the streets, literally, through soundscapes: for example, the Islamic praise poetry blaring from public transport, radio, state TV, and the mosques. My own experience in greater Khartoum, the capital, coincides with Salomon’s view that the dominant political discourse has become that of Islam. Therefore, he seems to have shifted from an earlier view that the Islamic state is nowhere to be found to a view that the Islamic state is everywhere (one of his chapter subheads).

There are some disappointments in the book. Almost all the ideas come from Sudanese intellectuals—whether Sufi (a more spiritualistic form of Sunni Islam), Salafi, or academic—not from the people. Furthermore, although I appreciate Salomon’s nod to multiculturalism, it is a truncated attempt, not to mention that one cannot help but note the near absence of women, the participation of whom is highly important to Islamism. This problem might have been alleviated had Salomon delved more into civil society. Sometimes it appears that he is bending over backward not to engage in critiques of the state and its known abuses of human rights, saying that he will leave the polemics to others. In fact, he often tucks very politically sensitive points into footnotes; for example, he comments that a 2003 speech by President Omar al-Bashir was “a distinctly Arab version of Sudanese political history” (49), omitting the other ethnic groups that also made contributions to the building of the Islamic state. The epilogue—“Escaping the Islamic State?”—seems designed to pick up such loose ends as the 2011 secession of the more Africa-identified South Sudan and the departure to join ISIS of a few students from middle-class families (Salomon’s explanation is interesting, however). Omitted from this escape scenario are the thousands of Sudanese who went into exile.

Salomon’s work shines, however, in the last three chapters when he deals with Sufism and Salafism—giving the reader the book’s closest look at the people’s Islam through its nonregime Sufi and Salafi intellectuals. Surely for some time to come, this brilliant book will be a center of discussion—not only among Sudanese and Sudanist scholars and intellectuals but also among Middle Eastern and African studies scholars and others, in general, who are puzzling over the nature of the Islamic state.

Sovereignty in Exile: A Saharan Liberation Movement Governs. *Alice Wilson.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016. 312 pp.

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Western Sahara’s ongoing battle for sovereignty remains one of the most enduring and least known conflicts in Africa’s decolonization. Home to mobile populations of mixed origin who speak the Hassaniya dialect of Arabic, the territory was claimed by Spain in 1884 and occupied by Spanish troops until 1975. As Spain withdrew, Morocco and Mauritania both laid claim to the territory, even as a movement toward statehood—the Sahrawi Arab Democratic

Republic, SADR—emerged. Fighting between the SADR and its two neighbors commenced in 1975. Mauritania withdrew that same year, while armed conflict with Morocco continued until a United Nations–brokered cease-fire in 1991. An internationally buttressed stalemate between the SADR and Morocco persists, with Morocco controlling most of the territory and at least 100,000 Sahrawi refugees living in camps in western Algeria.

It is the concerted political project by the SADR to construct state power in refugee camps and to unmake the tribes that have long organized Sahrawi political life that forms the subject of Alice Wilson's *Sovereignty in Exile*. This state-movement (as Wilson calls it throughout the book) consists of the unfinished fusion of the partially recognized state of the SADR with the closely related Polisario Front liberation movement and its ongoing struggle for autonomy, legitimacy, and territory. Conceptualizing sovereignty as a set of social relations, Wilson shows that it is not simply the purview of states but may also be a political project for displaced tribes in exile. This conceptual move takes us beyond reducing refugee life to bare life (for all the hardships they face and the rights they do not enjoy) and beyond simply seeing camps as spaces of exception. Wilson instead renders legible the “innovated citizenship” (11) and effervescent political life in camps that are all too often depicted as suspended in time and space. She spent two years in the camps and resided with four different households, whose socioeconomic and geographic diversity contributes to the breadth and depth of her perspective.

Wilson effectively uses the metaphor of a palimpsest to organize her political ethnography. In part 1, “Aspirations,” she describes the SADR's attempts to overwrite the social relations of the tribe with those of state power, yet she shows how tribal political structures continue to influence life in the camps. She uses a working definition of a tribe as a “sphere of consented solidarity” (32) to postulate that at particular moments in Western Sahara, a tribe has been a project of sovereignty in its own right. As she explains how the camps have changed over time, she traces the SADR's efforts to displace the tribe by introducing new administrative structures to engage refugees in governance. Yet refugees often celebrated their participation in public meetings as a continuation of earlier political practice as part of a claim that Sahrawis were “democratic before democracy” (84). Wilson acknowledges the ethnographic limits of measuring the truth of this claim but misses the opportunity to explore in depth why Sahrawi refugees take the effort to make it.

It is in part 2, “Compromises,” that the camps come to life, as Wilson details how SADR's attempts to overwrite the relations of the tribe gave way to working *through* these very relations to pursue the project of state sovereignty. Early on, the SADR attempted to establish a monopoly on

a key project of sovereignty: deciding which laws hold at a given moment. In the early revolutionary period, legal authority was transferred away from tribes and into the SADR through the Justice Committee. But by 1991, the SADR was promoting the professionalization and depopularization of legal power through formal courts. This concentration of legal power in the state also prompted a return to pre-legal conflict resolution through the reemergence of *sulh*, which Wilson interprets as a partial retribalization of social relations. Other tasks of sovereignty were carried out in the camps: the rise and fall of an “innovated taxation” (33) that intimately linked appropriation to redistribution and the management of inequality through efforts to regulate prestations and wedding celebrations to give an effect of social egalitarianism.

Part 3, “Dilemmas,” characterizes the problems of sovereignty in the apparent resurgence of the tribes. Tribal loyalties, social differentiation, and inequality were reemerging in the camps through markets. Yet markets were ambivalent in their effects: introducing gendered inequalities even as they legitimated women's labor outside the home and ethnicizing distinctions between status groups through the labor market while undermining stigma. Wilson also examines tribal loyalties as they relate to voting in elections and asks whether tribes are bad for democracy. Her answer is profoundly ethnographic if not also unsurprising: the relationship between tribe and democracy in any particular historical case is intimately linked with the character of the political relations in which the tribes are embedded.

In *Sovereignty in Exile*, Wilson has humanized and rendered animate life in exile in the Sahrawi refugee camps. Her style of ethnography emphasizes thick description and well-placed vignettes of her interactions with host families over formal interviews and direct quotes. Though the reader is left wanting more first-person accounts from the refugees themselves, the book is rich with the perspective of a knowledgeable, observant, and well-situated ethnographer engaging deeply with people and place. It makes important contributions to anthropological and area studies literature on states and sovereignty. Wilson shows that Sahrawi refugees living in camps are able to work within the moral and political frameworks of tribe and state rather than experiencing them as dissonant or historically distinct. And she demonstrates that a moral contract of revolution endures in which Sahrawi refugees prioritize a broad level of collective interests rather than one of rivalrous agendas. The form such a moral contract takes is by no means undebated, and it is understanding sovereignty as a set of mediated and contested social relations that allows us to trace its dynamic form. Wilson not only shows us that the ethos of this invisible revolution endures in Western Sahara but reminds us that there can indeed be a *polis* in exile.

Everyday Piety: Islam and Economy in Jordan. Sarah A. Tobin. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016. 248 pp.

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Amman, the modern capital of the kingdom of Jordan, is a city with a high proportion of college graduates, fancy shopping malls, and the ever-popular Starbucks coffee shops. For many citizens of the Gulf states, Amman is a fun place to visit. It boasts a diverse and well-educated population. You can drink alcohol in its restaurants. It is a cosmopolitan but also an Arab place, so it attracts Europeans looking for a taste of the authentic. In the last few decades, it also experienced an Islamic resurgence of a pious bent, which entices its poor and its affluent middle class alike. This Islamic revival spreads uniformly across citizens of local origin as well as Palestinian transplants and refugees, who make up nearly half the country's population (not all of whom are Muslim).

Sarah Tobin spent about two years in Amman, conducting fieldwork and working part of the time as an English instructor, which gave her acquaintances mostly from the internationally connected western part of the city. She had a short stint as an intern in the International Islamic Arab Bank, and she reports many conversations and observations from that experience. Readers are most likely to benefit from the two chapters in the second half of the book dedicated to Islamic banking. These reveal the discourses surrounding the practice among people of diverse walks of life—those at the top who shape its institutional arrangements, the employees of the bank, and the customers and their unending quest for real Islam in this and other aspects of their lives.

Islamic banking started in the mid-1980s as a transnational movement that had technical roots in the writings of a few Pakistani financial experts, but today it is a practical reality mostly in the Islamic reform sectors of the Arab world and its New World diaspora. This presence was achieved largely thanks to petrodollar support and ideological influences from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries, although the practice finds favor in varied milieus. Tobin provides a concise history of the movement in Jordan that is highly revelatory. King Hussein of Jordan formed an alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1970 civil war to dislodge the Palestinian Liberation Organization leadership from the country. With the clout that the Muslim Brotherhood gained from this association and the intervention of some members of the royal family, Saudi investment was secured and the Jordan Islamic Bank was established in 1978. In 1998, a second Islamic bank was started.

Tobin does not tell us much about Islamic banking aside from a reminder that its central tenet is the prohibition of interest. Instead, she supplies ample illustrations of the discourses in which actors engage when participating in or, alternatively, ignoring the institutions that represent it. These multiple voices are complemented by an exploration of motives, ranging from compliance under social pressure to ethical considerations to the desire for salvation. Tobin notes that there is tension among the divergent visions of Islamic banking, such as a different way of organizing economic life to achieve greater justice, or a means of accelerating economic development peacefully, or again a way of allowing people to fulfill religious obligations and avoid sin in our pervasively commodified environment. Other chapters take as subjects the growing incidence of women wearing headscarves, the new assertiveness to make the fast of Ramadan hegemonic in public spaces, and the lack in Jordan of the disruptive political correlates of Islamic effervescence found in other countries.

Tobin's discussion would have been helped by the provision of a few sustained ideological profiles organizing the contentions from a perspective rising above the negotiations and contingent moves that actors exemplify in daily encounters. Not only research subjects but Islamic authorities and scholarly authors, too, are treated in piecemeal fashion, creating a kaleidoscopic impression. Major historical figures of Islamic jurisprudence as well as distinctive contemporary writers such as the Moroccan feminist Fatima Mernissi or the Sudanese jurist Abdullahi An-Na'im are given cameo appearances, but without revealing the more comprehensive positions that shape their perspectives on the issues under review. A more careful use of language, for example, avoiding glossing "sharia" in incompatible ways in different parts of the book, could go with such an awareness. The reader will need to supply a conceptual framework that takes in historical developments and contemporary variability in the Middle East beyond the self-understanding of current Islamist pieties promoted by powerful financial centers. The Ottoman state, which ruled over most of the Middle East until World War I, was an Islamic power; it did not bypass sharia jurisprudence for economic matters because it could not keep up with modern developments, as suggested to Tobin by one of her interlocutors. In the middle of the 19th century, the Ottoman state took a different option: transforming the basis of the polity from religious legal principles to secular ones to accommodate a nation with constituents belonging to different confessions in a framework of citizen equality. This was a transformative decision on the part of its authorities, and the plan made great strides but could not be brought to completion before the 20th-century disasters and the dissolution of the empire. The unfinished project left a legacy in successor states and the postcolonial republics that emerged in the 20th century.

This legacy is what the Muslim Brotherhood political ideology and some other varieties of Islamic resurgence reject today. Radical historical options are available to actors beyond quibbles about how to wear the scarf or the degree of its fit with modernity or past fashions and conventions among the world's Muslims. Tobin's book does not include reminders of these broad political options, the historical debates, or the fevered oppositions concerning them among contemporary Muslims of the world but, remaining within the framework of the Islamist milieu in one place, it illuminates a part of the spectrum.

Siege of the Spirits: Community and Polity in Bangkok.

Michael Herzfeld. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016. 272 pp.

DOI: 10.1111/amet.12620

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In Bangkok's sprawling urban entity, monolithic skyscrapers and magnificent temples cohabit with a tangle of alleys and ramshackle neighborhoods accessible by shallow canals. This jumble of hidden neighborhoods offers welcome refuge amid Thailand's occasionally violent political polarization, marked by two military coups since 2006 and the death of Bhumibol Adulyadej, one of the world's longest-reigning monarchs, in 2016. Michael Herzfeld is attracted to such anomalous urban spaces. As in his research in Rome and earlier in Greece, he juxtaposes local forms of community building with state schemes of order making. These urban transformations make local neighborhoods congenial to tourism and other global markets, reflecting transnational processes of self-colonization. In *Siege of the Spirits*, Herzfeld explores these transformations in the tiny community of Pom Mahakan, a green strip of occupied land between an old city wall and one of the city's last transport canals.

The neighborhood of Pom Mahakan is named after its small whitewashed citadel, also one of the city's last forts, built in the late 1700s to protect the royal Rattanakosin grounds it borders. This proximity to royal spaces puts the community's residents, who number fewer than 300, under the looming threat of eviction in ongoing schemes of cultural gentrification. In this way, while the people of Pom Mahakan "view themselves as a microcosm of the entire polity," Herzfeld also views them as "a mirror that reflects many of the tensions and brittle balances that plague Thai politics and governance today" (203).

Amid intense state incursion from the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, the community's activism led to unexpected support from within the city's urban

middle class for a neighborhood that many of them formerly considered a dangerous slum. Herzfeld asks, "What processes lie behind this remarkable transformation?" (8). The complexity of his answers suggests widespread political implications for Thailand and global applications for community activism. Through meticulous urban ethnography, Herzfeld documents the resilient resistance of the people of Pom Mahakan as collective agents negotiating the self-contradictory paradoxes of Thai authoritarian and egalitarian politics. In one instance, residents countered a police order to remove their protest signs by insisting that they could only be moved to a street-side location that would further challenge unspoken modes of police authority. This deft tactic allowed the protesting residents to keep the signs temporarily in place in their original location. In another example, a community president insisted that Herzfeld speak with his political rivals, publicly demonstrating an adept ability to accommodate the followers of the opposing Red Shirt and Yellow Shirt political movements as an inclusive survival strategy. The community's moving resistance problematizes the predominant generalizations and simplifications in Thai political struggles.

In this way, Herzfeld's engaging book documents a significant source of cultural complexity that "refuses the simplistic polarities that so often dominate both social theory and Thai politics" (24). Beyond its critical implications for Thailand's uncertain future, the book provides cross-regional comparisons of local community activism against corporate state encroachment. Its transnational appeal also emerges from its extension of Pom Mahakan's narrative beyond local territoriality and national culture. Herzfeld's narrative history temporally weaves Siam's amorphous cosmological polity as a conjoined aspect of Thailand's demarcated nation-state. This ethnographic attention to time culminates in an exemplary chapter titled "Time, Sound, and Rhythm," which analyzes temporal malleability in local soundscapes, from the formal pacing of community leaders' speeches to the crackling treble of microphone amplification.

Herzfeld's ethnography integrates Pom Mahakan's subversive persistence with community performances in ritualistic hearings and a "mastery of official form, including royal and religious protocol" (15). As the neighborhood weathers complex state techniques of dominance, Herzfeld continues to participate in its resistance with measured deployments of personal advocacy. His willing activism and reciprocal respect for the neighborhood's residents are palpable. He delicately depicts the community's daily struggles through affecting moments of dissent against bureaucratic economic orders and global trends of self-gentrification. At the same time, the culturally specific contexts of Herzfeld's field site provide crucial implications for Thailand, from "the postmodern phantasmagoria of consumerist Bangkok"

(82) to the “curious symbiosis of democratic and authoritarian values, or resistance and subservience, that characterizes so much of Thai political life” (27). These conceptual grounds are evoked through a compelling cast of agents who include cryptic royals, national politicians, apprentice anthropologists, retired boxers, inebriated gadflies, and embattled residents.

In *Siege of the Spirits*, Herzfeld crafts an intimate non-binary narrative that transcends generalizations of political heroism and villainy. His ethnographic portrayal of cyclical temporality merges with the impermanence of community resistance. Through this juxtaposition, any potential outcome will necessarily reflect the ongoing transformations of a fleeting and unstable era. Thailand’s self-contradictory oscillations between authoritarian egalitarianism and hierarchical equality signal this ethnography’s broad relevance to other transnational political contexts. Pom Mahakan’s contrary complexity amid deep national polarization serves as a cultural mirror for reflection beyond Thai politics. The open question of whether these stalwart residents will be completely forced from their neighborhood remains unanswered, even as the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration continues house-by-house demolitions in 2017 and transforms a few dozen remaining households into a museum.

Herzfeld continues to advocate publicly in Thai and international venues for the community’s legal and cultural legitimacy. As this urban war of attrition for the “future of the past” (187) continues, its story of resistance and eviction continues to reveal unexpected cultural and political complexities. This inspiring and tragic ethnographic journey effectively enlists anthropological storytelling as testament to the resilience of the community’s people. “If they are forced to leave the site,” Herzfeld writes, “a last, lingering trace of the old Siamese polity . . . will vanish, a barely perceptible wisp trailing the fast-fading echoes of memory into the greedy smog of modern Bangkok” (204). The residents’ harrowing dissent is a uniquely vibrant facet of Thailand’s contemporary political and cultural volatility. Herzfeld’s ethnography challenges the macrolevel forces of nationalist urban capitalism with the micropolitics of tenacious community activism.

Faith and Charity: Religion and Humanitarian Assistance in West Africa. Marie Nathalie LeBlanc and Louis Audet Gosselin, eds. London: Pluto, 2016. 256 pp.

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Marie Nathalie LeBlanc and Louis Audet Gosselin present a timely collection of case studies from Burkina Faso and

Côte d’Ivoire that consider “the dialectical relationship between, on the one hand, a dominant neoliberal ideology that encourages the privatisation, individualisation and NGO-isation of social activism, and, on the other hand, religious activists’ use of neoliberal language and practices to help achieve social and religious change” (10). Significantly, Islam features more prominently than Christianity. Five of the case studies focus on Islamic faith-based NGOs, two discuss evangelical Christianity, and another concentrates on Catholicism. The authors, who are from the two African countries and France, are professors, researchers, and students who collectively bring a wealth of expertise and longitudinal field experience to the question at hand, which results in detailed, deep writing. One of the more intriguing elements of the book is its methodology: all but two of the contributions derive from a collective research project led by LeBlanc, which makes the volume as a whole a “mix between an edited collection and a monograph” (20). Evocative of the structure of a monograph, the contributions in the first section provide extensive descriptive accounts, while later chapters seem to focus more extensively on conceptual analysis of field data. Regrettably, the volume offers few details on the collective research design and process; explicit discussion of how research questions were developed, sites selected, and data shared would have enhanced the monographic qualities of the text.

In the introduction, the editors offer compelling sketches of the histories of Burkina Faso and Côte d’Ivoire and are careful to explain that these nations reflect a history of “mutual dependence and rivalry” (15). In short, the two countries are not separate cases upon which a comparative study can be launched; rather, they are entwined and, national boundaries aside, a single case. This approach of integrating a critical conceptualization of contemporary nation-state boundaries into a research design should inform much more of our scholarship in this region and across the globe. After the introduction, the book is divided into two parts. The three chapters in the first part provide a broad, comparative perspective on faith-based development in the region; in the second part, five chapters explore how different religious and national contexts can spur or inhibit new forms of social action and citizenship.

Following an actor-oriented approach, the case studies focus heavily on NGO leaders and other actors who articulate the efforts, motivations, and impact of building successful organizations. In the transition from activism to religious entrepreneurship among Muslim NGO leaders, personal networks and prestige facilitate success. For example, Mara Vitale demonstrates how the charisma of religious leaders in the Tijaniyya brotherhood builds support through a transnational moral economy. In complementary fashion, Marie LeBlanc notes that for Muslim women’s associations local solidarities can *limit* opportunities to access international funding. Louis Gosselin and Boris

Koenig draw sharp attention to the structural dimensions of access, such as the deep history of the Catholic Church in the region, which allows its representatives to become implementing partners of state-funded initiatives. Kathéry Couillard, Frédérick Madore, and Muriel Gomez-Perez point to the ways in which uneven access to the state affects access to land and, ultimately, opportunities for success. Such keen ethnographic and historical insights point to the importance of understanding the role of religious pluralism in the field of development.

In tandem with questions of access, class and inequality quickly emerge as latent themes (in the conclusion, the editors suggest these themes as points for further inquiry) across the case studies and cast a significant shadow on the potential of faith-based NGOs to spur democratization. Rather, in the landscape of established and emerging faith-based NGOs, the outgrowth and spread of neoliberalism alongside the ongoing struggle for resources spur various degrees of professionalization by leaders, employees, and volunteers. Social transformation, then, emerges as a possibility for individuals, with much less opportunity for achieving broader structural changes. That said, striking changes result from professionalization, as seen in Issouf Binaté's discussion of recasting "imams in the role of employees paid by the community, in the same way as the service staff employed by the mosque" (57). Louis Gosselin's account of evangelical Christians reveals a theological framework that situates social mobility, entrepreneurship, and success as signs of faith; volunteers are thus able to engage in religious activism while improving their own status. Similarly drawing on neoliberal notions of the self, Boris Koenig shows how socially marginalized individuals combat their isolation through religious entrepreneurship and holistic rehabilitation in an evangelical NGO, producing what he calls Christian citizenship.

As much as *Faith and Charity* presents a meticulously researched ethnographic account of the emergence and activities of faith-based NGOs and leaders, at times the writing becomes too encyclopedic. Such detailed accounting results in missed opportunities for conceptual development and theoretical engagement. Individual case studies point to the ways in which religious entrepreneurship is balanced by aspects of the moral economy, but the volume would benefit immensely from a solid conceptual foundation and a framework for unpacking how and why religious pluralism matters to economic development. In addition, the authors perhaps assume more knowledge about the doctrinal details of Islam than potential readers might have.

Nevertheless, *Faith and Charity* will appeal to experts and nonexperts alike. Its attention to religious pluralism casts a refreshing and provocative gaze upon neoliberal politics and makes a substantial contribution to the literatures on faith-based NGOs, development, and humanitarianism. As Marie LeBlanc and Louis Gosselin note, the process

of NGO-ization and infiltration of NGOs into religious communities has had an impact not just on Pentecostal churches but on the "entire religious field" (5).

Affective Circuits: African Migrations to Europe and the Pursuit of Social Regeneration. Jennifer Cole and Christian Groes, eds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016. 352 pp.

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This exceptionally cohesive collection makes important contributions to the literature on affect, migration, and African studies. Editors Jennifer Cole and Christian Groes conceptualize migration pathways as affective circuits. This framework is useful for understanding African migration to Europe and the multistranded ties that link kin across time and space and, importantly, for understanding how these processes produce new forms, frameworks, and networks that contribute to a distinct process of social regeneration.

Although to some circuits might harken back to nothing more or less than a path that returns to its origin, as the authors use the term here it often partakes of a more electrical or electronic quality. If you're in the former category, "affective circuits," put simply, are "the social networks that emerge from the exchange of goods, ideas, people, and emotions" (6). Extending this idea further, Pamela Feldman-Savelsberg in a chapter on Cameroonians in Berlin conveys that "the metaphor of electrical current, subject to short circuits and regulated by circuit breakers, helps us appreciate the discontinuous nature of these flows: they can be slowed, dropped, blocked, and picked up again. . . . these social flows not only vary in speed and strength but also occasionally shift from alternating to direct current" (57). It is this elaboration of the concept that is animated throughout the book.

The book unfolds over 11 chapters, each of which offers a rich ethnographic case study informed by multisited research in Africa and Europe. One element of the book that I greatly appreciated was how the authors maintained deep connectivity to the literature on Africa. As migration work more generally tilts toward one side or the other of the multisited and increasingly toward the European destination, this grounding sometimes gets lost. *Affective Circuits* deftly avoids this pitfall. The circuit remains circular.

Most of the European settings that the authors describe center on former colonial metropolises—for example, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Portugal—with a sprinkling of other locales like Denmark that are particularly interesting because there is

less available literature on African migration to these countries. The studies set in Africa represent a broader set of countries such as Ghana, Cameroon, the Gambia, Mali, Madagascar, Senegal, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, the Republic of the Congo, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Each chapter is of a consistently high quality, avoiding the unevenness that edited volumes sometimes suffer from. Some chapters are compelling because they focus on very edgy and fresh topics of the sort that would grab an undergraduate reading audience; see, for example, Henrik Vigh's piece on cocaine migration in Guinea-Bissau or Sasha Newell's chapter on the sartorial culture of Congolese migrants or *sapeurs*. Other chapters are attractive because they are derived from literally decades of work—note Pamela Feldman-Savelsberg's work on Cameroonian mothers in Germany, Pamela Kea's chapter on migration between the Gambia and the United Kingdom, Christian Groes's chapter on Mozambican women and marriage, and Cati Coe's work on Ghanaians in multiple locales, including Italy—and can speak to change over time that substantively highlights one of anthropology's key contributions to larger studies of migration.

Another important component in all the chapters is their focus on intimacy. The authors in this volume know the populations they write about well. Because their knowledge is derived from immersive fieldwork practices and relationships with those interviewed, all the contributors are positioned to articulate complex social relations within families. Jennifer Cole, for example, writes about traveling from Europe to Madagascar with the woman she describes. This approach expands the larger conversation in migration studies that relies heavily on the material in the form of remittances or the legal and institutional mechanisms that govern migration. It's not that money or the state is missing from these studies, just that the authors take their analyses from the macro- to the microlevel. Each chapter engages deeply with this concept of affective circuits, referencing the introductory chapter and one another's chapters in a way that results in an integrated feel to the volume.

No volume can do everything, and in a few areas this volume has room for further development. Most of the studies reflect a nation-state bias. They tend to look at bilateral flows between two countries, which mimics a boundedness found in the larger migration literature that should, perhaps, be avoided in studies that take affect and intimacy as points of departure. Is it more valid to talk about Kenyan Pentecostals in London, or would it be better to look at Luo Pentecostals or even East African Pentecostals there? When does nationality become explanatory, and when is it mere reflexive habit (or a condition of grant funding)? That said, chapters like Carolyn Sargent and Stéphanie Larchanché's study of transnational health care

circuits do take a broader approach by focusing on the West African community in France.

Somewhat paradoxically, one of this book's greatest strengths—its cohesiveness—can also be seen as a limitation. While the authors and editors seem to go to great lengths to highlight the moments when their chapters are mutually reinforcing, seldom does anyone point out when there is a lack of alignment or when two chapters might document different outcomes. I think more attention not only to how the findings reinforce but also how they contrast with one another—perhaps in a concluding chapter—could have added yet another layer to an exceptionally well executed edited volume. Overall, *Affective Circuits* is an important, multifaceted, and welcome addition to the ethnographic literature that serves as a significant stand-alone contribution as well as rich fodder and a jumping-off point for anyone interested in crafting new studies of migration, Africa, and the anthropology of kinship.

Impulse to Act: A New Anthropology of Resistance and Social Justice. Othon Alexandrakis, ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016. 284 pp.

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Impulse to Act is a nuanced evaluation of two central aspects of social action—*affect* and *agency*—via case studies of collective protest and popular resistance movements. Editor Othon Alexandrakis divides it into two sections; the first privileges *affect* as it emerges from and shapes collective action, and the second focuses on *agency* in protest and resistance. He considers that individuals are drawn to protest by multiple motivations and interests and come to popular resistance from a wide range of personal experiences. Motivation in such collectivities is at least as much affective as cognitive—what is felt and experienced rather than what is shared as knowledge or analysis.

In the section on *affect*, Jessica Greenberg's study of resistance in Serbia compares an older generation's totalizing vision of and faith in revolutionary change with a disappointed and disillusioned younger generation's adoption of more modest and reformist pragmatism. Affective experiences of disappointment shape and are recycled into political action as an essential dynamic of Serbian democracy. Eirini Avramopoulou focuses on the "overwhelming life" (43) of a transgender individual in Istanbul who refuses self-labeling, using gender uncertainty as a protest against totalizing and constricting identity categories. Avramopoulou emphasizes that demanding rights is more than a cognitive exercise. It involves

passion for something different or better. “That is why rights as universal ideas do not exist but insist” (57).

Irene Peano analyzes efforts among rural farmworkers in Italy to form what she refers to as a composition, a collectivity that depends not on authority or a specific political agenda (as do labor unions) but on the affect, friendship, and love that relationships can embody. A composition unites through such ties, endorsing and actively supporting self-determination and self-actualization, processes that can be useful in many different contexts and struggles. Peano concludes that affective relationships are crucial to building resistance and change. James Faubion broadens the field of concern beyond affect to include life and body. He argues that “the human body—a sensuous and sensible body, a textural and rhythmic body, by no means least a living and dying body—is the most immediate and most ubiquitous matrix of our imagination of the cosmos itself” (109). Faubion claims that the “mindful body” forms the basis of values that justify biopolitics as a collective enterprise dealing with *vital* matters, those that address crucial issues of survival. He strongly implies that such values include the value of human life and the value of many things that make one human as well as the value of the living environment.

Neni Panourgíá wants to explore what may happen to the “dialectical dance of otherness initiated and effectuated by the anthropologist” (115) between the anthropologist and the people she or he purports to study when the context is one of crisis that envelops both. She offers descriptions of the precarity of life during the Greek economic crisis, experienced with concrete examples in different ways, that may expose the affective cost of a global economic system in which the official ideology is that there is no alternative to austerity. Here it seems that ethnography works to support resistance by redirecting critique from individual and collective responsibility to the level of the political economy and how it influences the affective lives and hardships of people.

In the section that considers agency, Tania Ahmad shows how residents of middle-class neighborhoods in urban Pakistan “locate their rejection of [sectarian] violence in a discourse of respectability” that “combines sensibilities for pious morality with leisure activities, consumer practices, and the authority of a kinship-based domestic order” (136). Attempting “normal” life becomes a form of resistance to and criticism of the violence as well as a statement of a desired alternative. A shared idiom of pious morality creates an emergent collectivity in opposition to the violence. “The question is less about power and effective action and more about the possibility of articulating intentional practices through affective belonging” (136).

In her descriptions of LGBT activism in Nicaragua and opposition to a wind turbine project in rural Mexico, Cymene Howe focuses on the need to look at activism in

those periods when there is no apparent action—“how unmovement may in fact reveal the finer contours of the political ecologies of activism and transformative social action” (163). Howe exhorts us to be attentive to “the full scope and shape of movement politics” (169) and what we methodologically include and exclude. Discussing a Russian art collective, Petra Rethmann explores a strain of Russian aesthetics that “imagined objects and things as alive—that is, as endowed with the ability to produce new experiences, new social relations, and new human subjects” (185). Thinking of objects as agentic, not merely functional, Rethmann claims that the artists in the collective she studied intentionally incorporated common objects into their works almost as coproducers of an artistic expression that can move people to a different or heightened consciousness. She concludes that “the creative arts are capable of maintaining a space outside hegemonic constructions of politics and history, and that art can grasp heterodoxies that other approaches often cannot” (190).

Discussing the Indignados protests in Spain, John Postill urges researchers to pay more attention to the complex and multiple temporalities of resistance movements—their events, trends, and routines—and how they dynamically shape both the participants in and the nature and direction of these movements. Marianne Maeckelbergh examines some of the ethical complexities of researching resistance and social justice movements. At issue for her is how the researcher responds to and prioritizes the ethical demands of different voices among the powerful and the oppressed. Alex Khasnabish goes further, examining and exhorting us to do research that does not simply describe and catalog what was or is but that works with activists and participants in movements to construct imaginaries of what could be.

In the concluding chapter, in dialogic form, Athena Athanasiou and Othon Alexandrakis focus on a critical examination of the idea of crisis, reminding the reader that crisis is a politically potent idea often deployed by regimes of “neoliberal governmentality” to preclude or dampen both popular resistance and alternative ways of dealing with it. The question of action and resistance becomes, “how do bodies, subjects, and collectivities come into play when protesting modalities of power that make it impossible to contest them?” (249). But while this dialogue devotes attention to resistance movements, the authors do not offer an adequate acknowledgment of the many examples in which the idea of crisis becomes a potent tool that such movements also deploy.

At times, *Impulse to Act* gets tangled in its own verbiage and rehashes already well-understood and widely accepted perspectives. It does so sometimes a bit too narrowly, as the discussion of crisis exemplifies. And in places its authors seem to be straining to make a rather thin set of ethnographic material support rather broad conclusions. Yet this book's value is that it offers a wide variety of quite different

contexts in which to consider the deeper meanings of affect and agency in resistance and social justice.

Mortuary Dialogues: Death Ritual and the Reproduction of Moral Community in Pacific Modernities. *David Lipset and Eric K. Silverman*, eds. New York: Berghahn, 2016. 262 pp.

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The editors and the contributors to this volume modify Robert Hertz's claim that mortuary rituals re-create a society ruptured by the death of one of its members, arguing that the Pacific mortuary rituals they discuss do not simply restore an eternal sociocultural order but deliver different historically contingent messages. Whereas the *l'Année sociologique* perspective viewed death-related rituals as functional, they see them as ambiguous and inconclusive. As the editors put it, the rituals discussed in the book are not only about personal and collective loss but are also about "fluctuating positions of moral communities in global modernity" (1).

Applying Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of discourse, the editors and many of the contributors focus on both the official and the unofficial voices in the ongoing mortuary debates about Christianity, capitalism, and the state—the three forces that have made a major impact on the lives of the Pacific peoples in the postcolonial era. These multivocal and contested mortuary discourses, referred to throughout the book as dialogical, provide the basic framework within which the individual authors adopt their specific theoretical perspectives. Their notion of mortuary dialogues also refers to the ways in which people in different Pacific communities engage with modernity, while asserting an ideational autonomy of the ancestors and the inherited ancestral order expressed in rituals that emphasize continuity and moral coherence. Bakhtin's influence is also evident in the authors' approach to these dialogues as involving many "contradictory voices that privilege no authoritative position, single voice, or set of meanings" (234).

The book is divided in two parts: "Tenacious Voices" and "Equivocal Voices." The five chapters constituting "Tenacious Voices" feature cases in which local cosmologies dominate responses to modernity. Here invocations of tradition (even when invented) offer participants a sense of having agency despite the troubles of modernity. The four chapters in "Equivocal Voices," all of them dealing with rural Papua New Guinea communities, reveal mourners' feelings of uncertainty as well as expressions of personal and collective loss of power.

"Tenacious Voices" includes two chapters on societies outside Melanesia and of these two, only Laurence Carucci's piece on the Marshall Islanders of the Enewetak and the Ujelang Atolls, who resettled in Hawai'i in the 1990s, uses the mortuary dialogues approach effectively. Carucci argues that over the past century and a half the people of the Enewetak and the Ujelang have modified their burial practices as a result of their encounters with colonialism and, more recently, with Hawai'i's bureaucracy by repeatedly developing new ritual forms that continue to draw upon long-standing Marshallese concepts of the moral person. The chapter by Che Wilson and Karen Sinclair is largely a description of the role of women in present-day Māori mortuary rites and only glancingly touches on the theme of dialogues approach. One could, of course, view the persistence of indigenous Māori death-related practices alongside Catholic ones as a kind of dialogue. However, when a theoretical construct is applied so loosely, it is no longer effective.

Dialogue is a central theme in David Lipset's chapter on the Murik Lakes people and Nicholas Bainton and Martha Macintyre's chapter on the effects of mining wealth on the Lihir and Misima Islanders. The latter is particularly interesting. When large-scale mining began delivering sizable amounts of money to some Lihir communities in the 1990s, local people used this windfall to make death rites more elaborate. As a result, the funeral became more of a ritual of competition for prestige by means of a display of wealth than a celebration of the deceased's transition to the afterlife. Among the Misima people, however, the boom times of the local gold mine were soon over, leaving locals with major ritual obligations and a society divided into the wealthy and the poor. As a result, many people advocated shortening the mortuary rites or even abandoning them altogether.

With the exception of Alexis von Poser's chapter on the mortuary rites among the Kayan, all the chapters in "Equivocal Voices" are effective in their application of the mortuary dialogues concept. Nancy Lutkehaus's piece on the changing death practice on Manam, an island off the Papua New Guinea coast, begins with her own return to the field after many years of absence. Since her last visit, a major volcanic eruption forced the islanders into temporary quarters on the mainland. However, in the meantime, some of them began returning home, where they have been reviving the old practice of homestead burials. With their island under threat, they seem to value being closer to their ancestors despite an uncertain future.

Eric Silverman eloquently argues that for the Eastern Iatmul, unlike the old days when mortuary rites provided closure for mourners by reintegrating them into the moral community, the modern predicament of these Middle Sepik River people does not allow them to end their grief at the conclusion of the ritual cycle. Their sorrow remains, which

has a lot to do with the fact that the deceased is now remembered more as an individual than as a relative with a particular social status. Individuation coincides with the anomie brought about by modernity. While Silverman does offer sufficient data to support his argument about an increase of individuation in the way that Eastern Iatmul mourn their loved ones, he fails to prove that it is individuation combined with the anomie brought about by modernity that keeps local people from coming to grips with their grief.

On the other hand, Joshua Bell's chapter on the I'ai people of Papua New Guinea is the best illustration of the editors' dialogues with modernity idea. Like a number of other Papua New Guinea peoples, the I'ai have also been recently opting for homestead burials. However, unlike the Manam Islanders, for example, the I'ai are doing so not to reconstitute the family in an ancestral place but for a very different reason. Using the concept of structural violence, Bell argues that in the last decades unequal access to revenue generated by local resource extraction and related disputes have led to a major increase in accusations of sorcery, so much so that the majority of deaths are now attributed to it. Hence the reason the I'ai opt for homestead burials is to assert their innocence in case of such accusations as well as to ensure that their deceased kin and their own grievances are not forgotten.

Despite the shortcomings of some of the volume's contributions and the overuse of the mortuary dialogues concept, this book is theoretically innovative, ethnographically rich, and very thought provoking.

Fragile Elite: The Dilemmas of China's Top University Students. *Susanne Bregnbæk.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016. 184 pp.

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Students who score highly on China's rigorous university examination and gain entrance to one of China's elite universities might seem to have won the lottery of academic success and to be all but guaranteed a bright future, but as Susanne Bregnbæk skillfully demonstrates in *Fragile Elite*, achieving normative success in the eyes of both family and state generates its own set of contradictions. *Fragile Elite* examines these contradictions by linking the particular context of post-Mao China to the broader context of universal psychological dilemmas. The primary dilemma Bregnbæk traces is oedipal, which she defines not in narrow Freudian terms but as the "universal existential need to establish some degree of separation from the will of parents

and, by extension, the will of the state" (3–4). The state and the family are intertwined in China in complex ways. In the Confucian tradition, fulfilling one's familial duties was viewed as the foundation of a well-ordered polity, and the Chinese Communist Party has implicitly and explicitly invoked parental metaphors in legitimizing its right to both care for and control the citizenry (encompassed by the Chinese term *guan*) and in justifying sacrifices of individual rights and freedoms for the good of the quasi-familial collective.

Fragile Elite is based on extensive interviews with several students at and recent graduates of China's top two universities—Tsinghua University and Beijing University. Bregnbæk uses these interviews to sketch how students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds navigate the double bind of pursuing self-realization and happiness while fulfilling their duties to obey their parents and to repay them for the sacrifices that enabled their academic success. This dilemma is particularly acute for students from the countryside, for whom "the thought of returning to their hometown to set up a family there and to care for their parents is strongly at odds with the kind of urban/cosmopolitan future they imagine for themselves" (60–61). Some students find that their dilemmas are less of the existential sort and more the product of China's intensely competitive job market, where social and familial connections (*guanxi*) play an outsize role. Accustomed to the effort-rewarding meritocratic testing system, they suddenly find their bright futures thwarted by a job market governed by a different set of rules. For students who join the Communist Party, linking their personal ambitions to broader state goals of building a strong and prosperous China, such corrupt realities make many of them cynical once they graduate and enter the workforce—they come to view party membership as little more than a vehicle for networking oriented toward personal advancement.

Many Chinese education experts, parents, and students are highly critical of China's test-based educational system, and there have been various efforts to implement quality-based education or *suzhi jiaoyu*, which aims to foster the personal qualities such as creativity, independence, and risk taking believed to be stifled by China's exam-heavy curriculum and to encourage the cultivation of nonacademic talents such as athletics and music. These reforms have enabled some exceptional students to gain admission to universities, but Bregnbæk shows that for many others *suzhi jiaoyu* is viewed as a "back door to corruption" (108) or as yet another anxiety-inducing competitive hurdle. For others, the specter of the colorful, well-rounded life conjured up by the notion of quality education renders the reality of endless memorization for exams all the more unbearable. One student poignantly describes career and educational competition in China as a train everyone is

rushing to get on despite having no idea where it is going. Bregnbæk powerfully argues that this train metaphor also captures the aporia inherent in state rhetorics of technological competition between nations and its corresponding fetishization of STEM education. In the mad rush not to be left out of the tech-dominated future, critical questions about the humanistic ends of education and technology are viewed by most as “irrelevant or retrograde” (144).

The book begins and ends with the issue of suicide among elite students, about which Bregnbæk hears constant rumors during the course of her research but which universities are reluctant to openly discuss or even acknowledge. She deftly unpacks why university student suicides are so deeply troubling not just to their families but to the party-state, as these deaths serve as a rejection of the students’ state-assigned roles as the agents of China’s future strength and prosperity. Rather than enabling students to overcome their double binds, success renders them all the more acutely irreconcilable. *Fragile Elite* is a powerful reminder of the contradictions inherent in both self-actualization and national progress, dilemmas that we might paper over with the symbols of success but can never fully resolve.

In framing her study of elite students in China, Bregnbæk draws heavily upon Michael Jackson’s existential anthropological approach, and she frequently tacks back and forth between purportedly universal existential dilemmas (such as the conflict between self-sacrifice and self-actualization) and the more particular conflicts (such as those between rural family obligations and urban opportunities) generated by the demographic and political particulars of China. This existential framing allows her to challenge simplistic binary notions of an individualistic personhood associated with the “West” set in opposition to the collectivist, sociocentric personhood of the “East.” Bregnbæk argues that while one pattern may be dominant at a certain historical moment in any given society, it always exists in tension with a subdominant pattern, which may rise to prominence under changing political and personal circumstances. For China scholars, this universal existential framing might leave them wanting her case studies of individual students to be more deeply embedded in the particulars of contemporary China. However, the existential framework gives *Fragile Elite* the potential to resonate deeply with university students in the midst of facing dilemmas similar to those that Bregnbæk’s interlocutors are grappling with. Those university students, her most likely readers, will also learn much from (and about) their Chinese counterparts. Thus, this book will work well in courses devoted to the anthropology of contemporary China and the anthropology of education as well as in more general introductory anthropology courses.

The Social Life of Materials: Studies in Material and Society. Adam Drazin and Susanne Küchler, eds. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015. 336 pp.

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Nearly 30 years after the 1986 publication of Arjun Appadurai’s *The Social Life of Things*, Adam Drazin and Susanne Küchler’s ambitious edited volume brings into interdisciplinary conversation the role of material properties and substances beyond the category of the object. *The Social Life of Materials* challenges its readers to take part in what Drazin terms the “materials revolution” (xvi), the current moment in which materials of technology, design, and science and their related social worlds are drastically changing. Aside from some terminological fuzziness in the framing of this set of essays and moments throughout that veer too far into the abstract, the volume as a whole is successful as an inclusive set of compelling and interdisciplinary case studies. If we take seriously Küchler’s call for more fine-grained ethnographic attention to materials and related social phenomena, we might not develop a revolutionarily new vocabulary, but we might engage more closely with both people and materials in ways that make explicit the relationship between the two that is and historically has been at the heart of the anthropological project.

In this volume, materials become active participants in social life. In an effort to destabilize the object as a categorical type, Drazin and Küchler focus not on a singular class of thing but instead present 13 case studies of different materials in varied contexts. They divide materials into four overarching categories in four sections: “On Materials Innovation,” “From Substance to Form,” “The Subversion of Form by Substance,” and “Ecologies of Materials’ Social Lives.” Rawness becomes a key trope in many of the book’s chapters as their authors relocate materials in a social world in which they are not “acultural and unsocialized stuff” (24) in juxtaposition to the object but are already always socially constituted.

The first section of case studies explores varied approaches to a new materials paradigm that upturns the notion that materials are fixed, measurable entities. The individual chapters in this section bring together anthropology, geography, engineering, and museum studies in complementary and generative ways. These chapters challenge studies of materials to push beyond a simplistic notion of raw materials in order to focus on the sociality that emerges from interactions with informed, expressive, and evaluative materials. These alternative approaches include Graeme Were’s chapter on the sociohistorical development

of the New Zealand flax plant, *harakeke* (the Māori term); Andrew Barry's account of pharmaceutical molecules as informed materials, an important framing concept used throughout the volume; Mark Miodownik's account of a diversity of global materials libraries phenomena; and David Howes's exploration of anthropology's sensory turn in which he addresses what would happen if anthropological methodologies were incorporated into sensory science.

The volume's second section centers on transformation, a tension that weaves throughout the whole of the collection. The authors showcase how readily perceived forms can revert into material substances in unexpected and revealing ways. In this section, Laurence Douny presents an ethnographic account of Dogon production of wild silk designs in Mali in order to analyze how material properties constitute particular systems of both social and human-material relations. Tom Fisher uses a design perspective to address the contemporary material ecology of plastic and plastic-based forms of becoming. Urmila Mohan approaches religious subjectivity through a materials analysis of deity clothing and embodied Hindu learning.

Authors in the third section provide the most cohesive set of case studies that draw together gold, diamonds, and plastic artifacts in ways that encourage the reader to think about materials and materialities within a nuanced framework of the productive tensions between form and substance. Peter Oakley addresses the complex conceptualizations of fair-trade and fair-mined gold in contrast to preexisting practices of manufacturing and trading gold. Deirdre McKay and three colleagues, Padmapani Perez, Ruel Bimuyag, and Raja Shanti Bonnevie, present an ethnographic analysis of *Everyday Objects*, a 2012 plastic (*plastik*) artifacts exhibition in the Philippines in which a materials approach to plastic reveals Filipino political concerns, economic anxieties, and questions of identity. Filipe Calvão analyzes processes of valuation in Angola by examining diamonds in terms of their material properties in conjunction with relationships between diamond miners and traders, the language of the market, and articulations of expert knowledge.

The final section of case studies focuses on the critical role of forms and substances of new materials within broader social phenomena. In this section, Sarah Wilkes writes about moral personhood and moral materials by addressing sustainability across a wide field of substances and materials. Chan Chow Wah analyzes an alternative history of material properties and the senses by examining the intersection of changing fragrance preferences and social transformation in China. Fiona McDonald approaches sensory-political experiences of woolen blankets in the United States and New Zealand by looking at how artists reconfigure mundane materials that are imbued with long colonial histories.

The volume concludes with coeditor Susanne Küchler's history of how materials in use have been treated and neglected by social science research. Invoking Andrew Barry's approach to informed materials, she addresses how materials assert themselves in the project of design. She ends with a call for further ethnographic attunement to varied cultural perceptions of and interactions with materials and connections between materials and the "lived-in social worlds in which people are desiring to make informed decisions" (274).

Drazin and Küchler and their contributors provide an approach to materiality that asserts the social importance of materials in ways that tend to their substances, properties, uses, and contingent social lives beyond the confines of the thing. The book is notable for its stellar and large set of fine-tuned interdisciplinary case studies that are deep enough for advanced scholars yet readable enough for undergraduates. Although the tremendous breadth of this volume is a great contribution to the development of a truly interdisciplinary field of inquiry, the brevity of each chapter may leave the reader wanting more ethnographic and analytical depth. The volume would have been improved with more theoretical cohesiveness and more explicit linkages among the chapters. Overall, however, by traversing a wide array of overlapping approaches to materials and the social world, *The Social Life of Materials* showcases how materials serve as fruitful bases from which to develop productive and creative transdisciplinary conversations.

Mapping Feminist Anthropology in the Twenty-First Century. *Ellen Lewin and Leni M. Silverstein*, eds. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2016. 310 pp.

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To do feminist anthropology is to be frustrated—and that's a good thing. Frustration emerges out of the clash between feminism as an often factional politics and feminist anthropology as a kind of scholarship about a particular field: women's lives in distinct places. The authors collected in *Mapping Feminist Anthropology in the Twenty-First Century* reprise familiar narratives about its history and its essential contributions, and this will be helpful to those learning about the field, including graduate or advanced undergraduate students, while the themes that emerge across the chapters transform the book into much more than an introductory volume. Taken as a whole, the collection presents feminist anthropology as a field generated by productive tensions between research and activism, particulars and universals, professional striving for institutional

security and engaged advocacy for radical change. Across the book's 11 chapters, the authors explore how working amid these tensions generates new insights and future paths for research.

One of these core tensions remains the awkward relationship (in Marilyn Strathern's words) between anthropology as an institutionalized discipline and feminism as a movement with utopian dreams. As Louise Lamphere recounts, feminist anthropology has always been inseparable from anthropologists' engagements with social movements—women's liberation, civil rights, antiwar, LGBT, labor—and the intersections among them. The field that emerged is characterized not only by a research agenda that foregrounds questions of gender, difference, power, and change but also by its application of these questions to research practices and ethics. For many feminist anthropologists, research is both verb and noun, as much about working through the challenges of collaborative research and the desire to help research participants as it is about analyzing gender. Thus Meena Khandelwal shows how collaborating on an engineer's project to introduce solar-powered cookstoves to rural Rajasthan brought her new insights into ecofeminism, globalization, and anthropology. This wrestling with questions of power and ethics can also manifest itself in what a researcher refuses to do, as when Kimberly Theidon notes that throughout her research on sexual violence she has “never asked anyone if they were raped” (205).

A. Lynn Bolles and Margot Weiss both take up the costs of and the opportunities created by institutionalizing what began as upstart approaches. Bolles highlights the shared origins of feminist anthropology and women's studies in the feminist project of gender liberation, considering their parallel struggles with a canon dominated by Western (and usually white) scholars and the institutional separation that, oddly, has resulted in women's studies essentially reinventing qualitative gender research absent any dialogue with anthropology. Weiss wrestles with related challenges posed by the establishment of queer and feminist anthropology and queer studies as separately institutionalized fields, concluding optimistically that boundaries between fields may in fact drive innovative research through scholars' recurrent desire to overcome these barriers. For example, Weiss points out, scholars in gay and lesbian studies, frustrated by the limitations created by defining their studies around the concepts of gay and lesbian, sought out new concepts like queer to overcome those limitations. As she puts it, “it is precisely the frustration of the (political-analytical) desires that motivated the field to begin with” (174) that now motivates new scholarship.

Another set of core tensions addressed by the authors arises between anthropology's interest in difference and feminism's dedication to universal projects, such as ending violence against women and empowering women

to control their reproductive lives, which tends to rest on the assumption that phenomena like gender-based violence and reproduction are essentially the same across cultures. Case studies by Matthew Dudgeon on Mayan masculinity and contraception, Kimberley Theidon on the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Committee, and Lynn Kwiatkowski on women and domestic violence law in Vietnam show how ethnographic detail—the intersection of masculinity with ethnic hierarchies, local meanings of what kinds of violence matter and how, kinship practices—challenge these universalist assumptions in ways that could be seen as undermining feminist goals.

For example, given the attention and resources that transnational feminist organizations have devoted to having all countries' legal and criminal justice institutions recognize domestic violence as a crime, Kwiatkowski's evidence that many Vietnamese women facing domestic violence find moral or economic reasons to stay married appears to contradict a bedrock assumption of the movement: that women prioritize their own safety. This does not mean that the authors and their interlocutors are not potentially feminist—that they have no interest in contraception, justice, or ending violence. Rather, each author makes a convincing case that it is only by carefully incorporating ethnographic complexity into our understanding of injustice and oppression that progress can be made toward the broader goals of justice and liberation. Furthermore, as Catherine Kingfisher illustrates in her comparison of gender forms and the impacts of neoliberal welfare reform in New Zealand and Alberta, Canada, identifying both widespread patterns and local distinctions is critical for intervening in problems that have themselves been shaped by globalized ideas, people, and organizations.

Paradoxically, anthropology's challenge to universalism has also been essential to making progress toward feminism's liberatory goals. As Elise Kramer shows, linguistic anthropological concepts such as performativity have enabled feminist activists and theorists to denaturalize gender differences and spurred efforts to reshape gender norms through language activism. Further, by denaturalizing nature itself, feminist anthropologists' studies of science, medicine, and technology and not least their analyses of sex and gender have provided necessary theoretical and empirical grounding for activist goals such as transforming gender norms, reshaping the medical systems that have pathologized so many kinds of bodies, and exposing race as a political project, as Elizabeth Roberts demonstrates. Delving further into the question of the body, Frances Mascia-Lees examines anthropology's early 21st-century turn to somatic and affective experience, suggesting that it was feminist, queer, and critical race scholars' frustrations with the lack of materiality in poststructuralism that inspired this turn. Kramer, Roberts, and Mascia-Lees also illustrate the crucial role of feminist anthropology

in transforming fields as wide-ranging as linguistics and biology over the past several decades and creating entirely new lines of inquiry such as science and technology studies.

It is perhaps ironic that a collection so rich in nuanced analysis contains relatively little about the political and material contexts of the 21st-century Western university, resulting in a strange sense that feminist anthropologists attend closely to the political and material conditions of the lives of their subjects but less so to the conditions of their own work. One wonders, for example, what new insights are arising from the frustrations produced by doing the work of feminist anthropology in today's corporatized, precariously staffed universities that themselves help reproduce gender, class, and racial hierarchies.

Nevertheless, more than half a century into this experiment in agitation known as feminist anthropology, it seems a fitting moment for founding scholars and emerging innovators alike to assess the field's contributions, shortcomings, and future prospects. What can we make of a field that simultaneously compels us to understand the world better and to make the world better, equally valuable goals that are inevitably in conflict? This collection is a valuable and encouraging set of meditations on that question and a call for feminist anthropologists to continue embracing their vexations. As the authors persuasively argue, it is by dwelling in the uncomfortable place where nuanced ethnographic understanding challenges dreams of a more just world that feminist anthropologists can move both projects forward.

We Were Adivasis: Aspiration in an Indian Scheduled Tribe. Megan Moodie. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015. 240 pp.

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This ethnography of aspiration and upward mobility among an urban community of erstwhile tribal people in northern India offers a rich account of a community in transition between what the author usefully terms the "era of service" and the "era of contract" (25). Based on fieldwork conducted between 2002 and 2012 with the Dhanka in Jaipur, Rajasthan, Megan Moodie revisits long-standing questions about social belonging and hierarchy under transformation in India. What kinds of possible and impossible subject positions are produced through state forms of recognition accorded on the basis of aboriginal identity? When the ideals of a rising community look like the ideals of those situated above, how do we characterize this similarity? If these aspirations spell new forms of stricture and circumscribed mobility and capacity to earn for women, how do we analyze

this gendered distribution of aspirational labor? Moodie brings fresh insights to bear on these perennial questions by training her analysis on the creativity and innovation deployed by the Dhanka in their projects of community uplift.

The Dhanka were entered in the colonial bureaucratic record in the late 19th century as one among the Bhil, "the lawless forest and hill tribes" (48), a designation that in 1950 was inscribed in the Indian Constitution as a Scheduled Tribe (ST) worthy of positive discrimination in the form of access to education and government jobs. Reservations (as this form of affirmative action is called in India) were secured by the chief architect of the Indian Constitution, B. R. Ambedkar. Himself a member of a Scheduled Caste (SC), Ambedkar was convinced that without provisions for substantive equality the promises of democracy would remain unfulfilled. Reservations function as a key feature of the era of service and as a means of social mobility for anyone who can qualify as an SC or an ST. The Dhanka case illustrates what many scholars have referred to as the invented character of caste and tribe in India. In Rajasthan, the Dhanka have been on the list of scheduled tribes, off, and then on again. In beautifully clear prose, Moodie navigates the reader through this complex history of criteria for and designations of tribal belonging and into the contemporary strategies that the Dhanka deploy to successfully occupy the "tribal role" (24).

How do we think about the desire for a better life between colonial forms of knowledge and contemporary conventions of masculine protection and feminine respectability? The Dhanka want to be modern, Rajasthani, and tribal. They say "we were adivasis," thereby capturing their identification with as well as their temporal disidentification from the category of tribe. Moodie's account of subaltern citizenship and community progress through reservations attends to the ways that aspiration is collectively desired and pursued and yet unevenly distributed. Young women must give up any plans for education or life beyond semisequestered domesticity. Arguing against the emulation model of upward mobility, Moodie notes that while ideals of feminine respectability and masculine willingness are shaped by hegemonic Rajasthani norms, the particular Dhanka configurations of these ideals are not mere copies but repetitions with a difference. The annual collective marriage rite (*samuhik vivaha*) elucidates her claims about the ways the Dhanka work to craft themselves as a distinct community by placing themselves both as extratribal—because no longer considered to be promiscuous and sexually backward—and as more modern than the Rajputs who continue to practice dowry. Conjugal arrangements play a pivotal role in the effort to secure the concrete dreams the Dhanka hope to realize. Moodie notes that this means that the work women do to situate themselves within this framework of respectable modern sexual personhood is both necessary and disabling. She quotes M. N. Srinivas's

comment on the gendered character of what he called Sanskritization, a process of upward mobility often pursued through and registered in “increasing harshness toward women” (14). In this way, Moodie situates Dhanka mobility as being premised on new forms of gendered constraint.

Overall, however, gender emerges in the ethnography as a choreography of positions in which different actors reproduce and legitimate their positions through the relationships they enact and cultivate. Women’s domestic and personal labor underwrites the accomplishment of ordinary life and the fulfillment of concrete dreams in the form of solid, permanent (*pucca*) houses and upward mobility. Tensions emerge between the dreams of the older men who came of age in the era of service and the younger men who must make their way in the diminishing opportunities of the era of contract. The ethnographer inscribes herself as a gendered character whose own youth and trajectories of romance and marriage made for common territory with the young women, her most intimate interlocutors, but also situated her as a daughter or a niece worthy of forms of masculine support and protection.

Moodie’s arguments about the politics of sexuality among the Dhanka recall Saba Mahmood’s critique of liberal feminism’s failure to recognize female agency where no resistance against the weight of tradition, religion, or custom is evident. As a means of illuminating spaces of female agency, Moodie dwells on the dreams of young women—their personal aspirations for more education, a lover they choose for themselves, or work that would enable

them to roam about as the foreign ethnographer does. Drawing on the work of Lauren Berlant, Moodie situates these dreams as aspirations to a life lived “otherwise” and evidence of young women’s creativity and capacity within and against the strictures of conjugality and respectability.

Moodie offers a detailed sociological portrait of generational and gendered differences within a community but leaves the messiness of variegated lifeways outside the ethnographic frame. What are the possibilities and consequences of departure from collectively held aspirations? Do all the men want concrete houses and respectable wives? Do all the young women want loving, providing husbands? What happens to those who fail to marry? Or to those whose marriages fail? Moodie’s focus on what makes the community hang together left this reader wondering what happens to those who fall away. We get a glimpse of a widow who depends upon the patronage of a community leader, himself a widower, in the marriage of her daughters. Moodie suggests that this widow’s respectability is contingent upon the distance she maintains from other, more respectable women. One of her most helpful contributions is the argument that respectability is improvisational. It is not a given and should be investigated as an ethnographic and historical question. While it is perhaps unfair to inquire of such an elegantly constructed book, I cannot but wonder where the Dhanka who fell away from community aspirations are. The question of the possibilities and consequences of living life otherwise would seem to rest with them.