

## BOOK REVIEWS

**CONSTANCE CLASSEN**, *The museum of the senses: experiencing art and collections*, London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic 2017, 171 pp. Hardback \$26.95. ISBN 978-1-4742-5243-0.

Rich in stories about people's sensory experiences in the art world, Classen's work bridges the fields of sensory studies and art history with a brand new perspective. The book is organized diachronically into six chapters. The first chapter starts with cases of people's sensory engagement with holy and royal relics from earlier history. In this chapter, kissing the skull of a saint is a way to empower individuals, and the touch on a special medallion handled by royals is a medium for supernatural healing. Kissing as a sense of touch, licking as a sense of taste and other idolatry practices illustrate an enchanted world in medieval times. The second chapter focuses on Renaissance paintings and sculptures and on the sensory illusions that lead art viewers to touch the objects on display. The third chapter, with less aesthetic discussion but more thrilling facts, discusses historical cases of nineteenth-century European obsessions with Egyptian mummies from the emotional experiences of pity and fear to bodily attempts to unwrap, touch, smell and taste the mummies, and even to reuse them as fuel, fertilizer, fine paper and paint. The fourth and fifth chapters focus on the rise and fall of an art-collecting family in England, the Arundels. The assembling and dispersal of their pictures, marbles and jewels are accompanied by symbolic aromas of the family perfume, which shows an intense influence of the sense of smell. The last chapter focuses on the modern age and illustrates the transformation of museums from an art empire that restricts any bodily sensation beyond sight to a multi-sensory playground. The changes of hierarchy in different senses have been noted, showing how the sense of seeing shares some of its priorities with the other senses.

Distinct from anthropological perspectives on sensory experience, which generally approach the problem from the perspective of either the phenomenology of perception or symbolic anthropology, Classen disentangles the relationship between art objects and their viewers with more of a historical style. Historical facts are treated as neutral in this book. Some cases are even situated outside the context of museums, for example, in the original field of art objects (mummies in the Egypt desert in nineteenth century) or in the houses of artists and private collectors (the Arundel Collection).

This is not to say, however, that the book does not engage with contemporary debates on sensory experience in anthropological discussions. Indeed, Classen's work provides many

raw materials to illustrate the complexity of the problem and push the discourse even further. For instance, the act of kissing religious relics as a healing ritual in the medieval period introduced in the first chapter can be rethought by anthropologists of religion. Also, Classen sees the West's obsession with unwrapping and reusing the mummies as 'a parallel interest in exploring and colonizing Eastern lands and peoples' (6) in the nineteenth century, complementing some anthropological discussion of colonial legacies. Gender ideologies are also given impressive emphasis, as in her comparison between the portraits of the Earl and Countess of Arundel. Individual reactions to art objects, such as breathing and muscular movements, can be found in detailed and splendid descriptions, which can be seen as cases supporting anthropological explorations of the body and embodiment.

In conclusion, Classen's book assembles and arranges historical and contemporary facts about sensory experience in the art world, many of which have the potential to be considered in contemporary anthropological discussions.

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**TSYPYLMA DARIEVA, FLORIAN MUELFRIED and KEVIN TUIE** (eds.), *Sacred Places, Emerging Spaces: Religious Pluralism in the Post-Soviet Caucasus*, New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books 2018, 235 pp. ISBN 978-1-7853-3782-6.

The authors in this collection of articles discuss sacred shrines, that is, sites of popular worship in the great variety found in the Caucasus borderlands between Europe and Asia. Anthropological studies in the field provide the case work for arriving at a rich variety of interpretations and suggesting different approaches. The whole issue is discussed in the context of major ongoing debates on the topics of what gives shrines their holiness and their social significance in a region that is characterized by changing political situations under different political regimes.

The nine chapters dissect both conflicts and a degree of cohabitation between community-based shrines – what the authors call 'folk' beliefs, or a 'non-institutional set of beliefs and practices' (N. Tserediani, K. Tuite and P. Bakhrashvili, pp. 48-49) – and state and non-state religions, as well as contestations over hegemony among the variety of religious institutions and those of the state. The editors' introduction points out that processes

of secularization that are often seen as originating in Soviet society in fact predate that period and that the current ‘de-secularizing’ trend is more complex than simply an attempt to revert to the pre-Soviet state of affairs. The current position is sometimes taken as a triangle of antagonisms among worshippers at saints' shrines, churches and the state in Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Abkhazia and into the southern fringe of the Russian Federation. The reader will find that the ground covered includes a considerable number of different cultural, ethnic and/or religious groups and different layerings of variations of Pagan (a term accepted in Abkhazia, where it carries no pejorative flavour), Islamic, Christian, Judaic and other beliefs, mostly centred on perceived contacts with saints sited at the local shrines where they are buried and often on sites of or adjacent to churches and mosques. Four of the states that cover the Caucasus are associated more or less with one of the three Abrahamic religions, the exceptions being ‘the indigenised “paganisms” of Abkhazia, Ossetia and [in Georgia, the zone of] Pshay-Khevsureti’ (Introduction, p. 8).

The freshness of new research emanates from these writings, as the editors find: ‘The veneration of saints and pilgrimages may undermine or support political authority and national grand narratives, and even emerge from the state [...], in contrast with the Western view on Eurasia, which identifies the notion of “being Muslim” in the Soviet Union as being an oppositional one to the secular state’. Interestingly, T. Darieva finds that, in the Soviet period, ‘the [Communist] Party's policy towards religion was far from uniform throughout the twentieth century. [...] Anti-religious campaigns were not linear processes; in reality they were accompanied by religious revivals and the adaptation of the sacred to the secular world’ (p. 41). Darieva concludes from her study of a shrine in Azerbaijan that ‘religion and secularism...should be viewed’ as “overlapping social and political fields” (p. 41).

Shrines can be shared or not shared by people who regard themselves as Muslim, Christian or Pagan, while facing attempts at incorporation or rejection by clerics of the Muslim or Christian churches. In Georgia there is a conflict between the Orthodox Christian Church and the state over recognition as the bearers of the Georgian national spirit, and this collection of articles includes a study of a government-built complex of church, synagogue and mosque buildings without religious practices, as the state asserts its primacy in representing a unified Georgian people – what Silvio Serrano calls ‘Sharing the Not-Sacred: Rabati and Displays of Multiculturalism’ (Chapter 9). Hege Toje writes of ‘privatisation and marketisation’ (p. 142) influencing the management and proprietorial claims to sacred shrines and church sites since the demise of the Soviet Union, with its dominant socialized property ownership: ‘The transformation of ritual space and sacred sites has links to processes of

economic transformation, the expansion of new economic niches and [the] professionalisation of services' (p. 143).

In a similar vein, Hamlet Melkumyan writes of today's social structuring of hierarchical castes or classes around the shrines of the Yezidis of today's Armenia, whose 'syncretistic religion [has] linkages to Islam (Sufism), Zoroastrianism, Iranian cults, Christianity and Judaism' (p. 178). Melkumyan contrasts this process with the transformations of Soviet times, which went in a different direction 'as a result of the ideology of social equality' (p. 193).

There are a number of other interesting subjects discussed in the contributions to this broadly based volume that usefully point to some fields of research around sacred places which could well do with further examination. Among them is the significance of shrines giving voice to the laity, whereas Church religions strive to control initiatives through their clerics. The influence of states and changing economic backgrounds goes beyond the often-encountered Soviet-versus-non-Soviet politically stereotypical paradigm that is now coming to be recognized as a simplification. Igor Kuznetsov's contribution is tantalizing for its introduction to what is by many standards the 'peculiar' place occupied by the Pagan Abkhaz of the northwestern part of the Caucasus. Students following up on almost everything touched on in this interesting volume might do well to direct their gaze more to its perceived exception to many 'rules'. Abkhazia's complex belief system is reflected in the Pagan shrines being accorded pride of place, as *primus inter pares*, in the state's constitution, which is defined as a 'unitary state' where it is illegal to argue that any one belief system is superior to others, including atheism. At a different level there remains a possible field for fruitful research into the relationship of the 'powers' that are accorded to saints and spirits, as opposed to the sites of the shrines themselves.

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**FREDRIK HAGEN** and **K. S. B. RYHOLT**, *The antiquities trade in Egypt 1880-1930: the H.O. Lange Papers*, Copenhagen: Det Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab 2016, 335 pp. ISBN 978-8-7730-4400-1; ISSN 1904-5506.

This volume is an in-depth study of the Egyptian antiquities trade during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Fredrik Hagan and Kim Ryholt focus on the papers of Hans O. Lange (1863-1943), an Egyptologist who taught at the University of Copenhagen and served as the Chief Librarian of the Royal Library. Lange took two trips to Egypt, one in 1899-1900 and another in 1929-1930, to acquire antiquities for Danish museums, and his travel journals and letters offer a first-hand account of the antiquities trade during this period.

Hagan and Ryholt seek to understand how antiquities were acquired by Western museums, what types of antiquities institutions in Europe were looking to secure at the time, and how the trade in and acquisition of certain antiquities influenced the Egyptological research agenda. Their work offers an admirably thorough analysis of the antiquities trade, going far beyond the study of Lange's archival material by drawing on multiple outside sources, including substantial photographic evidence and the first-hand accounts of others who were active in the antiquities trade at the time. Their expansive scholarship is ultimately a historical ethnography, one that sheds light on the broader social and political contexts in which Egyptology and the trade in antiquities were embedded.

Chapters 1 and 2 outline the scope of the study and the sources the authors have relied on, which primarily includes correspondence between Lange and Egyptian antiquities dealers, museums and other Egyptologists, as well as travel diaries written by Lange and his wife Jonna. The authors also rely on photographs that the Langes took during their two trips to Egypt, as well as a substantial number of photographs from outside the collection of those people and places that were central to the trade. Lange's notebooks in particular are a vast source of information, as he meticulously recorded descriptions and prices of various antiquities, his personal dealings with local and foreign dealers, his pursuit of a personal antiquities collection and his purchases for European museums.

Chapter 3, the largest section of the book, primarily focuses on the social and institutional complexities of the antiquities trade. Hagan and Ryholt offer a detailed look at the practices of the trade, the methods of buying and selling and the implicit and explicit norms shared by those in the community of buyers, sellers and producers (those who excavated, looted, forged or found antiquities). The individuals who dealt in antiquities included high-ranking government officials, consular agents, tourists, professional Egyptian and foreign dealers, missionaries, archaeologists, Egyptian archaeological workers and farmers, who often

discovered objects of interest while turning over the soil in their fields. The Egyptian state and the Egyptian Antiquities Service also played a significant role in the antiquities trade, and the Sale Room of the Egyptian Museum sold surplus antiquities to the public into the 1960s.

Buying antiquities was a complex social transaction depending largely on the people involved, the timing, the market and the items themselves. Where the object had been discovered, where it had been since, who had previously handled it and how far a dealer had had to travel to obtain it were all factors that were considered when determining the value of an antiquity. The social context of the sale was so important that some dealers would travel to Europe to buy antiquities in order to bring them back to Egypt and sell them in Cairo for a substantially higher fee. In this vein, the authors emphasized the cultural biographies of Egyptian artefacts, showing how those biographies were, and still are, interpreted differently by various individuals.

Fake antiquities were as much a part of the market as were genuine ones. The demand for antiquities reached such a height during the first part of the twentieth century that fakes were even being produced in England and Italy and shipped to Egypt for sale to Europeans. At the height of the antiquities trade, adroit forgers were producing such high-quality artefacts that even seasoned Egyptologists like Lange found it difficult to determine the authenticity of some of those that were offered to him. The authors also include a discussion of antiquities laws and a useful summary of Egyptian legislation enacted over the years to regulate the sale of antiquities (128).

Chapter 4 covers Lange's interest in and acquisition of papyri, in which he took a particular personal interest, and his efforts resulted in the two collections currently in Copenhagen, the Papyrus Carlsberg Collection and the Papyrus Hauniensis Collection. Even though he was only able to acquire a few pieces during his first trip to Egypt, he continued collecting through his contacts in Egypt before and after his second trip in 1929-1930. The section includes a detailed account of how papyri collections are formed, as well as the efforts of other Egyptologists at the time to establish collections of written texts from Egypt.

In the final chapter, the authors provide an extensive compendium of 256 primarily Egyptian, but also foreign, antiquities dealers. Hagan and Ryholt write that, 'the history of Egyptology is much more than the history of Egyptologists, but it is relatively rare to find the diverse "supporting cast" (workmen, photographers, financiers, etc.) treated at any depth in the Egyptological literature' (183). In this vein, their aim was to make visible the Egyptians who were as much a part of Egyptology and the antiquities trade as their Western counterparts. Each entry is accompanied by a short biography, including the years in which

they were known to be active and photographs of the dealers when available. Incredibly, the authors have also included family trees of some Egyptian families who were well established dealers in Cairo at the time (189, 266).

The appendix also contains valuable information, including detailed explanations of the 1912 antiquities law (278), licenses issued by the Egyptian Antiquities Service (284), antiquities dealers mentioned in the Baedeker guides (travel literature) (285), the organization and salaries of the Antiquities Service in 1908 (288) and further background information on Lange and the antiquities trade.

In *The Antiquities Trade in Egypt*, Hagan and Ryholt argue that Egyptology as a discipline was not isolated from other social networks involved in the movement of Egyptian antiquities. Acknowledging these concomitant networks not only allows us to question the site of the production of archaeological knowledge, it also offers a broader understanding of Egyptology. In particular, their study illuminates how the field of Egyptology was informed by the antiquities trade and how Egyptian antiquities in Western institutions ultimately got there. They have far exceeded their goals for the study, and their work represents a considerable contribution to the study of the antiquities trade in Egypt, a field still in its infancy. This volume is highly relevant for anyone interested in Egyptology, archaeology, the antiquities trade, historical ethnography, museum studies, archaeological archival studies, the history of Egypt and the anthropology of the Middle East.

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**PETER HARRIES-JONES**, *Upside-down gods: Gregory Bateson's world of difference*, New York: Fordham University Press 2016; xi, 279 pp. ISBN 978-0-8232-7035-4.

Gregory Bateson has been hailed as one of the leading thinkers of the twentieth century. Outside the fields of anthropology and cybernetics, he might also be considered one of its best kept secrets. Bateson's forays into problems as diverse as Balinese body culture, evolution and symmetry in nature, information theory, schizophrenia and dolphin communication do not lend themselves to easy summation, which might account for his relative obscurity. Nevertheless, Peter Harries-Jones manages to show not only the coherence

of Bateson's thought as it developed across the formative decades of the twentieth century, but also his remarkable foresight and lasting influence in the twenty first century. In *Upside down gods*, he draws on published work, conference transcripts, letters and notebooks to trace the development of a singular and challenging career which greatly inspired famous contemporaries such as Gilles Deleuze and Allen Ginsberg.

This intellectual biography is centred around Bateson's continuous engagement with concepts of information as he developed and applied these to problems in anthropology, cybernetics, psychology, biology and ecology, often while playing a formative role in these fields. Throughout, information materializes in ritual, growth and pattern as the animating principle of the living world. Bateson became a leading figure in the Macy Conferences on cybernetics from 1946 to 1960 and engaged in discussions with pioneers such as Norbert Wiener and Warren McCulloch while seeking to introduce cybernetic principles to the social and life sciences. As Harries-Jones makes clear, this was no simple task: definitions of cybernetics rested on abstract scientific generalizations related to the laws of thermodynamics, and while there are analogous concepts of information in physics and biology, disciplinary and epistemological contradictions abound. In a mechanical system, energy will eventually move from an ordered to a homogenous state as information gives way to entropy (think of ice cubes melting in a glass of water), whereas living systems are able to resist the flow of entropy and maintain structure in great abundance. To Bateson, information theory had to be turned upside down so that the emergence and maintenance of pattern in all its social and ecological variety became the key problem for research. In his hands, cybernetics became a productive interface between social, biological, synthetic and ecological systems. He developed a holistic framework that emphasised a deeply interconnected world of meaning and inspired the emerging ecological imaginary of the 1960s and 1970s. At stake was nothing less than life itself, as Bateson sought to save nature, science and society from an instrumental logic that had showed its horrifying hand during the Second World War.

The coupled emergence of cybernetics and ecological thought was the focus of Harries-Jones's (1991) earlier book on Bateson, and here the task he sets himself is more far-reaching as he seeks to link Bateson's post-war theoretical contribution to his pre-war ethnographic work. Bateson's career as a fieldworker got off to the worst possible start with a perplexing but drawn-out period among the Baining of New Britain. The Baining were secretive and resented his intrusion. They refused to discuss genealogies or religion with him and tricked him into leaving their village on days of significant ceremonies and rituals. Nothing much



came of this experience besides considerable frustration, but Bateson relocated to study the Iatmul of New Guinea and later produced his key anthropological work *Naven* based on the Iatmul ritual of the same name (Bateson 1958). It was also in New Guinea that Bateson met and fell in love with Margaret Mead, the two subsequently marrying and embarked on collaborative fieldwork in Bali. This period is notable for its experimental engagement with the epistemology of anthropology. In *Naven*, Bateson challenged contemporary orthodoxy by writing about his own role as a participant observer, developing a ground-breaking argument about how the observer-informant relationship enters into academic accounts of culture (the impact of an observer on a system became a key concern for second-order cybernetics as this was developed by Margaret Mead, Heinz von Foerster and others in the late 1960s).

Peter Harries-Jones details Bateson's struggle to find a place from which to discuss culture and its expression in day-to-day interaction through hopeful and combative letters to A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, Bronislaw Malinowski and Frederik Bartlett. His work in New Guinea and Bali made him deeply interested in how social patterns evolve and are maintained in both everyday and ritual practice and how, through feedback or feed-forward, social dynamics might either be kept in check or run out of control. Harries-Jones argues that the theory of 'schismogenesis,' developed on the back of fieldwork in New Guinea and Bali, became crucial for notions of feedback and control in the early cybernetics movement, with particular relevance for critiques of game theory and Cold War nuclear strategy. Bateson developed this theoretical framework further through experimental practice in the treatment of schizophrenia after he relocated to Palo Alto in California in the 1950s. Positing that schizophrenia could not be understood in isolation but had to be viewed within the second-order context of interactions between patients and their families, he helped pioneer the use of family therapy in its treatment.

Bateson's early fieldwork and experimental work in psychology are perhaps less well known than his later ecological thought, but through Harries-Jones's discussion a fuller picture emerges of how Bateson came to theorize context and information – understood as order and pattern – as key to understanding the social and living world. As Bateson himself pointed out, a focus on organism plus environment inverts the great chain of being handed down to us from Aristotle. If we take seriously the notion that living systems, including humans, fundamentally change under ecological interdependencies, the idea that the human mind is perched at the top of a ladder with successive rungs of intelligence falling away to the animal, plant and mineral kingdoms below becomes hard to maintain. Instrumental hierarchy gives way to a flattening epistemology as what had previously been the explanation, the mind

at the top, now becomes what has to be explained (and be so on an equal footing with everything else). This inversion should chime well with current discussions in anthropology and beyond as the Anthropocene becomes the new ecological imaginary we all have to come to terms with.

## REFERENCES

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**IAN HEYWOOD (ed.)** *Sensory arts and design*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017, 258 pp. Hardback £85. ISBN 978-1-4742-8019-8.

*Sensory arts and design* is an anthology of critical perspectives on the senses in art and design. This collection covers a huge range of art and design mediums and disciplines, from traditional artistic mediums such as music and drawing to areas such as gastronomic art, which may be less familiar to the reader. The authors approach ‘arts’ and ‘design’ as broad categories, with less obvious topics, such as night-time walking or the design of material and virtual objects on ‘the internet of things’, also addressed in the volume. In addition to covering a wide range of mediums, the collection also encompasses all five of our senses, as well as extending the concept to include others, such as a sense of direction, which we might not normally consider being within the same gamut. The senses are examined both in isolation and as part of multisensory experience. This anthology will be of interest to scholars, practitioners and appreciators of arts and design, as well as to anthropologists who are interested in sensory experience (a key area in medical anthropology, for example). A key theme and recurrent argument throughout the anthology is its challenge to ‘ocularcentrism’, that is, to the dominance of the visual as the ‘truest’ sense. If, like the contributors to this volume, you have ever felt that Western culture values vision too highly at the expense of

other senses or multisensorial approaches, then you will certainly find this anthology thought-provoking and enlightening.

The book is divided into three parts. With contributions so wide-ranging, the thirteen chapters in this volume have been gathered together only loosely under three broad headings, though there are some common themes throughout. In order to do justice to an anthology with such a broad scope, I will first summarize each of these three sections before briefly discussing some of the book's key themes.

Part one is entitled 'Sensory arts and design, new technologies and the urban environment', and consists of four contributions on novel techniques in using sensory experience to explore and appreciate our urban environment (rather than on arts and design in the formal definition of the term). The novel techniques discussed are essentially non-visual means of exploration. Nick Dunne's chapter on night-walking, based around the author's own experiences of this activity, elucidates new ways of approaching and understanding our built environment when the cover of darkness forces us to rely on more than just the visual. He also explores how, in the age of the 'digital panopticon' (p. 34), the night-time carries a sense of the 'here and now' (as opposed to the 'tenuous and distant' life of the daytime, with its layer of data and digital devices) (p. 35), and is perhaps one of the reasons why Dunne sees night-walking as 'a subtle act of resistance' (p. 44). Jacobs and Huck's chapter on sensory augmentation discusses the possibility of whether new sensory information can be embodied, using the example of a device that gives the wearer magnetoreception (i.e. providing new directional information). Although the experiment produced no concrete conclusions, the technique employed (in this case wearing a magnetoreception device) had the effect of making the wearer more mindful and aware of their surroundings, much like Dunne's night-walking, as well as showing how devices can bring information which might otherwise be 'invisible' to the forefront of individual minds. The chapters by O'Keefe and by Tseklevs and Darby explore the process of designing a non-visual experience of a landscape. O'Keefe describes creating a soundscape of Dublin's Smithfield Square, although her research and installation were focused on memory. Her description of the artistic process – as opposed to a focus on the artwork itself – mainly poses questions and provides descriptions. Without actually having visited O'Keefe's installation, however, it is difficult to grasp exactly how she answered the questions she poses ('how can one narrate a soundscape memory, in what way can a gallery space represent the social shaping of community sounds, and how can a work of art reflect the loss of what is already an ephemeral experience?' (p. 96)). Tseklevs and Darby explore the installation of a xylophone in a park as part of a

‘playful health trail’ designed to promote healthy ageing. Importantly, this is a medical intervention without any outer appearance of such, and their discussion focuses on how to design objects to elicit this playfulness in adults.

The second section, ‘The range of sensory arts and design: extensions, realizations and capacities’, most explicitly challenges traditional notions of the hierarchy of the senses (although this challenge is one of the book’s key themes, and is present throughout). Caro Verbeek explores this in relation to olfaction and Futurism, most interestingly in relation to the intersection between olfactory memory and other senses. Mark Clintberg’s chapter on gastronomic art obviously focuses on taste, most thought-provokingly in discussing how the hierarchy of the senses reinforces the power dynamics and social stratification of the gallery, and how gallery interactions that are non-visually orientated or multisensorial in nature can democratize the gallery space, or in some cases just give the illusion of democratizing it. Joy Monice Malnar’s chapter on the Chicago Architecture Biennial discusses how ‘rational’, cerebral (i.e. visual) approaches to a shoreline kiosk competition fail to engage with the character of the lakefront (e.g. the climatology) and thus how people interact with the spaces as a result of the failure, or rather the lack of desire, to create multisensorial environments. Alan Marsden and Richard Leadbetter’s chapter continues to undermine the hierarchy of the senses, this time approaching the problem from the opposite direction and exploring how one artistic medium (music) involves more senses than just the obvious one. I was most interested in the discussion on music’s ability to transport people – and thus how it is employed as a ‘technology of the self’ – and how, for many people, the place they are transported to is multisensory rather than just a visual memory. All in all, this second section is the most exciting, thought-provoking, challenging and coherently grouped section of the book.

The third section, entitled ‘Vision, touch and technologies of sense’, is based on vision, both in terms of further weakening its position at the top of the sense hierarchy (for example, as not the only or even primary sense associated with painting and drawing) and in undertaking a consideration of the unseen. In relation to the first of these, Harland and Donnelly’s chapter on art spectatorship and Casey and Davies’ chapter on ‘Encounters with the unseen’ both describe ways in which painting is able to capture the non-visual. For Harland and Donnelly these are the ‘haptic’ qualities, such as the surface of an object, that painters such as Velazquez and Manet are able to capture, while Casey and Davies give the example of the way in which the deaf painter Johannes Thopas is able to visualize silence. Elsewhere in the volume, it is argued that trying to render the other senses visually only further cements the dominance of sight. However, Harland and Donnelly argue the opposite,

namely that capturing tactility in the visual ‘seems to evoke sensations that we may take for granted in most usual situations’.

Heywood’s chapter on Impressionism deals with the same topic, except in a situation where it fails. While an impression doesn’t have to be visual, it is visual in the case of Impressionist painting. Heywood argues that the subsequent backlash and debate about the act of an artist’s seeing ‘render[s] highly questionable any sweeping statement about the predominance of a simple, unitary ideology of the visual, an optical mainstream’ (p. 228). This statement strongly contradicts the primary recurrent theme in the book, in which Western ocularcentrism is frequently cited, and is thus quite jarring in standing in sole opposition. Paul Coulton’s and Pip Dickens’ chapters offer a slightly different approach to the broad topic of the book. Coulton discusses how we design objects in a world where the virtual/real divide no longer exists precisely, and the internet is increasingly a place in which we ‘live’, while Dickens offers an exploration of the artist’s studio itself.

As should be evident by now, the chapters are wide-ranging and varied. Some feel like a tentative first step into a newly carved-out space, whereas others offer a more in-depth analysis with a stronger theoretical basis and more confident conclusions. It is thus difficult to find many connecting ideas or themes, though this is probably a credit to the volume’s ambitiously wide approach to the topic rather than a detriment. There is, however, one dominant connecting theme in the challenge to Western ocularcentrism and the hierarchy of the senses in favour of a more multisensory approach, and linked to this is a recurrent theme of mindfulness. Although it is not always explicitly mentioned (and is never discussed in terms of formal mindfulness practice or training), there are several suggestions for how decreasing our reliance on the visual and foregrounding other senses can increase our awareness and attention – our sense of being ‘present’, to borrow a term from mindfulness practice. There is a sense of the ability of multisensory approaches to make us actively attentive to arts and design, as well as to our own personal explorations of our environments.

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**ANDREW IRVING**, *The art of life and death: radical aesthetics and ethnographic practice*, Chicago: Hau Books 2017, 245 pp. Paperback £26.50. ISBN 978-0-9973-6751-5.

*The art of life and death* studies the impact of HIV/AIDS on individuals in New York over a twenty-year period, with a particular focus on gay men. Employing a variety of ethnographic methods, the aim of this book is to show how different people have learned how to live a meaningful existence in the pre- and post-antiretroviral eras while negotiating life with a terminal illness. Irving achieves this and captures the reader's attention by sharing stories and offering insights into the lives of HIV-positive individuals in New York. His attention to the smallest details and his often humorous commentary on his findings, coupled with frequent references to popular culture, artists, songs and authors, makes this book thoroughly engaging.

Irving is perhaps best known for his 'walking fieldwork' ethnographic method, which involves accompanying people as they carry out their daily routines while they narrate aloud their thoughts and emotions throughout the experience. In Chapter 2, he shows just how effective this method can be in fieldwork as a window into another person's thoughts and experiences in the lived moment. Albert, an HIV-positive male artist, shares how, even with the ability of antiretroviral drugs to enable one to reach an average life expectancy, he is constantly reminded of his HIV status by the drugs he has to take every morning. Through Albert's monologue, we learn how his perspective as an artist plays a role in his view of the world and hence how he perceives his diagnosis. For example, he chooses to wear a red-striped T-shirt because it is symbolic of the infectious blood that he perceives runs through his veins. Irving observes that Albert addresses various audiences throughout his narration, including his past self, his future self and the Virgin Mary. These and many more rich insights are gained through this peculiar form of methodology.

A second method Irving uses throughout the book is to depict the artwork of HIV-positive artists. Irving shows how the construction of the art is as important as the final product. For Rebecca Guberman-Bloom, who was infected at just seventeen-years old, the use of her own blood in her artwork is cathartic, as, once external to the body, this infectious blood is soon rendered harmless, as HIV cannot live long outside the body. By being able actually to view her blood, Rebecca was able to come to terms with her condition and accept it. For Bill Cullum, any painting he painted started from the centre of the canvas, and he tried to fit in as much as possible due to his belief that his condition would not allow him to live long and therefore he could not waste time on preparatory work. This method gave William's

work a somewhat chaotic appearance, while also conveying a morbid intensity, depicting his fear and fascination with death. By including these works of art, Irving shares insights into the artists' experiences that go beyond the written word.

As HIV/AIDS is one of the greatest pandemics facing our world today and one that has been dealt with so poorly, particularly by ostracizing and stigmatizing those with the infection (hence leading to people preferring not to get tested and spreading the infection unknowingly), *The art of life and death*, by providing insight into the lives of people with HIV, is of the utmost importance. Irving draws attention to one example of such stigma by sharing the story of Bill, an HIV-positive gay man, who was lured into a sting operation when his friend, who was working with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), offered him money to be involved in a drug deal. Hoping the money would help him get out of the city and cut his own drug habit (a result of his depression from having HIV), Bill agreed but was apprehended by the DEA. Bill's arrest coincided with a campaign targeted at gay men which included hundreds of posters of the gay men found to be dealing drugs posted around their neighbourhoods with their names and phrases such as 'over seven years for selling crystal meth, was it worth it?'. There was public outrage from the gay community in response to this DEA campaign because, as a 2004 *Newsday* publication described it, the operation, rather than preventing drug deals, would only heighten homophobic attitudes in the community by means of these posters. This, coupled with the widespread public health messages claiming that gay men were the primary culprits for spreading HIV, was stigmatizing gay men in New York. By giving a voice to the marginalized, *The art of life and death* can provide important information to health-care policy-makers in order to better tackle the issue of HIV in LGTB communities.

Overall, this book is a very worthwhile introduction to any medical anthropologist because it includes detailed ethnographic descriptions, a variety of ethnographic methods and a range of key anthropological themes, including a focus on embodied experiences, social injustice and how individuals deal with death. The narrative style of the book makes it easy to read and relate to. This is a great feat given the complex and troubling themes discussed, which lead one to question their very perception of life itself.

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**DAVID LE BRETON**, *Sensing the world: an anthropology of the senses* (translated from the French by Carmen Ruschensky, with a preface by David Howes). London etc., Bloomsbury 2017. ISBN 978-1-4742-4602-6.

At the very start of this book, David Le Breton writes, ‘before thought there is feeling’ (1), since one experiences the world first and foremost as embodied. His work is a culmination of almost two decades (1990-2006) of reading, observing, reflecting and translating a wide range of daily sensory experiences gathered from both historical and ethnographic sources.

Carmen Ruschensky’s English translation of this work from the original French follows Le Breton’s lead in travelling the difficult path of studying sense and sense-making. Le Breton and Ruschensky are both aware that, even when confronted with similar surroundings, the senses are perceived through symbolic systems. Words grant recognition to perceptions, though not all sensory experiences are reducible to words. Sensory perception escapes language when one has to describe ‘the taste of a liquor, the pleasure of a caress and an odour or a painful sensation’ (13). Thus, there is both speculation and symbolism in looking for sensory meaning.

Le Breton’s work moves beyond the dualism involved in studying the techniques of the disciplined body as in the case of Foucault, in which there is an inclination to treat the body as an object and/or approach the ‘lived body’ phenomenologically. For Le Breton, one overcomes the dualism of existence and perception by studying the body-as-lived, which is unknowable in any absolute sense. In a sense, as David Howes notes in his preface (ix), Le Breton’s methodological approach is based on ‘sensology’, which emerges in relation to knowledge about ‘sensories’. That is, one senses the world first of all, and not all senses are socially developed. To engage with Le Breton’s writing is to make a sensorial and affective journey of the five senses of sight, sound, touch, smell and taste.

Le Breton carefully outlines the different approaches to studying the senses. He dedicates five out of the seven chapters to the five senses severally and traces the history, spirituality, vocabulary, sociality and limits of each sense. For Le Breton, sensations are perceptive and give rise to knowledge. In his chapter ‘From seeing to knowing: sight, the projective sense’, he acknowledges the knowability or the omniscience of the visual world, which unfolds for the viewer with indifferent ease. One believes in what one sees, and the knowledge it generates has its own historical and cultural context. For instance, taking the example of Hinduism, he refers to *darshan*, the process of the devotee being granted ‘sacred sight’ of the deity. Thus, often one sees what one wants to see, with little precision being given to an



‘objective’ reality. However, the gaze is far-reaching and objective in the way that it explores even what is out of reach of the other senses, like touch. In exploring, sight seldom acts innocently, for it lays claim to what it sees and is ‘nothing unless the subject is more or less used to using their eyes’ (45). Blindness, then, is not only perceived as the inability to see but also as a deprivation of the ability to ‘understand, weigh, compare and discriminate’ (33). As Le Breton notes, sight is more fixed than sound, which can be transient.

In his chapter ‘Listening to the world: hearing, the sense of understanding’, Le Breton explores the temporality of sound, which is contrasted with the *entendu* or the ‘ability to be understood’. The *entendu* makes sounds more lasting if one immerses oneself in the sonic sensibilities. According to Le Breton, however, sound lacks the malleability of touch and sight. Seldom does one have control over what one hears, which makes hearing a ‘defenceless process’: even when the listener does not wish to hear, the sound does not escape his or her ears but penetrates against the listener’s will (63). ‘Noise’ is as captivating as any other sound and, with technological progress, it infiltrates our lives with its constant presence. However, what constitutes ‘noise’ varies, and Le Breton, citing R. Murray Schafer (1994), notes that Jamaicans had no objection to the sound of machinery, unlike people from Switzerland, New Zealand and Canada (76). Anthropologists like Rodney Needham (Needham 1967) have referred to the sounds that create ritual transactions and that transport the mood to manifestations of the celebrated event or ceremony. Music, such as Sufi music, for instance, has the power to create moments of trance that are again dependent on personal divinity and the spiritual hold of that music on the listener, the meaning and emotions that the listener comes to associate with it. In other words, it is a ‘learned’ behaviour (86). In some instances, one sound might be used to block out other sounds, as when one uses earphones to listen to music. Similarly, there are also instances when silence can be a sign of anxiety that heightens other sensory experiences. For some people silence brings calm, while others feel exposed by the absence of familiar sounds that the mind is accustomed to. Silence could evoke a sense of emptiness, for among the Tuaregs of Kel Ferwan near the Nigerian city of Agadez, ‘conversations at certain hours is a weapon against the peril of silence’ (80).

In his chapter ‘Skin deep: touch, the sense of contact’, Le Breton argues that touch, though often ignored as a ‘secondary sense’ by philosophers, is the most important of all the senses, its deprivation leading to the absence of love and fulfilment. He writes, ‘to lose the sense of touch is to be robbed of any possibility of autonomous action’ (97). There are innumerable metaphors and vocabularies that use skin as a site of understanding, meaning that touch is also semantic: we ‘extend a helping hand’, ‘hit it off’, feel ‘touched by a story

that moves us', and sometimes offend people by 'rubbing them the wrong way' (119). However, even in the absence of language, touch has value, for it conveys emotions and helps individuals connect with others. As Le Breton says, 'the blending of bodies that makes touch the essential sense of sexuality is an attempt to temporarily overcome separation by engaging the others in shared pleasure' (120). Skin is known to be the most personal of all organs, as unsolicited touching can be considered an intrusion on the skin which translates into an intrusion of one's privacy. For Le Breton, skin has the power of care and healing, and for the child it starts as a mark of affection and love. On the other hand, unlike the other senses, the skin creates boundaries, restricts touch, arouses feelings of disgust, violence and discomfort, and defines intimate spaces.

In his chapter on 'Scents of smell and other: smell, the sense of transition', Le Breton argues that smell is the least documented sense because it is difficult to articulate. Sometimes, odour is dependent on body metabolism and varies based on the time of day and the health of the body. Odour that feels good, like the smell of the perfume and incense sticks, inspires trust, sanctity, spirituality and erotic pleasure. Nobody is indifferent to odour, a 'faint air that envelopes objects' (135). It lingers in the air but has no precise place, yet it mingles with our imagination, thus endowing it with meaning. Thus, sensual and moral knowledge is associated with odour. For instance, in American culture, personal body odour, such as the smell of sweat, bad breath, urine, etc., is a sign of low cultural status, hence one deodorizes to suppress smell; among the French it is a sign of interiority, and the phrase 'I don't smell him' indicates mistrust. Recent efforts towards cleanliness, according to Le Breton, symbolize the 'moral hygiene' that is expected from citizens through disposing garbage, maintaining gardens, teaching children habits of cleanliness, etc.

Odour is also important because it 'gives vitality to taste' (180). In his chapter on 'Savouring the world: from taste in food to the taste of life', Le Breton stresses that taste is perceived through the cultural prism and thus generates most evocative notions of ethnocentric biases. Eating is a sensory experience wherein the mouth acts as a frontier between the interior and the exterior (196). Food has cultural identity, its presentation being as important as its taste, while the company of others also adds value to eating it. Flavours are preferred over blandness, though blandness has a special meaning in some cultures as reflecting harmony; the religious texts such as the Bible and Quran ~~faiths~~ define god's virtue as sweet, and hunger and satiety are feelings that are socially actualized. Sexual pleasure and eating are also closely related: thus, 'committing the act of flesh entails, symbolically, having

to consume the flesh of an illicit partner' (227). Thus, the sensory act of eating is morally charged.

The most common metaphor that goes with taste is that 'we are what we eat,' giving rise to ideas of disgust. Disgust is what exists beyond the thinkable, threatening identity and creating limits to perception. Thus most societies detest cannibalistic practices as morally disgusting. The sentiments of disgust act as boundaries separating the self from the other. There is an intuitive reaction even before one has tasted something. As Le Breton says, 'the sharing of meals is aesthetic and moral before dietary' (249). Therefore, 'moral disgust is in effect a visceral reaction' (254).

I suggest that what marks the depth of Le Breton's writing is his ability to venture into the risky terrains of everyday presence, as well as the absence of common senses that make sensory experiences a matter of fact. His genius lies in his ability to consider silence, hunger and darkness as seriously as noise, satiety and sight. His methodology is also fresh in the sense that it rests on empirical knowledge of sense-creation, the ontology of the fleeting sounds and the fixation of vision. The book is a passionate work on the anthropology of senses, with an intelligible style of writing capable of reaching out to academic and non-academic readers alike.

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**CAROL A. MORTLAND**, *Grace after genocide: Cambodians in the United States*, Oxford and New York: Berghahn 2017, 300 pp. Hardback \$120. ISBN 978-1-78533-470-2.

Cultural memory after traumatic events is full of contradiction and selective amnesia, with a litany of different individuals reporting on factual occurrences and identifying where their experiences may intersect. Cultural memory within a refugee diaspora must also be

reconciled with pressures from a host country to abide by alien economic, political and social obligations. Speaking from my academic experience with Latin American cultural memory, collective trauma and migrant resettlement processes often obfuscate the capacity of a collective consciousness to render a single, universal story about a collective trauma. To my mind, reading Mortland's *Grace after genocide* provides us with the closest account of post-traumatic cultural memory's tangible consequences for a diaspora. By tangible consequences, I mean the frustration that stems from lacking the capacity to express unjust treatment convincingly. In other words, Mortland is able to demonstrate for the reader how cultural memory that is at odds with prejudice and factual representation is itself a daily ordeal that resettled refugees must survive (259).

A social anthropologist, Mortland's contribution to Southeast Asian studies and anthropology as a field is a significant piece of academic literature in many respects. The comprehensiveness of her work is astounding, drawn from conversations and observations in temples, schools, volunteer associations, homes and workplaces (2). Her thirteen-chapter anthology reads almost like a multi-sited ethnography, broken up thematically to illustrate progressive and overlapping experiences before, during and after Cambodian migrant networks created a diaspora. And, as a proper methodological precaution, she often charts her role in these ethnographic encounters in the first person by way of an introduction, a role that is characterized by the 'intentional or unintentional wounds that haunt human relationships' (5). Recalling how her own personal stake influences the stories of those she interviewed means grappling with a decolonized understanding of cultural memory and diaspora.

Aside from decolonization, these thematic chapters are all united around a common theme and her main argument: the story of Cambodian refugees is one of resilience and survival. Her compiled testimony from three and a half decades worth of semi-structured interviews and ethnographic work demonstrate that innocuous behaviour such as silence, dependence or an inconspicuous demeanour is actually a technique meant to preserve Khmer identity and withstand the pressure to assimilate totally (94). These results flout misconceptions about the Cambodian experience. *Grace after genocide* should not cause consternation. Amicability under the Khmer Republic and resettlement are strategies. The desire to resist assimilation was not always virtuous. Khmer familial dynamics often incorporated a man's responsibility to control his wives and children. Misogyny and abusive punishments meted out to wives and children ('traditional Khmer constraints') are sometimes seen as excessive among refugee households. Mortland reports that most Khmer are still shocked at the American 'over-reaction' to domestic violence (121). Again, her decolonized

methodology plays a key role in filtering out judgements rooted in a moralized cultural relativism. That does not mean that she is willing to overlook fabrications or exaggerations.

Academics cannot go so far as to say that cultural memory is subjective, a point that Mortland's work with Cambodian memory and diaspora makes markedly clear. She makes a point in one of her chapters of excoriating a memoir à la *The Killing Fields* that played fast and loose with the facts of what actually happened under the Khmer Rouge. To her, 'these stories about the reality that occurred are painful gifts to those fortunate enough to have escaped such suffering' (81). Mortland's captivating portrait is also a painful gift. Charting Cambodian life through a brutal Khmer Republic, heavily guarded Thai refugee camps and 'sink or swim' resettlement programmes in the United States, she manages to describe these human relationships in the diaspora with broad strokes and incisive detail. Having read her work, I have a stronger understanding of the Cambodian experience and of decolonized ethnography as a methodology.

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**ANNAMARIA MORTESCU-MAYES** and **MARCUS BANKS** (eds.) *Visual Histories of South Asia*, New Delhi: Primus Books 2018, 314 pp. USD 71.95, Euro 55, Rs. 1495. ISBN 978-9-3865-5244-0.

The status of visual materials in the social sciences in South Asian countries may seem bewildering at times. In particular, budding academics and young researchers are often faced with the question of what to do with such materials and how scholarly they are. In mainstream disciplines such as sociology and social anthropology, the obligatory question concerning them is, 'What is sociological (anthropological) about them'? Nevertheless, one can reference a growing number of academic works that have ventured into the study of the visual arts, media and culture of South Asia, predominantly in India. For instance, Christopher Pinney, Tapati Guha-Thakurta and Karin Zitzewitz have made explicit contributions in the areas of the history of art, photographs and visual culture. There is extensive work on modern technologies, visual media and the emergence of a new visual regime in India by scholars like Purnima Mankekar, Arvind Rajagopal and William Mazzarella. Yet researchers who adopt visual research methods and deal with this subject

matter have to make extra efforts to convince their peers and find a place within the mainstream disciplinary framework. Hence, one is forced to ask whether disciplines like social anthropology in South Asia are visually challenged? To back up this provocative question, one might explore the fear as well as the discomfort in dealing with visual materials, a fear partly derived from the inherent techno-magical ambiguity of visual materials and the complexities of the camera that have been analysed by Christopher Pinney in his book *Photography and Anthropology* (2011) and by John Tagg in *The Disciplinary Frame* (2009). This localized fear might have developed from the persistent lack of cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary practices, but on the other hand there might be some references justifying disciplinary concerns regarding the visually overburdened culture of the region. By not denying the facts and practices of undertaking visual research in different disciplinary domains, one can ask to what extent visual studies are theoretically grounded and methodologically informed. To take the question further, while it might be possible to consider some thought-provoking and critical works on visual culture and performance, these same works might be considered ‘soft research’ (soft sociology or anthropology) in the social sciences scholarship of South Asia. Thus, starting out from the thesis that South Asian sociology and social anthropology are suffering from visual blindness, the volume *Visual Histories of South Asia* co-edited by Annamaria Motrescu-Mayes and Marcus Banks offers a way forward to overcoming this intellectual challenge.

The editors’ aim is to break the frozen boundaries in the social sciences in dealing with the visual. The volume reiterates the need to refresh the theoretical and methodological underpinnings on which sociologists and anthropologists rely in studying visual culture and practice in South Asia. The other key promise the volume makes is to explore history through visual elements, thus providing access to existing and possible future frameworks of visual research in the quest for historical knowledge. To mark history’s timeline and key themes, visual documentation in the colonial period remains significant, but soon the visual appearance of pre-colonial and mythical elements becomes prominent, as underlined by the various layers of exploration in the book. Motrescu-Mayes and Banks offer a visual dimension to Indian history and underscore the importance of visual research in comprehending its contemporary socio-cultural and politico-religious aspects. They thus contribute to the attempt to turn text-based scholarship in the direction of visual research.

In his foreword to the volume, Christopher Pinney cautions against falling into the trap of dichotomizing text and image, or the *seeing* and *un-seeing*. Taking his concern into account, it is imperative to realize that disciplinary domains in South Asian scholarship suffer from a

blindness such that the question of seeing and un-seeing appears irrelevant. Elsewhere Pinney (2011) discusses the tension between photography and anthropology and elaborates on the historical trajectories of photography's centrality to that discipline. From the colonial period to contemporary anthropological practices, the ambiguity over the use of visual materials continues in respect of its contextual dimensions. For South Asian sociology and social anthropology, therefore, the task is to overcome visually challenged scholarship, instead of harping on the question of seeing or un-seeing.

In his own chapter in the volume, entitled 'An Archaeology of Visual Practice', Marcus Banks explicitly refers to the challenge that western academia is still faced with to justify the social impact of visual research. He underlines the growing pressure on visual scholarship in the contemporary 'funding regime' and 'audit culture', which is discouraging and alarming for those wishing to conduct in-depth social research. Moreover, he invites young scholars to think about 'slow research' as a way of acquiring greater insights, particularly in investigations involving visual materials.

The other chapters, not just that by Banks, incorporate a fair number of illustrations, not only to extend the texts, but also invoke some systematic explorations. For instance, Denis Vidal presents illustrations of Indian tribal paintings and popular works of art to unravel the complex dynamics of elitist exhibitionism, cultural commercialization and artistic ethnocentrism. Similarly Josefine Baark analyses the iconographic expressions of the Maratha Durbar Hall at the Thanjavur Palace Complex in south India in order to understand the visual economy of Indo-Danish diplomacy. The visual narratives help in unfolding European influence on the politico-economic structure of colonial India upon the arrival of the Danish East India Company in 1620. Imma Ramos's photographs, taken as part of her doctoral research on the Kamakkhya temple in Assam, provide an excellent overview of the visual politics of menstruation, birth and devotion. In her chapter, she shows how the images help explain the layers of meanings of these historically significant sculptures. In respect of the growing discussion about image production and colonial rule in the Indian subcontinent, the aspect of representation has always been challenged. However, Thomas Simpson takes a provocative path in this volume, suggesting that the representational images produced and presented by colonial administrators were not univocal, but rather fragmented, hence offering a multiplicity of meanings. According to Simpson, the attempt can be associated with the foundational visual ethnographic practice of colonial anthropologists in South Asia.

The colonial history of India allows one to explore three crucial aspects of the socio-cultural development, social status, gender dynamics and construction of the mass of the

population. The volume provides an impetus to researchers to begin a systematic visual journey exploring these vital domains. Thus Teresa Segura-Garcia's chapter 'Picturing Indian Kingship', Xavier Guegan's attempt to understand Indian masculinity through photographs and Adrian Peter Ruprecht's analysis of the visual languages taught to the Indian masses by the Red Cross Society are all of value to the creative researcher. Another set of scholarly engagements with visual culture and performative politics is presented in the chapters on sports and politically provocative cartoons by Souvik Naha, framing Simla and the politics of iconography by Siddharth Pandey, on the visual appearance and representation of international delegates by Aaron Bryant, and on the use of new media in the contexts of religious politics and explicit nationalism by Ronie Parciack.

Extending beyond India, co-editor Annamaria Mortescu-Mayes examines the ancient roots and routes and possible local-to-local dialogues in South Asia by discussing early photographs of Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka) to explore the perpetual nature of antiquity. She offers some possible perspectives for using archived visual materials and visual research methodologies in interpretative research.

This volume can be considered a landmark whereby visual researchers can declare their rejection of their disciplinary godfathers for the sake of making dynamic progress and thriving in the production of critical scholarly initiatives. The fact that the editors of this volume promise to contribute to the wider context of South Asian visual and historical scholarship, which covers rich thematic and conceptual grounds, permits sociologists and social anthropologists in the South Asian academic sphere to take a step towards overcoming the fear of and discontent regarding visual research. However, this volume also whets the scholarly appetite to delve further into a wave of comprehensive visual cultures that not only share historical commonalities with colonial India, but also explicitly demonstrate the latter's peculiarities. In contemporary South Asia, a wide-angle lens is needed to capture nationalist distinctiveness and everyday visual practices across borders.

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**ALEX RHYS-TAYLOR**, 2017. *Food and multicultural: a sensory ethnography of East London*, London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 176 pp. £84.99. ISBN: 978-1-4725-8116-7.

*Food and Multiculture* may be somewhat vague as a title for this book, as it sounds rather dry and clinical. The title misleads the reader as to the contents of what they are about embark on, namely a visceral journey through a selection of London's eateries, one that plunges the reader into a combination of vivid descriptions and theoretical analysis that outlines a sensory-rich version of the city that, though familiar, has been relegated to the background of daily life, as Rhys-Taylor suggests. The author uses this work to bring the 'sensoria' back to the fore in order to illustrate the many mechanisms that underplay something as frequently overlooked as a takeaway meal.

The author's chapter on 'Halal katsu wraps' is one such example. Rhys-Taylor examines this 'hybrid dish' of a bread-crumbed chicken sandwich with curry sauce, often eaten hurriedly by white-collar workers from the nearby financial district—who Rhys-Taylor amalgamates into a generic 'carbophobe' called 'Charlie'—and traces the historical pathways that lead to its creation and the emotive reasoning as to why it is being sold at a particular stall in a London market.

Utilizing taste and smell as research tools and catalysts of discovery to tie together the rich theoretical and analytical backdrop with which the book is written, Rhys-Taylor organizes the work into eight sections. Each section uses a food item as a starting point for discussion, beginning with chili to explore ethnicity and issues of integration and appropriation; halal chicken katsu wraps to better understand the interplay of historical trajectories and the exchange and dialogue involved in a cross-cultural community with a multi-layered identity; the 'moral panic' that can be generated by sensationalized media, as shown with the horse meat scandal; and how fried chicken, and most importantly its smell, is deeply associated with race and class, and conversely how the dish can form a basis for a community in the margins. Chapter six follows the sad life-cycle of the quintessentially English jellied eel, showing how memory is deeply intertwined with food, while the last two chapters offer Rhys-Taylor reflections on those who came before, in which he 'digests' them. The author also includes a short note on methodology, his personal relationship with food and some of the issues he faced in conducting his research (such as persevering in acquiring a taste for jellied eels, which is to be commended).

The interdisciplinary cocktail used to explore how urban life is lived through food, by utilizing vignettes of ethnography to propel each chapter, gives the reader a well-rounded introduction to the world of ‘sensoria and sensibilities’ that has been marginalized in many examples of urban studies. The use of food as a prism through which one can understand the intersectionality of ethnicity, race, class, politics and economics allows the reader to see how a simple daily and ritualized practice and/or experience is heavily laden with meaning, politics and history. The contemporary heterogeneity of food culture in London speaks volumes about the people who partake in it, whether they are producers, cooks, hungry office-workers or teenagers on a budget.

The study eloquently relays what the subjects themselves seem to articulate subconsciously. As Rhys-Taylor argues, ‘it is at the level of the non-discursive, or the sensuous, that we get a taste of the broader range of processes that are shaping the culture of contemporary cities’ (39). This is further illustrated in the poignant story of Raheem, an Iraqi migrant, who enjoys the jellied eels ‘Tubby Isaacs’ has to offer, but with the shadow of the memory of seafood dishes that are inextricably linked to a place that is fixed in the realms of nostalgia, no longer attainable, but capable of being conjured up by a mouthful of jellied eels from a street vendor in London. This element of nostalgia and memory is further illustrated by John’s story of his split life between Italy and England and his strong affinity with a place that is so removed from him. John’s old age prevents him from travelling to Italy, but the food culture he acquired through his late wife’s family continues to maintain his ‘powerful’ bond with the Amalfi coast. Stories like these add flavour, as it were, to Rhys-Taylor’s argument, illustrating the nuances of food culture and how people identify with it.

The ‘fly-on-the-wall’ method of collecting ethnographic data was fruitful, as well as necessary, as one unpleasant encounter involving a giant snail suggests (142). It leads to illustrative and occasionally amusing interactions, such as the one in ‘Heat of the moment’, when the author happens to stumble upon an argument that ends rather comically in the disgruntled party chewing on a very hot chili in defiance, thereby causing themselves a great deal of discomfort. The book would have been enriched still further had additional ethnographic examples been used and if more of a voice had been given to those who were observed and depicted. As the author has spent years working on this book, there must have been more encounters which have remained undisclosed to the reader. Overall, however, Rhys-Taylor reminds the reader that, even in a bustling and congested city such as London, the brief pause given to food and its consumption is laden with memory, meaning and ritual.

Food forms the backbone of our days, and the food choices we make say a great deal about us as individuals and as members of a community. After all, we are what we eat.

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**ARND SCHNEIDER** (ed.), *Alternative art and anthropology: global encounters*, London: Bloomsbury Academic 2017, 239 pp. Hardback £19.99. ISBN 978-1-4742-3124-4.

In *Alternative art and anthropology: global encounters*, Arnd Schneider initiates a dialogue between artists, scholars and curators to map the growing relationships between these two hybrid fields. Contributors from a wide range of specializations and geographies explain their individual and collaborative artistic work in their own words. The reader is invited to reflect on the global exchange between contemporary arts and anthropology as a conceptual tool to understand both artistic production and the anthropology of art, which needs to be complemented by a renewed emphasis on alterity beyond simple binaries of ‘self’ versus the ‘other’ to generate its full epistemological and practical potential (21). Moving away from the hitherto central Euro-American conversation, Schneider links a variety of perspectives from countries including Japan, the Philippines, China, Bhutan, Indonesia, Nigeria, Mexico, Chile, Mexico and Ecuador, as well as transnational communities such as the Filipino diaspora in Chicago. Overall, the book is very enjoyable to read and presents a range of new conceptual and practical perspectives.

Anthropology is certainly the main academic discipline occupied with the discussion and understanding of otherness, using fieldwork as its main method. However, drawing on the recent revival of ontology initiated by anthropologists such as Philippe Descola, the author maintains that ‘fundamental differences of knowledge acquisition and representation are proposed between Western modes and certain other forms of thought’ (2). He touches upon the ongoing shift in art, observing that other ontologies have also entered contemporary art and that artists are now engaging ‘directly with alterity and epistemes different from the West’s’ (2). Thus, Schneider draws our attention to the crossover, both conceptual and methodological, of anthropology and contemporary arts using ethnography as the main approach. He invites the reader to think about the interchanges between art and anthropology

no longer as a simple exchange between the two, but in a reconfigured shape (17). Schneider presents ‘translation’, or the possibility of communication, as a means to go beyond alterity. In this sense, anthropology and art can both be understood as translation tools attempting to communicate alterity without losing their distinctiveness. Noting that the ‘ignorance of other traditions of thought and theorizing continues to support the hegemony of central, metropolitan notions’ (11), he seeks to redress imbalances in the global discourse about art and anthropology. Thus, questioning the notion of ‘contemporary’, he convincingly shows that this concept is historically and culturally contingent and consists of ‘multiple partners and disciplinary traditions or temporalities, multidirectional and across different parts of the globe’, whose traditions and notions of art and anthropology are different on the global scale (17). Hence, in creating a platform for transnational exchanges that are no longer restricted to the West, the book brings other traditions of contemporary art and anthropology to the centre of the debate.

The conceptual and theoretical framework is reflected on throughout the book. The seventeen chapters are divided into a range of essays, almost all written on collaborative works exploring the interconnections between anthropology and art. They are followed by interviews with the editor and discussions by the contributors who explore these ideas in greater depth. The plurality of views and the alternation between the essays and conversations prove to be very fruitful in providing a comprehensive understanding of the multiplicity of approaches and practices in art and anthropology. A number of photographs add valuable visual material to support the contributors’ descriptions. The book’s conversational language facilitates the accessibility of the complex abstract ideas. Furthermore, the questions the editor asks mobilizes the readers’ imagination, inviting them to reflect on possible answers.

Across the first eight essays, contributors range from established to younger artists, curators and scholars, including Shinichi Nakazawa (Japan), Tomoko Niwa and Tadashi Yanai (Japan), Lili Fang (China), Adeline Ooi and Mella Jaarsma (Indonesia) and X. Andrade (Ecuador). For example, in Chapter 2, Ugochukwu-Smooth C. Nzewi, the curator of African art at the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, presents four young African-born artists who ‘engage with contemporary personal and public memory tied to place as well as collective history’ (29). They demonstrate reflexive experiments and fieldwork processes in their practices, as they negotiate complex and fragmented worlds. Ugochukwu-Smooth C. Nzewi argues that ‘the ethnographic turn in contemporary art is not restricted to certain contexts or geographies’ (29). As an illustration of this statement, in the following chapters,

artists use a diverse range of media, including photography, sound, performance and workshops, and they explain the challenges encountered in the ethnographic field. They constitute insightful examples of the way creativity is key in navigating through different conceptual fields in their attempts to translate alterity.

The final essays focus on wider collaborative projects. In Chapter 11, Almira Astudillo Gilles explains her work in organizing two collaborative paintings by Filipino artists based in the Philippines and by Filipino Americans from Chicago. By digging into the practicalities of the collaboration that produced two murals for the Erehwon Center for the Arts in Quezon City and the Fields Museum in Chicago, she expands on the crucial negotiation – which is not without its challenges and tensions – between contributors who conceive their identity in completely different ways but who need to come to terms with one another in order to produce the collaborative work. The artwork is thus a process rather than a final object. Chapter 13 echoes Chapter 11 in being an essay on the collaboration between artists and curators from Switzerland and Bhutan. In 2010, FOA-FLUX, Zurich, and the Choki Traditional Art School, Thimphu, initiated an exchange project to explore the processes at educational sites dedicated to contemporary European and Bhutanese Buddhist art traditions (163). The collaborators, Annemarie Bucher and Dominique Lämmlli, based in Switzerland, and Sonam Choki, based in Bhutan, reflect on the central reason behind the exchange, which is: ‘how to consolidate and transform tradition without destroying its agency’ (168). An interesting outcome of the encounter between Bhutanese and Swiss artists and teachers is the observation of their distinct notions of art and teaching concepts. Individual artistic authorship and research, as well as critical reflection on aesthetic norms, were prevalent among Swiss students. By contrast, the approach of the Bhutanese students focused on their traditional paintings and the oral tradition comprising skills and techniques handed down for generations (172).

The final chapter prominently illustrates the idea of multidirectional dialogues in the work of the artists of ‘Conversación de Campo’ (Field Conversation), a collaborative network of four Chilean artists and anthropologists working in Chile, Mexico, Germany, the Netherlands and Britain. Their fundamental method is conversational, which they define as a ‘horizontal exchange of subjectivities’. Their aim is to reach a cross-disciplinary and global audience, using art and ethnography as tools to create meaning and reflect upon it, not as ends in themselves (217).

With its substantial theoretical framework and rich range of empirical examples, this book is a key text for students, academics and practitioners in areas such as anthropology,

visual anthropology, the anthropology of art, museum and curatorial studies, cultural studies and art history.

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**LUCIEN SCUBLA**, *Giving life, giving death: psychoanalysis, anthropology, philosophy* (Studies in Violence, Mimesis and Culture, translated from the French by M.B. DeBevoise). East Lansing (Michigan): Michigan State University Press 2016; x, 367 pp. ISBN 978-1-6118-6208-9.

In his endorsement on the book's cover, Michel Deguy describes Scubla's writing using the words 'combat', 'tournament', 'polemical bravery' and 'force'. This description of this uncompromising, sharp and radical book could not be more to the point. Imagine the fight of the century: one man enters an arena filled with giants, ready to fight them all, and, after a merciless battle, he remains the last man standing.

Lucien Scubla's weapons, which he aims to use to turn modern Western thought on its head, are the biological and cultural realities of maternity, namely the fact that women alone can bring children into this world. Armed with this evidence, Scubla extends an intriguing invitation to his readers. He challenges diverse scientific disciplines and schools of thought, including, but not limited to, philosophy, anthropology, psychoanalysis and feminism in his attempt to counter relativism and radically re-think the foundations of classic theories of human organization and social and gender relations.

Firm in his belief in the existence of universal schemas that "govern all natural and cultural phenomena" (p. 135) and that develop "spontaneously in all societies, in accordance with the same principles, without therefore being uniform and immutable" (p. 135), Scubla asks: What if all grand theories of social science and humanities had something in common, namely that they wrongly dismissed the ways in which attachment, desire, kin and social organization are governed by women's power to give birth and produce offspring and by the masculine envy of that ability?

Scubla demonstrates that, while aiming to describe the drivers of human relationships, psychoanalytic theories based on the Oedipus complex reduced women to sexual objects much like studies of kinship and alliance reduced women to objects of exchange between

male-dominated kin groups. He shows the influence of maternity in shaping social relations, kinship and ritual and emphasises that, notwithstanding its near total omission from Lévi-Strauss' kinship atom, filiation, and particularly the relationship between mother and son, is the foundation of kinship and that women are the bearers of continuity between generations.

*Giving life, giving death* challenges readers to venture beyond contemporary western thought, which the author frames as “at once individualist and egalitarian, enamored of diversity and hostile to distinctions” (p. 157) and which supposedly “exhibits weaknesses and inconsistencies that popular ethnology and its bogus relativism have made still more disabling” (p. 157). Rather, academics should aim at integrating and unifying the sciences and acknowledge that “[b]ehind the proclaimed supremacy of the male over the female, one cannot help but perceive, when all is said and done, an implicit recognition of the superiority of the feminine gift of life over the masculine gift of death” (p. 149).

In aiming to deconstruct academic tropes, contradict grand theories and create a new way of looking at universal phenomena, Scubla, much like Freud in *Totem and taboo*, scrutinizes a broad variety of academic schools and disciplines, engaging with academics such as d'Anglure, Aristotle, Barry, Comte, Devreux, Dumont, Freud, Gauchet, Godelier, Girard, Héritier, Héran, Hocart, Jones, Lacan, Lévi-Strauss, Malinowski, Maranda and Maranda, Moisseff, Reik, Róheim, Schreber and Testart. In his wide-ranging study, he includes numerous ethnographies of village structure, marriage, kinship and social organization, ritual, especially initiation rituals, and labour organization of from diverse parts of the world. In his investigation, he draws, inter alia, on the Dogon of Mali, the Omaha of Nebraska and the Baruya of Papua New Guinea. Scubla analyses Bororo village structures, Australian totemic rites, couvade practices and cooking processes among the Sara of Chad, alongside tales like the Brother Grimms' Hänsel and Gretel, religious understandings and clinical studies.

The author is extremely diligent in his reviews of others' contributions. Searching for the chink in their armour, he analyses, probes and tests them until, sometimes in half sentences and minuscule details, he finds the gap in the argument that allows him to give the kiss of death to the theory, render its incompleteness visible, expose its weaknesses and contradictions and leave its pieces exposed, pieces that can then be sorted for their validity and re-arranged. His multi-disciplinary approach and his aim to make a valid contribution not only for psychoanalysis, anthropology or philosophy, but for all sciences is fascinating.

Scubla calls on academics to remember undeniable natural differences as the bases of kinship theory in order not to be stuck between “confessing to utter powerlessness and defending an arbitrary inequality” (p. 164). Simultaneously he remarks that scholars should

remember that “culture is not external to nature (...) it is a modality of it” (p. 209) and that “humans are by nature cultural beings” (209).

Scubla criticizes feminist thinkers for disregarding the cultural and biological fact of maternity and remarks that a passion for equality should not lead to a denial of real differences (p. 116). He also criticizes feminists for neglecting due diligence when drawing up their arguments and states: “One thinks of feminists who conflate two religions, each of which has its own special character, when they ascribe to the Judeo-Christian tradition a will to enslave women, forgetting that in the Gospels all female figures are positive, and seeming not to notice that it is, after all, in the Christian lands that feminism first appeared and developed” (p. 163).

Drawing on Marika Moisseff’s work, he remarks that there is a hierarchy between sexes and generations that has its foundation in the asymmetry instituted by maternity and in the consequences of masculine envy aiming to correct this natural inequality.

One of his main concerns is to demonstrate the various ways in which rituals consolidate violence and the sacred and how the male giving of death through ritual, hunting and war and the female giving of life through childbirth are interpreted and negotiated in religion, ritual and practices in various societies. Scubla demonstrates how rituals such as initiation into male societies or the practice of *couvade* are ways to negotiate male envy of the female ability to bring children into the world and their desire to dispossess women of this unique power (p. 88). Initiation rites into male sodalities, alongside ritual killings, therefore mimic a woman’s ability to give birth. Here, “the fiction of being born from the man is a nullification of birth from the woman” (Reik, [1919] 1931, p. 146, n.I. in Scubla, p. 176) and an attempt “to obtain from the initiation ritual a capacity for giving life equal to or greater than the one that nature has conferred upon women” (p. 176). *Couvade* practices try to mediate the tendency of fathers to see the newborn as a “stranger” and “intruder” and to restrain the impulse to “kill and devour” the newborn (p. 167).

Scubla bases many of his ideas on the work of Alain Testart, the only contribution he does not dismiss. After a thorough review, he remarks: “Everything considered, the validity of Testart’s law seem to me firmly established. It is one of those rare laws, in due and proper form – indeed perhaps the only such law – in which anthropology can take pride” (p. 134).

Testart’s law holds that the sexual division of labour is not based on nature, but on a trans-historical ideology, a social construction, involving the symbolism of blood and the taboo against mixing “menstrual blood and the blood of the hunt (or that of the sacrifice), that is, the blood *involuntarily* shed by women and the blood *deliberately* shed by men” (p. 132 original



emphases), a taboo found in very different societies. Testart suggests that “killing, for a man, is the equivalent of giving birth for a woman” (p. 177) and that women are generally excluded from professions that require the shedding of blood (hunting, surgery, the army etc.) and from using weapons that draw blood, at least during their menstrual period. To Scubla this law has been undervalued in the academic community because, “far from being an arbitrary interpretation, the principle of keeping different kinds of blood separate has served as the basis for the sexual division of tasks in the human species as a whole” (p. 140).

Scubla’s work is radical and unforgiving in its criticism. It offers a thorough, but not exhaustive review of other works (Scubla neglects, among others, bodies of literature on feminism, as well as current studies of masculinities and femininities), sheds light on their perceived shortcomings and makes a valid enough proposal, but its weakness lies in fighting a one-man battle aimed at uniting the sciences by ripping apart the cornerstones on which many schools of thought are based while dismissing those works it could have benefitted from.

What is the scene that unavoidably follows combat? What is left after the carnage of a battlefield once the adrenaline and sounds of colliding bodies and clashing weapons subside? What comes to mind is the silence, maybe the wind, the lifeless bodies on the ground, a whole world at an apparent standstill. In the dust that settles, those who were victorious struggle to stand on trembling legs, struck down by exhaustion and overwhelmed at the shifting sands of an uncertain future.

I was shocked and intrigued by Subla’s book, and it left me wondering whether the fine line between being critical and destructive should not be erased, precisely because, if one is the last person standing, all that is left is a fundamentally different outlook, but with nobody to learn from or converse with.

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**NIKOLAI SSORIN-CHAIKOV**, *Two Lenins: a brief anthropology of time*, Chicago: Hau Books, 2017. 150 pp. Hardback £19.00. ISBN 978-0-9973-6753-9.

The concept of time in anthropology is a topic that has often been discussed on the side-lines but seldom analysed centre-stage. Scholars such as Laura Bear have pushed the boundaries of the study of time in works such as *Doubt, conflict, mediation: the anthropology of modern time* (2014a) and *Capital and time: uncertainty and qualitative measures of inequality*

(2014b), but time was either still a secondary consideration or was lumped together with economics, materiality or globalization. This is not the case with Ssorin-Chaikov's *Two Lenins*, which approaches time not as a conduit for analysing other anthropological subjects, but as an entity worth studying in and of itself. Ssorin-Chaikov argues that 'time – in [an] anthropological perspective – is a culturally specific construct that combines ways of structuring daily activities with broader meanings about the past, present, and future' (3). Furthermore, he argues throughout his book that *time* is not a single entity. There are numerous different types and rhythms of time – including gift time, narrative time, chronological time, etc. – which coexist, running sometimes in continuity, sometimes in conflict with one another.

To make this argument, he contrasts the stories of two Lenins, one an Evenki hunter nicknamed *Lenin* because of certain similarities to the late Soviet politician, the other the latter himself. The author looks at chronological time through the development of modernity among the Evenki. Here, what modernity brings is both a giving and a taking of time. Modernity has given Evenki hunters the opportunity, the time, to expand their skill set and create businesses for those who choose to take this step, such as Lenin. This as modernity is a giving of time, so is it a taking of time. Before modernity, Soviet helicopters would come and transport the children from the Evenki nomadic sites to school each year, a journey which only took two hours. After modernity, the helicopters stopped coming, and the journey was lengthened into a several-day hike through the snow-laden forests.

Time, both as a narrative and as a gift, is seen in the story of the late Soviet politician Lenin, who allowed Armand Hammer, an American businessman, to bypass the usual bureaucratic red tape to set up trade which allowed Hammer to access resources from the Russian mines and allowed famine-ridden Russian villages to access much needed wheat. This is both gift time and narrative time because of the problems Ssorin-Chaikov encountered while researching the story. Ssorin-Chaikov's primary source is Hammer's own account of what happened, as well as newspaper articles, Lenin's diary and visits to the Lenin Museum in Moscow. Time as narrative, then, is an issue because Hammer has control of his side of the story and therefore can potentially manipulate the results.

Ssorin-Chaikov addresses this issue and explains his reasoning for relying heavily on Hammer's account of the story. Despite first appearances, it does not detract from the overall point Ssorin-Chaikov is trying to make, as it serves the purpose of problematizing our notion of time while also showing the multiplicity of time itself.

Throughout the book, the algebraic concepts of X and Y are used in an attempt to explain different types of temporality, which Ssorin-Chaikov explains as following one or more of three equations, either (1)  $X = Y$ , (2) X is Y, or (3)  $X \neq Y$ . In the first, different temporalities equal each other and therefore are cross-compatible ( $X = Y$  [and vice versa]); in the second, one temporality either is or becomes the other in such a way that the process cannot be reversed (X is Y [but Y is not X]); in the third, the two temporalities are completely incompatible with each other ( $X \neq Y$  [and vice versa]). Ssorin-Chaikov argues throughout the book that different temporalities can at different times embody each of these three equations (and potentially others too). A tangible example of the  $X \neq Y$  case can be seen with Soviet time and Modern time, which are incompatible with each other, thereby forcing Russia after the October Revolution to switch from the Julian Calendar to the Gregorian Calendar in order to align with Modernity, and thus eliminating the two-week time difference between Russia and those who followed Global Standard Time.

In this book, Ssorin-Chaikov attempts to look at time as a fluid and situational idea. Pulling concepts from those such as Fabian, Lefebvre and Briggs, he constructs a notion of time not as an entity in itself, but as a multiplicity of entities. Not only can time be gift time, capitalist time, Modern time, etc., but each of these can form multiple times in and of themselves. There can be multiple Modern times, and gift time can depend on whether Mauss's or Hobbes's concept of the gift is followed – something which Ssorin-Chaikov investigates.

Although occasionally Ssorin-Chaikov can be criticized for spending too much time – pun intended – on seemingly obscure aspects of time or straining himself to find different temporalities, what he accomplishes in the span of this short book deserves applause. It becomes clear in later pages that the study does not exceed what is necessary to create an anthropology of what so many of us take for granted: time itself.

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**PAUL-FRANÇOIS TREMLETT, LIAM SUTHERLAND and GRAHAM HARVEY** (eds.), *Edward Burnett Tylor, religion and culture*, London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017; viii, 219 pp. ISBN 978-1-3500-0341-5.

This volume is a collection of ten papers which revisit the theories of religion and culture of Sir Edward Burnett Tylor. Tylor's idea of religious evolution or animism, which suggests that religion evolved from a rudimentary belief in spiritual beings animating the world, has faced severe criticism since it was published. This collection aims to re-assess Tylor and his work, exactly one hundred years after he passed away, to highlight the importance of both to the contemporary study of religion.

The book is divided into two parts, each containing five papers. Part 1 engages with debates about Tylor's theory, while Part 2 explores new ways in which his work might be approached. Most of the papers focus on Tylor's 1871 two-volume work, *Primitive culture: researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, art and custom*. Two papers reference *Anahuac*, Tylor's eloquent 1861 travelogue about his observations regarding religion and practice in Mexico. The papers in both parts intersect with each other, focusing on Tylor's definition of religion and his ideas on animism, spiritualism, survival and myth. The papers all share the similar goal of emphasizing the relevance of Tylor's work to the contemporary study of religion, either by suggesting new approaches based on critiques of his theory, or by focusing on the contribution of his original work. Three common themes run throughout the collection. The first is that the merits of Tylor's work, such as his pioneering ethnographic methods in studying culture and religion, have been overlooked. The authors argue that this is because most of the previous attention given to his work has been directed towards his highly criticized evolutionary framework. Secondly, it is argued that Tylor's evolutionary theory and thought on the psychic unity of humankind have affinities with the present-day cognitive approach to religion. Thirdly, myth and other spiritual practices or beliefs are not survivals, as Tylor suggested. Instead of departing from the evolutionary, non-utilitarian, situational or narrative perspective, the authors contend that these practices should be seen as the result of oscillations along a continuum between changing forms of culture.

The collection uses Tylor's theory to demonstrate theoretical points and to suggest new perspectives and approaches to the study of religion. Although the arguments of the ten papers focus on the theory of one of the founders of anthropology, the book's aim is clearly to target those who study religion rather than those who study anthropology. Nevertheless, the book provides some exceptional anthropological insights. For example, James L. Cox challenges Tylor's predetermined ideas about the origins of religion and suggests that the agency of religious practitioners should be taken into account when studying religion. Graham Harvey references Hallowell's (1960) work and advocates a fresh approach to understanding animism and fetishism as an alternative to the rather 'static' notions put forward by Tylor. Following Hallowell, Harvey argues for an ontological understanding of the possibly dynamic relationship between humans and the material when studying

religion. Harvey's reference to Hallowell's ontological perspective is perhaps surprising because it indicates that anthropologists were already becoming aware of the alternative ontological perspective to understanding culture nearly sixty years ago; it is therefore not simply a contemporary discovery.

Throughout this collection of papers, the contributions of those who have had a great influence on anthropology are frequently quoted and compared with each other, including James George Frazer, Émile Durkheim, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Rodney Needham, Clifford Geertz and Bruno Latour. This helps to familiarize the reader with theories of religion, belief, myth and modernity by some of the key thinkers in anthropology. Overall, one does not need to know Tylor's theory very well before reading the book, as his theories and ideas are outlined in detail throughout. These elaborations provide more than a basic understanding of Tylor's work. On this basis, the book can therefore be recommended to anthropology audiences, especially those who are new to the discipline.

As an anthropology student at the University of Oxford, I fully appreciate the editors stating at the beginning of the book that, 'although acknowledged as a founding figure, Tylor's position in the anthropological canon is an odd one, severely circumscribed, [and] rarely acknowledged' (2). Tylor devoted much of his time to the University. He was its first reader in anthropology at Oxford, and then the discipline's first professor there. However, probably because of his evolutionary approach to culture, he rarely comes at the top of the reading list in the contemporary School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography in Oxford. The present collection's efforts to move beyond his evolutionary framework and highlight the relevance of his work to contemporary studies, both within and outside the discipline of social anthropology, should therefore be appreciated.

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**ROY WAGNER**, *The invention of culture*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016, 208 pp. ISBN 978-0-2264-2331-9.

Roy Wagner broke new ground when he first published *The invention of culture* in 1975. At its core, the book advances the argument that 'culture' does not exist as an objective 'thing', but that people constantly create, or 'invent', culture by manipulating existing symbols to

create new meanings in order to make sense of their social worlds. Wagner further argues that anthropologists have reified the idea of culture through their attempts to study it, and he takes issue with the tendency to approach culture as an objective reality that can be evaluated, quantified and represented in writing as a seamless system or structure. Wagner does not, however, aim to define the term 'culture', but instead argues that any single definition could only ever be one interpretation among many. In this vein, he aims to expose the role anthropology has played in the objectification of culture and to further underscore that the discipline has deprived our understanding of the creative processes underlying its creation.

In order to demonstrate the ways in which 'culture' has been defined as an object of study by anthropologists and its subsequent reification in anthropological writing, he begins by interrogating the uses and implicit meanings of the term in Western academia in an attempt to bring to light the inherent assumptions behind its employment within the social sciences. He argues that preconceptions of culture in the West have, in part, influenced how anthropologists approach it and that, 'when an anthropologist studies another culture, he "invents" it by generalizing his impressions, experiences, and other evidences as if they were produced by some external "thing"' (26). Wagner thus contends that 'culture' is invented by anthropologists as a 'prop' to aid them in their study of social phenomena (8).

Moving on, he argues that culture is constructed from symbolic expressions, which similarly do not have innate meanings, but must be understood in context. Further, any symbol can, theoretically, be interpreted differently by individuals in the same social milieu, the meaning of which can only be understood in the particular context in which they are employed. He contends that within a society symbols are constantly mobilized and acted upon, and his argument rests heavily on the distinction between his notions of 'invention' and 'convention'. To Wagner, invention 'changes things, and convention resolves those changes into a recognizable world' (53). In other words, conventional symbols organize social worlds into systems that are shared by groups of people. Yet, any of these symbols can be given new associations or meanings, and thus are invented by individuals, which ultimately alter the conventional corpus of symbols and their previous connotations.

He uses advertising strategies in the United States as a case study to describe these processes in action, since, 'as an interpretive medium, advertising is constantly remaking the meaning and experience of life for its audience, and constantly objectifying its products through the meanings and experiences it creates' (64). Wagner looks at the way in which advertising agents take certain common (or conventional) symbols and create novel meanings by emphasizing new relationships between symbols not previously associated, such as

notions of masculinity and racing cars, thus reinterpreting them and inventing meanings which, over time, will either become conventional or will be forgotten.

In the same way, individuals use their knowledge of well-known (conventional) symbols to make new connections (inventions) which then inform the conventional. What anthropologists might recognize as continuity can be explained by the continued presence of certain conventional symbols, but their meanings may not always stay the same, and this is one pitfall of anthropological approaches that Wagner takes issue with. Instead of imagining 'culture' as a single collection of symbols which have static meanings, he emphasizes that it is the constant tension between convention (what existed before) and invention (what comes into existence) that defines the creative processes underlying the creation of culture. Thus, his analysis rests on the dialectic between invention and convention, creativity and control, meaning and context, and the greater portion of the book is focused on the constant interchange between the individual and the social, the particular and the universal.

The idea of invention, however, does not refer to something that is fictitious or accidental, but to a phenomenon that 'must be taken very seriously, so that it is no invention at all, but *reality*' (71, emphasis in original). In this sense, he implores us to focus less on the fact that culture is invented, and rather to question *how* and *why*. He attempts to explain how culture is made and enacted by individuals, who are in turn influenced by larger forces within a society. In this sense, culture is not a determining force, nor are people autonomous actors who exist outside of conventional meanings. Finally, this same process of using conventional symbols to generate new meanings is the same process that anthropologists use to 'invent' culture through written representations.

The greatest drawback of the *Invention of culture* is perhaps the lack of clarification of the terms Wagner uses to support his arguments, which he acknowledges himself as the book's 'hazards of jargon' (xxvii). In particular, a clear theme that connects all the chapters is the concept of control. Wagner seeks to identify who controls culture and how individuals control change. For example, he argues that one of the primary reasons anthropologists invent culture is to 'control' their culture shock when they first arrive in the field (6). It is not always clear, however, exactly what Wagner is referring to when he uses the term 'control', and he does not offer any discussion of the term as he employs it, nor does he address its potentially multiple meanings.

Although Wagner's work is problematic at times, even controversial (particularly his assumption that all anthropologists are male), it has contributed significantly to ongoing debates concerning culture within the discipline of anthropology. His greatest contribution is

perhaps the idea that culture *cannot* be clearly defined. At the same time, he offers a new approach to understanding culture as a creative process. In many ways, Wagner's work was ahead of its time, not only foregrounding the critical debates concerning the representation of culture in writing in the 1980s and 1990s, but also setting the stage for some of the concerns that were later raised with regard to perceptions of personhood (78-80) and the ontological turn within anthropology (133-135). These questions are constantly revisited by anthropologists today, and thus his work remains relevant not only for looking back on how current anthropological thought has developed, but also for how we might continue this line of questioning in the future.

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