

BOOK REVIEWS

ALAN BARNARD, *Anthropology and the Bushman*, Oxford & New York: Berg 2006, x, 179 pp.

Alan Barnard is a leading authority on the anthropology of the Bushman, with over thirty years' experience in the field. He is already the author of a comprehensive synthesis, *Hunters and Herders of Southern Africa* (1992), which provides an overview of the various Khoisan-speaking peoples. The current book, as the title indicates, is not really about the anthropology of the Bushman, but about anthropology and the Bushman—or better still, anthropologists and the Bushman. It is a complete history of individual anthropologists' (and others') encounters with and representations of the Bushman, ranging from the 15th to the 21st centuries.

The first few chapters adopt a strictly chronological approach. The first encounters with Bushman were made by explorers and settlers who were mostly concerned with the distinctive physical characteristics of these peoples, but already also with the distinction between hunters and herders. The first recognisably anthropological accounts were those of Victorian folklorists and linguists—especially Wilhelm Bleek and his sister-in-law Lucy Lloyd, who compiled an extensive collection of stories told by the /Xam people of the Cape Colony. These were swiftly followed by the earliest ethnographic forays to the fringes of the Kalahari Desert, notably by Bleek's daughter Dorothea. The pivotal part of the book is Chapter 5, 'Amateurs and Cultural Ecologists', which covers the popularisation of Bushman ethnography in the 1950s and 1960s by Lorna Marshall and her family—who had no formal anthropological training, hence the chapter title—as well as the ecologically minded George Silberbauer and Richard Lee. From then on the chronological framework loosens as the volume of ethnography increases and the diversity of perspectives multiplies. The subsequent chapters cover economic anthropology—in particular, the notion of the 'original affluent society', in Marshall Sahlins's famous phrase; mythology and symbolism, which oddly enough have been more central to the archaeology of southern Africa (in the form of rock art studies) than to its ethnography; and the 'Kalahari debate' between those who thought that Bushman were largely untouched by contact with pastoralists and revisionists who saw them as part of a wider economic system. Finally, Barnard tackles advocacy and development work by anthropologists and others—often in partnership with Bushman groups—and the self-representations of the Bushman themselves, along with the use of representations of the Bushman by politicians and the media.

A key strength of the book is its sensitivity to the changing contexts in which anthropologists and others have worked. As a big name in the field himself, the author knows or knew many of the other big names quite well. He shows us the personalities involved and how their actions made sense to them at the time, rather than simply shooting down outmoded theoretical or methodological approaches. The vivid personalities help make the book a remarkably easy read—at times it is more like having a fireside chat with a favourite uncle than wading through a history of anthropology. Yet this is also a valuable resource for anyone interested in going deeper into hunter-gatherer studies: it contains 21 pages of references covering every aspect of Bushman life from every period of anthropological study, all embedded within a coherent narrative describing the development of the anthropological ideas that have shaped these works. The coverage of several Japanese, German and Afrikaans ethnographers, as well as British and North American authors, is particularly welcome and adds to the overall impression of balance in the book.

Barnard's occasional forays into archaeology, linguistics and physical anthropology further add to the well-rounded feel of the book. But when he strays from social anthropology into these other disciplines he can be guilty of oversimplification, as when he argues that most theoretical perspectives within archaeology are variants of either processualism or post-processualism: 'Approaches labelled Marxist, feminist, symbolic, cognitive, interpretative, contextualist and so on are essentially permutations of post-processual perspectives' (p. 97). This is like saying that anthropological theory boils down to either functionalism or post-modernism—and anyway, much Marxist and cognitive archaeology is arguably more similar to processualist than post-processualist approaches. In his old-school, avuncular way, Barnard may also be guilty of not taking seriously enough the possible sexist and primitivist connotations of using a word like 'Bushman' to describe a group of people. He does mention early on that he prefers this descriptor to San because the latter was coined as a pejorative term by neighbouring pastoralists—yet it is not until eight pages before the end of the book that he gets around to defending the term 'Bushman' against charges of sexism, and rather unconvincingly. He writes that the usual feminine and masculine plural terms are 'Bushman women' and 'Bushman men'—implying that 'the Bushman' is properly the descriptor of the people as a whole—but to my ears, the phrase 'a Bushman man' still sounds wrong, and he does not use it in this book. And if the neuter term *Buschleute* is now preferred in German, as he maintains here, why not use a similarly neutral term in English? Moreover he offers no real defence against the charge that the epithet might make these people seem inappropriately savage and bestial—even though, as he also states on this page, 'Bushmen [sic] do not see themselves as bush-dwellers, but as inhabiting camps' (p. 139). He merely notes that those Bushman who know of the term 'San' have tended to prefer the term 'Bushman.'

At 147 pages of text, the book is not over-long, and its length might have been increased with extended discussions of theoretical issues, and perhaps a chapter on the impact of classic Bushman studies on disciplines beyond anthropology (such as evolutionary psychology, where they have influenced the key concept of the environment of evolutionary adaptedness). The book also left me slightly disappointed because I wanted to find out more about Barnard's own theoretical ideas and his 'regional structural comparison' approach, which involves the systematic ethnographic comparison of specific aspects of the ways of life of several neighbouring groups. To leave readers wanting more is not a serious fault, however, especially when there are so many pointers to show us where to find it. This book works very well as a comprehensive yet accessible history of Bushman ethnography, and is strongly recommended to anyone with even a passing interest in hunter-gatherer studies.

GORDON INGRAM

MONISHA DAS GUPTA, *Unruly Immigrants: Rights, Activism, and Transnational South Asian Politics in the United States*. Durham NC & London: Duke Univ. Press 2006, ix, 238 pp.

Monisha Das Gupta begins her book on non-citizen South Asian immigrants' struggles for rights by describing a 'ritual of humiliation' that would be familiar to many South Asian immigrants, as well as those South Asians who have had experiences with foreign embassies in their own countries. Her unpleasant experience at the immigration office in Boston for the annual renewal of her work permit serves as the introduction to a work that describes, admirably nuanced, the complexities that groups of 'aberrant' immigrants encounter in their struggle for rights that are not based on full citizenship. These aberrant immigrant elements—feminist, queer and labour groups—adopt a transnational South Asian identity that defies religious, national and regional boundaries in order to claim rights as migrants. In Gupta's words, 'they want rights to move with them' (p. 19).

Gupta highlights the 'emotional content of impersonal bureaucratic processes' and shows that structural forces such as global migration, transnationalism, border controls, neoliberal reform and economic deregulation are not just distant macro-level phenomena that have no bearing on people's lived experiences (p. 2). She underscores the everyday lived reality of the legal category of the immigrant (p. 4). Gupta shows how their discourse and activities free rights from restrictive notions of citizenship and so defy nationalism and patriotism as conventionally understood (p. 26). Her arguments are refreshing and radical, as when she suggests that citizenship should be seen as a 'violent mechanism through which the state creates legitimate and illegitimate members of the national body' (p. 258).

The book charts how three kinds of organizations—feminist, queer and labour—have challenged the monopoly of citizenship over human rights through their struggles to be granted rights as immigrants, not citizens (p. 4). Her rich ethnography of seven South Asian organizations builds upon interviews with core members of these organizations in New York, New Jersey and Boston, together with attendance at the organizations' general meetings, speaker events, festivals, film screenings and workshops. The choice of these organizations springs from her past involvement with one of them, South Asian Women for Action (SAWA).

The immigrant organizations she studies surfaced on the political scene in the United States in the mid-1980s and 1990s. As the South Asian community in the US grew in number and diversity in the 1980s and 1990s, conditions were conducive to the rise of organizations exercising 'space-making politics' premised on the recognition of underlying differences within the South Asian community. Gupta construes their rise as symptomatic of the limitations of mainstream organizations that practice 'India-centered, elite, accommodations politics' or 'place-taking politics' (p. 9). The organizations that are the subject of Gupta's study practice, instead, 'space-making politics'.

The *place-takers* strive to be immigrant success stories through accommodations, rather than confrontational and transformative politics. They subscribe to the image of unproblematic, 'good' and hence 'successful' racial subjects, and they also constitute the mainstream South Asian immigrant community in the United States. Conversely, the *space-makers* deconstruct the image of a monolithic racial category of South Asians to reveal sharp divisions along gender, sexual and class dimensions. *Space-making* organizations symbolize spaces of legal innovation as they challenge the link between citizenship and rights. Not only do they reject rights based on citizenship, they also do not rely on universalist notions of personhood as the basis for their rights demands; instead, they demand rights for groups (for instance, groups of migrant workers' dependents). Their struggles have led to the construction of a transnational complex of rights premised on mobile rights, which casts doubt on the hitherto taken-for-granted link between rights and citizenship.

The first chapter examines the *place-taking* politics of the Association of Indians in America (AIA), founded in 1967, and describes its acceptance of the terms of belonging in the United States and its willingness to assimilate and contribute economically without demanding anything in return (p. 53). The AIA's efforts aimed at carving out a separate space for 'people of Asian Indian heritage', which would allow them to escape being pigeonholed into one of the two dominant 'white' or 'black' categories. The AIA's assimilative politics came to represent the South Asian mainstream's political activities as it served as an example of a 'model migrant organization' adhering to the notion of citizenship as requiring a contribution to be made. However, the AIA's reliance on

ethnicity and race as the defining characteristics of South Asians obfuscated divisions based on gender, sexuality and class, and hence did not satisfy the needs of non-citizen immigrants, immigrant women, sexual minorities and low-wage workers (p. 54).

In the second chapter, Gupta examines the competing claims of cultural authenticity by *place-takers* and *space-makers*. In her discussion, Gupta highlights not just how place-takers refuse to recognize divisions amongst themselves, but also how they are guilty of patriarchal oppression and forced heterosexuality in the name of culture. By labelling immigrants as either authentic South Asians or 'corrupted Americans', based respectively on their conforming to or rejecting mainstream standards, the place-takers have arrogated to themselves the function of gatekeepers of their self-defined, 'authentic' South Asian immigrant community.

The experiences of domestic workers, queers and low-paid members of the working-class threaten the place-takers' mythical 'immigrant success stories' and their portrayal as a model minority. Thus, those in trouble are ostracized by the place-takers and are seen as aberrant individuals. Gupta sees this denial of problematic co-ethnics as the place-takers' way of combating racism, which views immigrants with suspicion as potentially troublesome (p. 58). While place-takers tend to see women victims of domestic abuse who speak out as home-breakers and try to rationalize the men's violence as the outcome of economic pressures (for instance), the space-making organizations highlight the structural conditions that make immigrant women vulnerable to such abuse.

Gupta shows how place-takers' values of family solidarity, obedience and self-help square with the American state's aim of making immigrants self-reliant. Consequently, those who do not fare well economically and socially are easily condemned as failures who are themselves responsible for their adversity because of their own shortcomings.

While part of the structural explanation for the exploitation and vulnerability of low-paid and informal workers, immigrant women and queers lies in the mainstream community's power to define who qualifies as a genuine South Asian and who does not, the other structural component relates to the state and its laws (explained in Chapter 3). Gupta explains this dynamic by taking domestic violence as an example. While domestic violence is widely seen as a manifestation of the culture of the immigrant's country of origin, Gupta shows that patriarchy is not just cultural—it is actively bolstered by immigrant legislation in the United States, which makes immigrant women dependent on their spouse's status as a citizen for their own legal status. This forces them to choose between protection from abusive husbands or deportation (pp. 83, 86). Thus, an oppressive culture works in complicity with the state, resulting in a 'double subordination' for many immigrant women.

Another structural factor contributing to the exploitation of the space-makers is capitalism itself. Gupta describes how capitalist forces work to make the primary labour market flourish at the expense of the secondary market comprising immigrant labour. She argues that first-world states and global capital benefit from the supply of skilled and unskilled labour provided by immigrants, even as they exploit them for their immigrant status by slotting them into contradictory categories such as illegal, legal yet nonresident, and legal and resident yet noncitizen (p. 13). Thus, labour is extracted from them, but their rights are not recognized (p. 14).

The Introduction and first three chapters of the book lay down the broader discursive, historical and legal framework which the space-making organizations work within and against. The remaining three chapters are comprehensive case studies describing, in turn, the struggles of feminist, queer and labour organizations. In conclusion, the book attains its goal: through an illuminating ethnography of *space-making* organizations and their struggles for migrant rights and a transnational rights regime, it makes a powerful case for a rights regime that does not hinge on full citizenship.

MAIRA HAYAT

ANNETTE AURÉLIE DESMARAIS, *La Vía Campesina: globalization and the power of peasants*, London and Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, & Halifax: Fernwood Publishing 2007, xi, 238 pp.

La Vía Campesina: Globalization and the power of peasants is a notable work about an international, 'peasant'-led movement that attempts to counteract the idea of food and land as commodities within capitalist relations of production upheld by the WTO and other dominant actors in the global trade of foodstuffs. In line with anthropological studies of power and organisations, the author not only addresses contestations over the meanings of food, agriculture, development and the idea of peasanthood, but also treats the emergence of Vía Campesina (VC) as a politically-charged process within the domain of civil society. Much of this analysis of VC's organizational culture is left to the end of the book, however, and earlier chapters often leave little space between the moral stance of the subject under study and the author's own point of view. Indeed, although *La Vía Campesina* makes an indispensable contribution to our understanding of the most wide-ranging peasant movement in history, it is informed throughout by an overt political stance, which arguably strays from the critical tradition of social sciences such as anthropology.

Trained in geography, Desmarais centres on the various scales at which the primary actors (*i.e.*, the VC, NGOs, the WTO, the UN, transnational corporations, etc.) are situated, and highlights certain interrelations between people and place, 'North' and 'South', the local and the global. Yet this theoretical approach, as well as Desmarais's

position as an insider (at the date of publication, the author was a member of the VC technical support staff), has likely affected which discourses the author chooses to highlight and which are left out. Indeed, while she demonstrates an awareness of her 'privileged position' (p. 18) as an insider, Desmarais does not reflect upon the ethical implications of her own situated position and how this may have shaped the kind of data collected and the resulting analysis. For example, the VC's concept of food sovereignty—the notion that access to food should be inseparable from localized and culturally-valued ideas and actions—becomes the crux of the book's argument, while historical and social reasons why the more economically based notion of food security has gained legitimacy in global circles are largely absent.

Though Desmarais acknowledges the importance of treating ideas such as food sovereignty as discourses that contribute to community-formation (e.g., p. 38), her undue attention to the VC world view precludes her from demonstrating why the discourse of the market has become so prevalent, and so we remain unaware of how one may confront the latter on its own terms (if, indeed, this is the aim). Her ubiquitous contrasts between a 'political economy of profit' and a 'moral economy of provision' (p. 68, in reference to Parajuli 1996: 39) or equivalent polarities would be better treated as part of the very discursive scheme to be deconstructed, not least because market as well as community-based models for the economy have been historically legitimated in both political and moral terms (perhaps the best demonstration of a moral and political account of the market idea and ideal was given by Gunnar Myrdal in his seminal work: *The Political Element in the Development of Economic Theory*. 1953. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul). Such a perspective would have shed more light on the various historical actors at play who have determined the present-day position of 'peasants' on the world stage, a crucial starting point for any applied scholarship for change.

MARISA WILSON

ROY ELLEN (ed.), *Modern crises and traditional strategies: local ecological knowledge in island Southeast Asia*. Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007, xiii, 272 pp. (Studies in Environmental Anthropology and Ethnobiology 6).

Edited by Roy Ellen, Professor of Anthropology and Human Ecology at the University of Kent, *Modern Crises and Traditional Strategies* is the result of a symposium at the Ninth International Congress of Ethnobiology in 2004. Ellen argues in his introduction that, contrary to the assumptions of many development practitioners and other agents of modernization, traditional ecological knowledge remains a valuable resource in the modern era, not in spite of recent changes but often because of them.

The nine chapters that follow underscore this point with detailed case studies from island Southeast Asia during the years 1996 to 2004. Rajindra K. Puri describes the subsistence strategies on which Kenyah and Penan peoples of Borneo rely during crises such as the 1997 El Niño. Rini Soemarwoto examines the Kasepuhan of upland Java, who have largely rejected 'green revolution' rice on both practical and cosmological grounds, choosing instead to maintain their diverse array of local rice varieties. At the same, they register these local varieties with the authorities, showing that some concessions have been made to bureaucratic regulations.

In two separate chapters, Johan Iskandar and Roy Ellen describe the Baduy of Java, for whom swidden farming is not merely a subsistence base but also a ritual obligation and identity marker. The Baduy have maintained this system despite considerable pressure by the government to modernize their farming. As a result, they have fared much better in recent climatic perturbations than those groups who have adopted modern irrigation-intensive agriculture. Yet the Baduy have also taken advantage of certain outside influences: they sell non-rice crops, engage in wage labour, and have adopted a government-favoured tree species due to its close fit with pre-existing agricultural knowledge and practices.

Hermien L. Soselisa provides a case study from the island of Buano in the Maluku province of Indonesia. Agricultural modernization programmes often assume that conditions will remain stable, while traditional subsistence methods take future variability into account by diversifying the portfolio of resources. At the same time, traditional methods cannot anticipate every possible future disruption, and in certain crises newer strategies such as reliance on the market economy will be favoured. Soselisa illustrates this point through the successive shocks—El Niño, drought, and religious violence—that the people of Buano experienced in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Simon Platten argues that the people of the Minahasan plateau in north Sulawesi have a 'tradition of change'; their recent adoption of carrots as a crop has upheld rather than undermined their social structure. Dario Novellino examines the Batak of Palawan Island in the Philippines, for whom subsistence practices are not a monolith but rather 'a multiplicity of opportunistic responses, open-ended processes and coping strategies aimed at ensuring everyday survival' (p. 185). They must cope in particular with government- and NGO-favoured restrictions on their swidden farming, conditions which now vary with electoral, rather than ecological, cycles.

Laura S. Metzner Yoder demonstrates how older practices of protecting forests in East Timor have been revived in the years following independence, with encouraging results. Michael R. Dove explains why the inhabitants of Mount Merapi—one of the world's most dangerous volcanoes—have resisted the government's encouragement to relocate: locals have developed longstanding attachment to the land as well as strategies to cope with, and even to take advantage of, living on a volcano.

The central arguments—that traditional ecological knowledge remains valuable and viable in the modern era, that its strength lies in its local specificity as well as its ability to incorporate change, and that government policies must respect this—are broadly convincing. However, they would be even more convincing if they did not seem, at times, assumed *a priori* and defended in partisan terms. For instance, in his introduction, Ellen includes ‘irrigation’, ‘commercial cash-cropping’, and ‘road-building’ on his list of ‘crises’. But these are not crises in themselves, only developments with various risks and opportunities, like modernity as a whole. By defining them as ‘crises’, he has answered the question before asking it. Taken as a whole, the volume seems to demonstrate the immense value not only of traditional ecological knowledge but also of the market economy, which itself forms part of the diverse portfolio of resources that ‘traditional’ methods seek. This more balanced view is latent in the book’s material but backgrounded by most of the contributors; both local rejection and local acceptance of modern changes are taken as proof of insiders’ wisdom against outsiders’ folly. At the same time as traditionally oriented peoples are described in rich detail, government officers appear only as faceless ideologues and bumbling interventionists. A related imbalance in the book stems from the fact that the case studies are taken from the region’s most traditionally oriented groups. Johan Iskandar quotes a Baduy saying (p. 115):

Restrictions should not be violated
 Taboos should not be changed
 What is long should not be shortened
 What is short should not be lengthened
 What is other must be considered other
 What is forbidden must be forbidden
 What is right must be considered right

Whatever the merits of the system being defended, this is a profoundly conservative statement which may not be shared by the majority of the region’s inhabitants. The possible unrepresentativeness of the case studies does not undermine the book’s conclusions, but may limit them and thus ought to have been more squarely confronted in the introduction. Some chapters could also have benefited from improved thematic organization; the concluding section of a chapter often introduces new basic material when only a summary and a discussion are called for.

Despite these blemishes, Ellen’s volume remains a persuasive, detailed, and original contribution to the study of traditional ecological knowledge in the modern era.

PETER RUDIAK-GOULD

ELIZABETH HALLAM and TIM INGOLD (eds.), *Creativity and cultural improvisation*, Oxford and New York: Berg 2007 (ASA Monographs 44), xx + 327 pp.

This collection of essays attempts to expand the implications of creativity and improvisation. One of its most striking contributions is the emphasis placed on the process of creativity, which opens up the scope of creative life, resulting in an eclectic collection of ethnographic accounts exploring the diverse implications of improvisation and creativity.

Following Whitehead's definition of creativity (1938 [1926]: 410), Ingold explores creativity as the movement of becoming, or what Whitehead calls 'concrecence'. In this context, Ingold and Hallam (p. 5) seek to elevate copying and imitation by stressing how they involve a 'complex and ongoing alignment of observation of the model with action in the world'. This process of negotiation is what they take to be improvisation, which is shown to lie at the heart of creativity.

In order to illustrate this, Hallam and Ingold introduce the historically constructed polarity between innovation and improvisation. Innovation is defined as a novelty stemming from new creativity or from the creativity of the present; improvisation, on the other hand, is relegated to a mere convention, copying some former act of creativity (cf. Leip 2001).

One reason for improvisation coming to be seen as secondary to creativity, Hallam and Ingold suggest, is that creativity is judged backwards, or rather innovation is judged by the *product* and not the *process* of a 'creation'. This has led to creative innovation being labelled posthumously, or backwards. Improvisation, they suggest, is rather the sum of the process of creativity, and may rather be read forwards in time. Amar Mall, in a discussion of the southern Indian practice of Kolam (patterns of interwoven lines, traditionally drawn by Tamil women to protect and cleanse their houses and temples), illustrates just how much creativity is about the practice or process rather than simply the product. This is significant, since the rise in printed books of Kolam designs has been suggested as stagnating local creativity. Mall (p. 74) shows that, far from executing a pre-designed plan, the design by no means precedes the execution but develops as the work proceeds. It is most often said in relation to Kolam that 'It's come', since the unpredictability of the process means that they have to find their way as they go, and any novelty is only apparent when they 'arrive'.

Many of the ethnographies support Hallam and Ingold's point that to follow a plan or to execute a design involves much improvisational creativity. Patricia Hughes-Freeland illustrates this point most clearly in her study of Javanese dance. Typical explanations of Javanese dance traditions interpret the disciplined regimes as allowing no scope for individual expression and imply a Foucauldian discipline and body politic. Hughes-Freeland, however, illustrates how discipline and expression go hand in hand, to the extent that controlled and very formalised movements are actually liberating for

experienced dancers. Although the dance is explained to novices in terms of a series of prescribed steps, in order to achieve the desired aesthetic of flowing water in the movements, an experienced dancer must move in a 'flexibly responsive way', that is, 'continuous, sustained and measured' (p. 214), rather than rigidly moving to the musical structure. The movements become automatic, which allows a space for creative presence that transcends constraints, allowing for freedom and even subversion, which are central to any complete understanding of the dance.

Nakamura's account of Japanese calligraphy illustrates Hallam and Ingold point that even traditions need maintenance to prevent them from deteriorating. She argues that unlike western tradition, which places innovation at the heart of tradition, Japanese calligraphy springs instead from the creative source of imitation, with successful copying being called *rinsho*. However, rather than mechanically copying, to achieve *rinsho* the calligrapher must internalise the principles embodied in the classics, ultimately making them his own. It is this that is valued, and it is this that keeps a tradition alive.

Drawing on relational thinking, a cornerstone of Ingold's (cf. 2000) work, Hallam and Ingold continue to challenge the opposition between tradition/continuity and change. Creativity, they argue, is still seen to be more about change, and change is judged posthumously. They show how an individualistic notion of creativity is connected to the historical shift in European ideas in body concepts, from earlier principles of flux and generativity, to an individualistic, bounded and stable body. Rather than seeing creativity as an event and tied to the extraordinary actions of a particular individual, Hallam and Ingold encourage us to consider creativity as inseparable from our engagements with the world.

Many of the contributors to this volume illustrate that improvisation is relational because it is entangled in a mutually responsive way with many factors. Richard Vokes even illustrates the way ethnographic fieldwork involves not only the network of relations of people but also things, the mobilisation of which he compares to the hybridisation outlined by actor-network theory. Karin Barber (pp. 33-4) challenges the notion that innovation and creativity arise from gifted individuals, suggesting rather that it arises from 'cooperative mutual attunement', where something happens that exceeds the sum of the individual contributions.

By examining creativity in a forward direction, this temporal shift allows many of the contributors to re-incorporate improvisation into the creative process. Even the traditional or the old, or old people, as Catherine Degnen demonstrates, are shown to be creative by reading creativity forwards in time. Karin Barber goes some way towards establishing a level playing field for improvisation in creative pursuits. She emphasises how a performance that aims for the perfection of a model or tradition involves as much improvisation as a performance that is not aiming to imitate anything.

The final section of collection focuses on the creativity of anthropological scholarship itself. Initially this section seems to be something of an outlier to the other contributions, apparently challenging the overall cohesion of the whole collection. However, Clara Mafra (p. 318) ties it all together; paraphrasing Ingold (1993), she argues that ‘anthropology is a discipline capable of grasping and teaching something about a world in process’, a process which includes the anthropologist as much as the ‘Other’.

However, one gets the impression that the ethnographies in this collection are not always moving in the same direction. This is a tribute to the subtlety of the argument that Hallam and Ingold outline in the introduction. At first what they are saying appears quite simple, but in actuality they are suggesting a significant paradigm shift, one that requires the contributors to challenge many assumptions surrounding the concepts of creativity and improvisation. Subsequently, some contributions are more conclusive than others.

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KATE FAYERS-KERR

MARTIN JONES, *Feast: why humans share food*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007, xiv, 364 pp.

Feast attempts to explain why humans share food, a question immediately evoking Glynn Isaac’s prediction of a chimpanzee’s response when asked to comment on the behavioural differences between our two species: ‘These humans get food and, instead of eating it promptly like any sensible ape, they haul it off and share it with others.’ This apparently anomalous behaviour has long attracted speculation among archaeologists, forming the basis of Isaac’s ‘home base’ model and launching three decades of often fierce debate regarding the hunting abilities, cognitive capacities and social strategies of our hominin ancestors. Many of the classic debates are neglected here, with Africa under-represented and Asia completely absent—a peculiar omission given that the development of agriculture is a central focus—yet the book in many ways benefits from an approach that selects key sites and illustrates emerging analytical technologies, providing a fresh look at an entrenched and too often dichotomised series of questions.

After an initial meal at Gombe, the book follows a broadly chronological path through the archaeological record of changing human diets and the social encounters that

accompany the consumption of food, though the evidence necessarily pertains primarily to the former, with the latter being inferred from evidence of varying reliability. We dine with chimpanzees, Neanderthals and Cambridge academics, each chapter beginning with the now standard popular science device of a colourful and often wildly speculative vignette of life (and dinner) at the time. Jones highlights the merits of new technologies for the analysis of the often fragmentary evidence of human food remains, adeptly switching between the results of microscopic analyses and their broad-scale implications for the reconstruction of diet. Having mastered this blend of micro-science and macro-explanation in *The Molecule Hunt*, Jones here provides a thoroughly accessible synthesis of the technology behind the reconstruction of prehistoric diets.

The book achieves a rare success in blending general evolutionary principles with the particular social constructs that lend meaning to human gatherings in specific contexts. In evoking both Darwinian analyses and concepts derived from anthropologists such as Lévi-Strauss, Jones goes beyond the typical and ignorant social anthropological assertion that humans possess an ethereal and undefined quality that sets us apart from mere beasts whilst simultaneously sidestepping the ubiquitous slant towards determinism. Thus the evolutionary relationship between diet and encephalisation is juxtaposed with specific examples of feasting from particular archaeological sites, most of which are chosen so as to provide temporally controlled snapshots in the progression of human food procurement. Though this selection procedure risks falling foul of Binford's 'Pompeii Premise', whereby the recovered remains of activities spanning years, decades or centuries are interpreted to reflect a single socially salient episode, the case studies are generally well chosen and the conclusions well made.

Overall, *Feast* provides a gentle yet reasonably comprehensive introduction to a string of cutting-edge techniques and their application to a series of intriguing and lucidly recounted archaeological case studies. These studies are woven together to form a compelling story of the importance of food and food-sharing to evolving human societies; there is little new here, but the synthesis is more than welcome.

MATT GROVE

PETER LUETCHFORD, *Fair trade and a global commodity: coffee in Costa Rica*, London; Ann Arbor: Pluto Press 2008, xii, 226 pp.

As the title of his concise yet detailed ethnography suggests, Peter Luetchford is concerned with the interplay of the Fair Trade movement and the processes of production and trade involved in a highly globalized commodity market—coffee. Luetchford resists the tendency in the literature to quantify economic or social impacts, instead choosing to

highlight the areas of disjuncture and overlap between the value systems of smallholder coffee farmers and the Fair Trade movement. His analysis of the dynamics of Fair Trade is thus a unique and highly relevant contribution to the debate on its appropriateness as a development strategy. On the other hand, to make this argument he requires significant ethnographic detail about life in the Tilarán highlands of Costa Rica, which is sometimes achieved at the cost of a clear and robust analysis of Fair Trade relationships.

The book is divided into three main sections. The first two chapters provide the transnational, national, and local contexts in which integration into the Fair Trade market takes place for nine coffee-producing cooperatives belonging to the conglomerate Coocafé. In the first chapter, Luetchford shows that policy action and social values in Costa Rica have facilitated and supported a rural development strategy which has been rooted in the cooperative form since the early twentieth century. A more localized history of modernization and the improvement in material wealth among the members of one of the nine cooperatives, Coopeldos, is described in Chapter 2. The analysis challenges popular conceptions of Fair Trade as a catalyst for development, revealing it to be a marketing strategy which can only be engaged with once favourable policy contexts and successful, ethically motivated cooperative managers are in place.

Yet, the author's simplified portrayal of some Fair Trade actors detracts from this otherwise nuanced and insightful argument. For example, my own ethnographic research with a Fair Trade cooperative in Chiapas, Mexico, showed that cooperative managers pursue power and financial fortunes, sometimes at the expense of cooperative members, even as they seek to provide 'the best possible service' and 'development' (p. 49) for their members. Although Luetchford does pay attention to intra-cooperative politics throughout the book, he seems to see the problem as one of farmers' perceptions rather than as a possible lived reality. Moreover, my investigations showed that the Alternative Trade Organizations to which coffee is sold vary dramatically in their commitments to producers' welfare and to the ethical principles of Fair Trade. Local perceptions and actual impacts of Fair Trade are contingent on the individuals involved, and Luetchford's own rich material would be well complemented by a comparative perspective. His rather cursory explanation of the history of Fair Trade in the introductory chapter leaves him insufficiently prepared to engage adequately with threats to the sanctity of the movement's principles as it expands into mainstream markets.

The following three chapters of the book comprise a second section that analyses how uncertainties involved in agricultural production induce smallholders to dissociate morality from commerce. These chapters discuss how 'Fair Trade' producers' decisions in coffee and labour markets are motivated by pragmatism rather than morality, and their tendency to prioritize economic viability over egalitarian and organic production models. The author

asserts that producers 'do not associate commodity markets with ethics', and that this divides them from consumers whose acts of purchasing are motivated by morality (p. 53). While his refusal to romanticize coffee producers is important for a critical analysis of the Fair Trade movement, Luetchford thereby creates a problematic binary between 'surprisingly rational' Costa Rican farmers and an unidentified (though European) group of ethically motivated consumers. For example, it is unclear what 'light is thrown on our own ideas on the economy' by farmers' use of terms relating to risk to describe their economic lives (p. 59)—and furthermore who this 'our' represents. Luetchford provides a strong rebuttal to the essentialized 'Fair Trade' producer depicted in much of the literature, but not attempting to deconstruct the consumer in the same way, he sometimes reproduces the producer-consumer distance that Fair Trade itself seeks to close.

The final section of the book seeks to identify the 'moral imagination' (p. 105) of smallholder farmers in their household and village economies. The author argues that local values reflect a resistance to capitalist ideology, while eloquently acknowledging the complexities and historical transformations in their relationships with markets. He shows that the moral economies which the previous section could not locate in labour and commodity markets can be found outside these arenas, as reflected by the importance attributed to subsistence agriculture (particularly in the *milpa* or maize plot), the rejection of self-interest in the informal economy and in personal relationships, and the belief that true value derives from the earth rather than from market exchange. Thus, perhaps ironically, Fair Trade shoppers do indeed satisfy their desire to 'consume ethics', but mainly with regard to the set of producers' relationships that exist outside Fair Trade markets themselves.

This ethnography should be deeply appreciated for the coherence of its structure and presentation, the care and detail in the construction of the case study, and the uniqueness of the project in a sea of impact studies that too often take the cultural relevance of Fair Trade for granted. The author also offers his insight into gender discrimination within local economies and cooperative structures in a discussion which, although brief, helps to address what has become a gaping hole in our understanding of the impacts of Fair Trade (a research area being pioneered by Sarah Lyon). Still, some acknowledgement of the existence of a political economy of Fair Trade consumption and more attention to the history and critical challenges the movement has faced would have strengthened the overall contribution to our understanding of this form of alternative exchange.

KATHLEEN SEXSMITH

DANIEL MILLER, *Stuff*, Cambridge and Malden: Blackwell and Polity Press 2009, vii, 169 pp.

Material anthropology offers insights into culture through the relationships between people and things: how things are made, used, valued, interpreted, savoured, discarded, and used to express or create the self and/or community has significance for the understanding of any culture. Since anthropology's 'material turn' in the 1980s, several scholars in the nascent field have felt the need to stand up and account for the validity of studying material culture, especially those things which at first glance might appear superficial to other anthropologists (such as jeans, CDs or charity shop bric-a-brac). The case for a study of material culture has already been made vehemently in innumerable publications, which poses a challenge for Daniel Miller's new volume, *Stuff*. Miller is surely one of the most prominent and widely read anthropologists working in the field of material culture. This arises not only from the historical significance of his contributions made when the field of study first emerged in earnest in the 1980s, but also from the breadth of his enquiries over the years, which have taken in people from Trinidad to London and India, and cultural phenomena as disparate as clothing, the Internet and soft drinks. Miller's wide readership and high profile are surely also aided by his breezy, readable writing style, taken to its extremes in his latest publication, *Stuff*.

The book does not present new work by Miller, but rather is intended to be read as a summary of his works so far, as such acting as a gateway text into the field for students and scholars who are unfamiliar with material anthropology. His first chapter combats the notion that material culture is inherently superficial through an analysis of clothing and its importance in self-expression, as well as its ability to constrain bodies and proscribe identities (a discussion of saris in this chapter provides excellent fodder for Miller's arguments). Miller's second chapter questions the validity of constructing an overarching theory of material culture, whilst his third examines the importance of the domestic sphere in public and private life, asking how we accommodate stuff into our lives and our homes. In the fourth chapter, Miller tackles the immaterial world of the Internet and media, steering his discourse to examine how material anthropology studies can be applied to better the lives of those struck by poverty, loss and bereavement. This last theme feeds into the book's final chapter, in which Miller examines the importance of the loss of material goods in people's lives, and the significance of mementoes and acts of divestment.

Miller is obviously at pains not to burden his text with dense theory or lengthy citations. Coming fast on the heels of his last, more self-consciously populist work, *The Comfort of Things*, he deftly displays a talent for the uncluttered presentation of ideas, largely eschewing complexity without compromising the integrity of his arguments. By constantly placing his fieldwork centre-stage, Miller allows the empirical realities of

ethnography to bolster his key proposals and repeatedly encourages readers to question and reflect upon material culture and their relationships with their own 'stuff'. This approach similarly leads to neat and clear explanations of dialectical theory, semiotics, the verbose and (sometimes) baffling worlds of Hegel, Bourdieu and Strathern, and how they relate clearly to analyses of material culture that bolster the understandings of the anthropological discipline.

There are without doubt problems in covering this much ground in such a slim volume using such an informal, almost conversational tone, for at times Miller does not go as deeply into his material as one might hope. Purely in subjective terms, Miller's writing is peppered with irreverent self-references and attempts at humour, which, depending on the reader, render the text at turns compelling and frustrating. Perhaps the aim is that this digest volume will engage intrigued newcomers to Miller's *oeuvre* through its lack of pretension, but nonetheless readers are urged to seek out Miller's original publications of these works, for they are eminently readable and engaging in their own right. *Stuff* is intended as the first of two volumes, the second of which (the forthcoming *Consumed by Doubt*) 'will be concerned with the causes and consequences of consumption', including the negative aspects of our relationship with materiality—poverty, environmental degradation and disenchantment. That volume promises to offer something new and vital to Miller's canon. The present volume, however, acts neither as an all-encompassing textbook for students of material anthropology nor as the vehicle for new ideas on the materiality of the human condition. Yes, we are convinced of the merits of material anthropology from Miller's text, but no more so than we were by the many other broad volumes that have claimed to act as manifestos for the study of material culture. As such, readers acquainted with Miller's works may find something lacking in finishing *Stuff*, whereas others new to material anthropology might find themselves inspired to contemplate, think and read about the world of 'stuff' that bit more deeply.

ANDREW BOWSHER

EVA REICHEL, *Notions of life in death and dying: the dead in tribal Middle India*, New Delhi: Manohar Publishers 2009, 118 pp.

Eva Reichel's book is a comparative account of the conceptual and ritual interrelatedness of life and death in Middle India based on the ethnographic work of Piers Vitebsky among the Sora, Simeran M. Gell among the Muria Gond, Ulrich Demmer among the Koya, Charles McDougal among the Hill Juang and Michael Yorke and John Deeney among the Ho, and interspersed with brief comparisons and contrasts from the author's own short period of fieldwork among the Ho of Orissa.

Structured in six chapters elaborating on notions of death and dying in Middle India, the book's main argument is that people's concepts of and reactions to death are culturally determined and socially constructed. Death is an essentially universal phenomenon, an important rite of passage, but its representations in ritual and mourning vary cross-culturally and are fundamentally different in 'modern' Western societies and 'traditional' societies. The argument is based on Louis Dumont's theoretical discussion highlighting the different values of individualistic western and holistic eastern societies resulting from their different types of social organization. 'Traditional' societies are holistic, i.e. they place the stress on the society as a whole and not on its individual members, who are only conceived of as constituent parts of the whole; 'modern' societies, by contrast, are individualistic, i.e. they place the stress on the individual person as a measure of all things. Hence the fundamentally different concepts of death and its ritual representation. In 'modern' societies, death and life are two distinct categories: death occurs within a delimited period of time and is followed by a ritually prescribed period of mourning, after which the corpse is removed from 'the social context of the living'. Most importantly, death is a personal and private matter affecting only a limited number of blood relatives and friends. In 'traditional' societies, death is a social event which affects the wholeness of the community. In holistic societies life and death form a continuum, a circle whereby the life force of the dead is utilised in fertility and regeneration rituals for the benefit of the living. Death is conceptualised as a transition, a transformative initiation into another form of sociality (the afterlife). Here the author elaborates on the seminal works of Robert Hertz and Arnold van Gennep on the tripartite structure of death as a rite of passage and its significance for the continuity and perpetuation of life, as well as on Maurice Bloch's and Jonathan Parry's work on the regeneration of life implicit in mortuary rituals in 'traditional' societies. Especially fruitful for the theoretical discussion is Bloch's work on the differing concepts of the person in western societies (the indivisible person) and in holistic societies (the divisible person, *dividuum*), which underpin the fundamentally different concepts of death.

The author persuasively demonstrates that in the Tribal Belt of Middle India death is not perceived in the latter sense, that is, not as a termination of life but as an ongoing transformative process which links the living and the dead in an interdependent relationship which transcends physical death. This relationship is periodically reaffirmed and reconstituted through rituals of commensality and healing, name-giving ceremonies, sacrificial offerings, agricultural ceremonies of annual renewal and village festivals, as well as in the course of everyday interaction and communication (e.g. the Sora dialogues with the dead) which require the active involvement of the ancestors. In the various ethnographies summarised in the book, the dead continue to be involved in the lives of the

living in various symbolic ways, especially through the intermediation of ritual specialists (mediums, shamans etc.) but also in dreams etc. Thus the Sora communicate with their dead (*sonum*) on an everyday basis in large public gatherings aimed at negotiating and re-negotiating the relationship between the living and the dead and at assisting the dead in their gradual ritual transformation from dangerous Experience *sonums* through the transitional category of Earth *sonums* (who might or might not be dangerous and reside in various natural sites) to become eventually the benevolent and nourishing Ancestor *sonums*. The dead of the Hill Juang pass through a similar transformation from a potentially malevolent ghost to a benevolent ancestor which might take as long as twenty years to complete and culminates in the name-giving ritual in which a child is given the name of a deceased person from the generation of the child's father's father. The mortuary rituals of the Koya serve to reinforce kinship ties between the dead, the living and their affines, who perform a crucial role throughout the three phases of the mortuary ritual (i.e. the cremation rites, the installation of a memorial stone and the ritual bringing back of the dead person's soul, which is believed to reside in a special pot inside the house). The Muria Gond distinguish between malicious and benign ancestor spirits; the former reside in the uncontrolled space of the forest, whereas the latter are believed to dwell in ancestral pots inside the controlled and sacred space of the house. Similarly, Ho relations between the living and the dead reveal matters of kinship and ancestral protection granted to lineage members (transferral of land rights, agricultural produce and cattle). For the Ho the souls of all members of the patrilineage reside in a special sacred place inside the house and provide for the perpetuation of kinship relations, as ancestors are deemed necessary throughout the process of the construction of the social person.

Notions of life in death and dying is a valuable overview of the conceptualisation of death in different tribal groups in Middle India and would be of interest not only to students of social anthropology but also to everyone who is interested in the anthropology of South Asia in particular and the anthropology of death in general. The rich ethnographic material on the Koya, Hill Juang, Sora, Muria Gond and Ho summarised by Eva Reichel demonstrates that the meaning of social phenomena cannot be revealed in isolation, but only in their interrelationship with other social phenomena within the social system of a given society. And focusing on death might in some cases provide culturally specific notions of life.

ILIYANA ANGELOVA

ANDREA S. WILEY and JOHN S. ALLEN, *Medical anthropology: a biocultural approach*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009, xvii, 459 pp.

With this volume, Wiley and Allen have set out to provide an introductory handbook to medical anthropology, based on the understanding that health must be studied as a biocultural process. It is a worthy goal. Medical anthropology as a discipline developed from a growing awareness in the 1970s that health and illness are social as well as biological events; therefore it followed that they should be studied as a biocultural process. Yet Wiley and Allen only partly achieve their goal.

The problem begins with their definition of bioculturalism as any perspective that 'considers the social, ecological, and biological aspects of health issues, and how these interact within and across populations' (p. 5). In other words, it is a synthesis of the social and biological approaches to health-related issues. However, Ulijaszek (2007: 21) provides a similar definition, with one notable difference: 'In biological anthropology, biocultural approaches are those that explicitly recognise the dynamic interactions between humans as biological beings and the social, cultural and physical environments they inhabit'. Ulijaszek qualifies his definition with the preface 'biological anthropology'. As one reads Wiley and Allen's handbook, it becomes clear that what they are providing is a bio-anthropological introduction to biocultural medical anthropology. Having established it as such, it can serve as a good work of reference for students of medical anthropology, as well as for any health practitioner seeking a more nuanced approach to health treatment issues.

However, while any attempt to introduce a discipline in a single volume gives rise to some simplifications, Wiley and Allen have left some fairly significant omissions. For example, when they define a biocultural approach to health, they fail to highlight the controversy surrounding the issue. This is despite the fact that many academics have gone so far as to say that, rather than succeeding in combining biological and cultural aspects, biocultural approaches are actually fundamentally flawed. Ingold (2007), calls bioculturalism a 'complementarity' approach: he argues instead for the 'obviation' approach that does away with conventional distinctions between body, mind and culture (ibid.: 210). By failing to contextualise their definition within this wider debate, Wiley and Allen give any newcomer to the discipline the misleading idea that there is only one definition of bioculturalism.

Due to the way they have mislabelled the handbook, Wiley and Allen deserve criticism for focusing too much on the biological aspects of health. They note the over-privileged place that western biomedicine has given to the individual body, and in the same breath they state that 'Biocultural analysis considers the individual body as a starting point' (p. 7). They also state, largely uncritically, that biocultural approaches follow biomedicine

by relying on the fundamentally predictable ways in which diseases alter the biological functions, and that 'Biocultural analyses most often make use of biomedical categories of disease and use them as a standard...for cross cultural comparison' (ibid.). Some of these statements are more accurate than others, but either way, what is lacking is a context that explains to the reader that this is the authors' approach to bioculturalism, and that it is far from being a perfect approach.

Similarly, their definitions of key terms such as 'disease', 'illness' and 'sickness' are overly narrow, leaving out the complexity surrounding them. They define 'disease' very much as Kleinman did (1980), as 'a physiological alteration that impairs function in some way' (Wiley and Allen, p. 11). Yet scholars such as Lewis (1975) have long been aware that 'disease' must be understood as the product of a unique western and scientific definition, and not as an objective reality. Medical anthropology is now very aware of the sociology of knowledge, yet Wiley and Allen have not exploited the opportunity to explain this to their readers.

Even a perfunctory examination of the table of contents reveals that the categorisation of health issues is predominantly based on biomedical categorisations. Ignoring the highly variable and subjective nature of biomedical categories, even within a biomedical framework, to find them at the heart of a biocultural approach to medical anthropology illustrates the conservative and uncritical nature of this book. Although classic biomedical categories are accompanied by more cross-culturally sensitive categories, such as 'health and healers', or 'stress, social inequality, and race and ethnicity', the overall result falls short of the book's goal of exploring the dynamics between the biological and social aspects of health by not being sufficiently critical of the categories and terms used.

Many of these criticisms of this handbook might be better directed at the field of bioculturalism in general. Achieving a true synthesis of biological and cultural approaches to health is complex if not fundamentally flawed. Also, the North American approach to medical anthropology is more in line with biological anthropology when compared to the approach taken in the UK. However, this does not remove the central criticism, which is that the authors have failed to highlight these issues, thus failing to alert the readers to the limitations of their introduction. In so doing, they have reduced what is still a very thorough and useful handbook to a biological anthropologist's approach to bioculturalism. They introduce many of the key themes in medical anthropology, and the book has a clear layout, useful information, and discusses a wide range of issues. The problem is largely that the authors have not labelled the book correctly, but as long as readers are aware of this, it is a valuable introductory volume and work of reference.

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