

BOOK REVIEWS

R. DARNELL, M. HAMILTON, R.L.A. HANCOCK and J. SMITH (eds.), *The Franz Boas Papers, Volume 1: Franz Boas as Public Intellectual—Theory, Ethnography, Activism* (Vol. 1). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 2015, xxvi + 381pp., \$75. ISBN 978-0-80327-1-999.

Despite what its title, *The Franz Boas Papers*, might imply within the usual archivist terminology, these new pages are neither texts nor archives by Franz Boas (1858-1942) himself, but fifteen recent, specifically commissioned essays about his oeuvre. These papers were selected from a conference that took place in Canada, with funding provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) (ix). All four co-editors are based in English-Canadian universities, Regna Darnell being Professor of Anthropology and the Co-director of the First Nations Studies Program at the University of Western Ontario in London, Canada. The unclassifiable Franz Boas needs no introduction among anthropologists; he is presented by Michelle Hamilton as ‘the father of American anthropology’ (345) and in Regna Darnell’s opening chapter as ‘indisputably the founder and dominant figure in the emergence of a professional discipline in North America’ (xi). In the book’s third section, Julia Liss suggests we ‘consider Boas as a public intellectual, a “citizen-scientist” whose contemporary and historical importance come from outside the profession no less than from within it’ (293).

Situating Boas can sometimes be challenging or repetitive, so nowadays anthropologists have to be specific and precise highlighting the ways in which Boas’s contributions were so distinctive. In Chapter 1, co-editor Regna Darnell reminds us that Boas’s own conception of ‘anthropology took for granted a symbolic rather than material definition of culture, a text-based approach to cultural knowledge through the recorded words of members of culture, and the inextricability of language, thought, and reality (i.e., the external world)’ (4). *Franz Boas as Public Intellectual—Theory, Ethnography, Activism* comes in four parts: ‘Theory’, ‘Ethnography’, ‘Activism’ and ‘Archives’. In order to contextualize the volume within wider Boas scholarship, American anthropology and indigenous/Native American studies, this review will — admittedly unfairly — focus on just a few of its chapters.

In the section dedicated to ‘Theory’, many contributors, like Christopher Bracken, rightly point out Boas’s innovative ways of reasoning and his particular use of comparative methods,

for example, when observing similarities between lifestyles such as dances in different, separate, sometimes remote groups. The spontaneous temptation would have been to affirm straightforwardly, just like Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917) did at the end of the nineteenth century in his famous book *Primitive Culture* (1871), that these same cultural practices prove the existence of some kind of link between two selected communities with similar activities; but Boas contradicts that too-easy reflex when writing about what he coined ‘the Indians of the North Pacific Coast’ (55): ‘We cannot say that the occurrence of the same phenomena is always due to the same causes’ (Boas, quoted by Christopher Bracken, 55). Bracken explains that, instead of the tropological wager, Boas relied on metonymy when studying ‘The Growth of Indians’ Mythologies’ (55).

Typically each chapter in *Franz Boas as Public Intellectual—Theory, Ethnography, Activism* (like Chapter 6 on ‘The Boasian Legacy in Ethnomusicology’, by Sean O’Neill) focuses on one specific subdiscipline, for example, ethnomusicology and the studying of indigenous music, plus a selected place for fieldwork (in this case Boas’s 1883 sojourn with the Inuit on Baffin Island, 132), and then actualizes Boas’s research to re-inscribe its core elements into our current theoretical schemes and concepts, such as narratives, holism and cultural relativism, which were not used as such by Boas (p. 129). The interdisciplinary scope characterizes the most interesting contributions in this volume. As Sean O’Neill notes in his extensive endnote 46, the great anthropologists were not narrow-minded or exclusively focused on their own fields, as they were able to think and work outside the disciplinary limits of the social sciences:

Given that Sapir, Boas, and Lévi-Strauss all dedicated much of their private lives to their musical interests, it may be no accident that these scholars were all gifted generalists in their professional lives, able to make comparisons and see connections across a wide range of issues within the field. Music, in other words, may have primed not only their ears for language but also their brains for holistic, comparative thinking. (Sean O’Neill, endnote 46, p. 151)

Most of the contributions in the second section on ‘Ethnography’ focus on indigenous peoples like the Thompson Indians of British Columbia, referring to a milestone publication of Boas’s in 1900¹ (see Chapter 8, by Andréa Laforêt, 191ff., but also Chapter 10, by Robert Hancock, 237ff.). Unfortunately there is no recapitulation chapter. The final pages by Michelle Hamilton present the revitalizing idea of ‘The Franz Boas Papers Documentary Edition Project’, made possible through advances in the digital humanities (‘the duality of digital repatriation’) for archiving, cross-referencing and future research (345). The

¹ *Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History*, vol. 2 part 4.

importance of this initiative is highlighted by Hamilton, who reminds academics how Boas was redefined as an Americanist by US scholars, who thereby neglected his work in Canadian regions. Referring to ‘the Canadian contributions and legacies of Boas’ (346), Hamilton notes that Boas has ‘been relatively ignored by scholars who view him exclusively as an Americanist, narrowly defined’ (346). However, if this archive project, which is partly being funded with federal money, aims to be truly Canadian, it will have to add a much-needed French dimension, which seems, at this moment, totally absent from its contents or bibliographical sources. This should have been done long ago, and it is odd that no one has noticed this lack of a Francophone presence so far in this project, despite its international ambitions.

Potential readers of *Franz Boas as Public Intellectual—Theory, Ethnography, Activism* have to be familiar already with the history of anthropology, as some contributors do not always explain every element and actor; for example, in Chapter 11, by Joshua Smith, the reference to sociologist John Collier (1884-1968), who worked as ‘the Commissioner for the Bureau of Indian Affairs from 1933 to 1945’ (263), does not even indicate whether he was affiliated to the US or the Canadian government (263). Any author’s standpoint matters and can have unexpected consequences. Here, we do not even get Collier’s years of birth and death, not even in the chapter’s endnotes (275).

Even after a second reading, this reader is still left with a nagging question regarding readership: should one begin with Boas’s own writings or with this brand-new collection of new essays about his works and his contribution to anthropology? Depending on the reader, two opposite answers are possible: for the newcomer, Franz Boas himself cannot be replaced by anyone or any book, but anthropologists already familiar with Boas’ works will find here a reassessment and reconsideration of his writings and, more importantly, of his unique world view and methodological approach. Not really a book for public libraries or undergraduates, *Franz Boas as Public Intellectual—Theory, Ethnography, Activism* will be of interest to scholars in the history of anthropology, Canadian anthropology and/or Native Studies who already have an interest in Franz Boas.

At the time of writing this review, it appears that no second volume is being planned for 2019 by the University of Nebraska Press.

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D.S. FARRER (ed.), *War magic: religion, sorcery, and performance*, New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books 2016, x, 170 pp. ISBN 978-1-78533-329-3.

This book was originally published as a special issue of the journal *Social Analysis* (Volume 58, issue 1). The authors of these chapters discuss aspects of war magic, a form of magic used to harm or heal (D.S. Farrer, p. 1), in different societies. The authors come from different backgrounds, so the interdisciplinary approach enriches the understanding of these phenomena. In the first chapter, Margaret Chan employs theatre studies to interpret demon-killing exorcists in Singapore. The following two chapters are based on ethnographic research. In Chapter 2 Jean-Marc de Grave describes initiation rituals in a Javanese secret society. In Chapter 3, David Nidel examines black magic in highland Jambi, Sumatra. Chapter 4 offers a different perspective on war magic. Using a historiographic approach, Michael Roberts describes how religion empowered the role of the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. Ethnographic methodology returns for the following two chapters. In Chapter 5, Željko Jokić describes the shamanic powers of the *shapori* among the Yanomami of Venezuela. In Chapter 6, D.S. Farrer combines three years of ethnographic research with James D. Sellmann's investigations into ancient Chamorro philosophy to explain their use of magical chants. Finally, in Chapter 7, Iain Sinclair discusses war magic among tantric Buddhists in India. In the following paragraphs, I will highlight the features of some of these chapters.

Chan's chapter focuses on *tangki* worship in the Singapore Chinese diaspora. In these rituals, warrior gods become possessed by a spirit to avoid evil. These spirit mediums protect their communities, and they can also change people's luck or cure illnesses. For Chan, there is a strong relationship between medicine and exorcisms in traditional China: both share the ideograph 医, *yi*, which in contemporary Chinese means 'physician'. This ideogram is also present in traditional Chinese 醫, but in combination with the ideogram 巫, *wū*, which means 'female sorcerer' (Chan, pp. 31-32). Self-mortification is an important aspect of *tangki* rituals: by doing damage to the self, the performer demonstrates his or her invulnerability in confronting these evil spirits.

Robert's research presents an interesting syncretism between tantric rites and the Tamil Tigers, insurgents of Sri Lanka. In these processes, devotees seek to embody a divine figure that he or she is conciliating. This fusion hopefully provides benevolent protection during confrontations with other forces. In this chapter, Robert compares *kuppi*, self-sacrifice to defend one's comrades, among Tamil Tigers, and the *thāli*, a turmeric-stained string tied around a wife's neck signifying the permanent bond of a marriage among the Tamil. For him,

the two actions are similar (Robert, pp. 94-6) because both reveal a permanent bond. He considers them ‘rites of encompassing protection’, which reveals the power of encirclement. The devotee looking to be embodied in the divine figure is also part of a rite of encirclement.

The two-year ethnographic fieldwork of Jokić in Yanomami (Yanomaman) territory offers some examples of the use of *hekura*, spirit-helpers, to manipulate suffering and to kill their enemies (Jokić, p. 109). *Shapori*, Yanomami shamans, may be motivated to commit a violent act as vengeance for a previous assault. They can also compel such attacks in competition with other *shapori* in a ‘perpetual retaliatory revenge’ (Jokić, p. 120). For Jokić, these assaults also reveal how contact has produced historical change among Yanomami communities over time. It is also interesting to note how Yanomami are presented in this chapter. Jokić discusses their reputation as a primitive group among missionaries in the 1950s (Jokić, p. 108) and their characterization by earlier anthropologists as a fierce, violent, drug-ridden people. Such characterizations were also commonly made of other Amazonian communities in Brazil, Colombia or Peru.

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DIDIER GAZAGNADOU, *The diffusion of a postal relay system in premodern Eurasia*, Paris: Editions Kimé 2016, 187 pp. ISBN 978-2-8417-4777-1.

In this work, Didier Gazagnadou offers a comprehensive account of the diffusion of the medieval postal relay system during the thirteenth century. This system consisted of postal relay stations placed strategically throughout territories controlled by a centralized state to allow the efficient transmission of information through these stations by the state. According to Gazagnadou, this is what allowed empires to maintain and enforce their authority over their territories, and they formed an integral part of the medieval state apparatus, a ‘technique of power’, to borrow Michel Foucault’s concept, for the state during this period.

Gazagnadou traces the origins of the postal relay system to ancient China, where, because of the need for a centralized state to govern a large territory, a precise system for the transmission of information over great distances was developed. This system, Gazagnadou argues, was then adopted by the Mongols when they invaded China and subsequently brought to the Islamic Middle East by the Mongols when they invaded that region as well. It was

Book reviews

there that Milanese traders were exposed to this particular postal relay system. They then brought the idea back to Europe, where it was adopted by governments in France and Italy. Thus Gazagnadou argues that the postal relay system was diffused during the thirteenth century, while noting how the system developed and changed as it spread. For instance, in Europe it began to have a private function, allowing individuals to send messages in exchange for money akin to the modern postal service, while in China it was to be used purely for state purposes.

Thus, Gazagnadou offers an alternative interpretation of the formation of the state across different contexts, arguing against a 'pure identity' (i.e. formations being the result of internal developments without external influence) by illustrating how state formations are the result of cross-cultural influences and processes of diffusion. He also makes the point that the diffusion of state postal relay systems marked the beginning of the formation of the modern 'subject', again borrowing from Foucault, as it allowed the state to govern the individual through its access to and the dissemination of information.

While Gazagnadou makes a convincing case for the diffusion of the postal relay system, his analysis of it stops there. His argument that the system sowed the seeds for the making of the modern state subject could have been bolstered by a detailed discussion of the implications of the spread of the system, as well as by looking at what kind of information was disseminated and for what purposes, rather than assuming that it serves the function of ensuring state hegemony. Nevertheless, *The diffusion of a postal relay system in premodern Eurasia* is definitely an interesting read for anyone interested in a prime example of the diffusionist perspective and/or in premodern systems of the dissemination of information.

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JANE I. GUYER, *Legacies, logics, logistics: essays in the anthropology of the platform economy*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press 2016, 320 pp. ISBN: 978-0-22632-6-870.

Jane I. Guyer's latest book, *Legacies, logics, logistics*, draws together a collection of previously unpublished essays, advancing a number of aspects of her decades-long research into economic life in West Africa. The twelve chapters are divided into five thematic parts:

‘Foundations,’ ‘Public economic cultures,’ ‘Cultures of calculation,’ ‘Platforms’ and ‘Toward ethnography and the people’s economies’. Though the scope is broad, the references numerous, Guyer beautifully folds in (or ‘entangles’, to use vocabulary adopted by Guyer from Michel Callon) a complicated scholarship, including the anthropologies of finance, risk, temporality, modernity and ontology, while bouncing back and forth in relation to her own work.

Pivoting around *Prophecy and the near future* (2007) and Guyer’s seminal work, *Marginal gains* (2004), Chapters four and six are dedicated respectively to modalities of reasoning, and calculative practices and ordinality. I single out these chapters in order to suggest an alternative reading of *Legacies, logics, logistics*. Admittedly a brilliant ethnography of economic life in its own right (yet also unconventional), the reader familiar with Guyer’s previous writings might recognize a parallel current running through the collection. In the 2007 special edition of the *African Studies Review*, on the theme of *Marginal gains*, historian and philosopher Helen Verran reads the work of two theorists through the lens of the book and subsequently disentangles two different modes of reasoning at play in the anthropology of markets and value: Paul Mirowski’s ‘foundational empiricism’, whose work inspired Guyer’s analysis in *Marginal gains*;² and Michel Callon’s ‘relational empiricism’, to whom Guyer claims partial allegiance in *Legacies, logics, logistics*.³ Part I, ‘Foundation’, is dedicated to this analytical move, where Guyer’s own intellectual drift towards Callon et al.’s Economic Actor Network Theory (ANT)⁴ and her extended reflections on relational empiricism⁵ and other ontological conundrums are outlined. Read as such, *Legacies, logics, logistics* becomes a sort of re-kindling, as Verran writes; Callon had already ‘entered through the back door’ (2007: 174), and it was only necessary for past insights to link up with new ones to make it all seem sense.

By picking up on some of the key concepts on which Callon et al.’s theory is premised, Guyer critically unpacks the ontological groundings upon which the ANT scholars conceptualize the assemblage of ‘elements’ through which the market economy is performed. As the title suggests, Guyer maps out the *legacies* (people, institutions, temporalities), the

² Where the question regarding Guyer’s conceptualization of ‘institutions’ is the critical point.

³ For those particularly interested in the performativity of local and global markets, it might be productive to read Verran alongside Guyer for an exciting exploration of the ‘modal reasoning’ of West African numbering systems and the ontology of ordinality (see *Science and an African logic*, Verran 2001).

⁴ John Law and Bruno Latour are often associated with this scholarship. The Economy ANT scholars whom Guyer refers to cover a more extensive network.

⁵ ‘Relational empiricism’ is a term Verran introduce in *Science and an African logic*. For a further discussion, see Martha Kenney’s 2015 article, *Counting, accounting, and accountability: Helen Verran’s relational empiricism*,

logics (ideological and theoretical mechanisms) and the *logistics* through which it all works. Here, the platform allegory (or ‘the platform economy’, to cite the book’s subtitle) becomes a ‘replacement for the ideological “market economy” of neoliberalism’ (4). As such the platform has rhizomatic qualities, sometimes bundled together as localized structures,⁶ yet they are also part of an interconnected network that is contingent on legacies, logics and logistics, and that works through different ‘devices’.⁷ Reconceptualized as the ‘platform’, Guyer brings precision to ANT’s ‘assemblage’ and offers an analytical tool to work with. Chapter 5, ‘From market to platform’, goes more deeply into Guyer’s reading of the contemporary economic regime and elaborates on the use of the platform as a tool with which to understand the multiple and hybrid devices through which ‘the market’ works.

One aspect of the platform metaphor I especially appreciate is Guyer’s evocation of its infrastructural features. These need constant maintenance, repair and upgrading, being ever wide open to hacking, intrusions, incremental interventions and ‘toiling ingenuity’. Like another recent book on market performativity, by Veronica Gago (2017), Guyer’s platform does not have an autonomous externality, but is something enacted, reproduced and remixed in a myriad of different moves and modes. In doing so, Guyer traces emergent human and non-human agencies in Callon’s assemblage of horizontal elements that are just ‘lying around’ (27).

In the steady stream of new exciting literature on the anthropology of value and markets, Guyer calls for meticulousness, for historicizing, and, as in *Marginal gains*, for taking political economy seriously. The last chapter raises a timely question: ‘What is “real” about the “real economy?”’⁸ It concludes with a resolutely anti-essentialist critique of how economic life is often imagined.

Legacies, logics, logistics is not an easy read. It brings together the body of scholarship on ANT that has invested itself in economic theory, and provokes the reader to up the pace with Guyer and become familiar with an array of references, meta-discussions, concepts and ideas that the collection puts forward at a breakneck speed. It does not matter whether it is read in chronological order, as the book is structured, or alternatively read randomly – the

⁶ See Nick Srnicek’s *Platform capitalism* (2016) for examples of a particular kind of globalized platform economy.

⁷ Together with the concept of ‘economization’/‘marketization’, the ‘market device’ is a central idea in Guyer’s collection that could be contributed Callon’s *oeuvre*. Çalışkan and Callon use ‘economization’ in a general sense to describe the assembly of actions and devices as ‘economic’. (Çalışkan and Callon 2009; Callon, Millo and Muniesa 2007).

⁸ For an extensive discussion, see *Hau* 2017, 7(3), which include a special section on the real economy, edited by Federico Neiburg and Jane I. Guyer.

Book reviews

reader should just grab and hold on to whatever one can. Further, reading Verran alongside Guyer, as this reviewer did, invokes the feeling of listening in on a friendly yet advanced discussion, where the provisional conclusions have found their way into the essays and bear witness of the creative intellectual process behind the writing of the collection. *Legacies, logics, logistics* makes an acute call for anthropologists to engage in an extended discussion regarding the workings of the economy, which few do better than Jane I. Guyer.

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MALGORZATA IREK, *Travelling with the Argonauts: informal networks seen without a vertical lens*, New York etc.: Berghahn 2018, 226 pp. ISBN 978-1-78533-898-4.

This book, written by Małgorzata Irek, an experienced Polish researcher who has conducted fieldwork in her chosen sphere for some thirty years, is quite unique in its design of introducing a new approach to researching informal networks, and in fact all the informal phenomena that make up the world in which we live. In her introduction to the book, Irek

explains the limitations of all other approaches in respect of their verticality, dualism or space-boundedness. In presenting her own approach, which she calls the Restricted Verticality Perspective (RVP), she tries to take the strong points from other researchers' work, where she is inspired by Nietzschean horizontality, Norbert Elias's notion of *homo apertus* and Bruno Latour's Actor Network Theory, among others. Irek is very precise in showing us the limitations of all the previous theories, and her own approach aims for something truly grandiose and ambitious, where the layer of the social phenomena being examined would be researched 'across' space rather than in a single location, would be 'flattened' to try and limit the verticality inherent in our perception of the world, would be inclusive and non-dualistic, avoiding distinctions into formal and informal, and would be free of a priori hypotheses and intellectual embeddedness in previous theories. This endeavour is quite unique and teaches the reader to develop critical thinking in evaluating all previous theories researching social phenomena – in a way, Irek is aiming at the impossible goal of bringing the researcher as close as possible to life as it is experienced. By doing so, she enters into another set of debates about the position of the ethnographer vis-à-vis his or her subjects, and it is by investigating the necessary balance of distance and empathy that her presentation of the application of RVP begins.

Irek structures her book in a quite innovative way, deliberately avoiding any chronological presentation of her fieldwork, which was conducted in the 1970s and 1980s. Instead she divides her book into chapters in accordance with her own intellectual journey, which has consisted in realizing how to research informal networks and in learning through her own errors. Thus, in all subsequent chapters Irek is always present as a researcher and presents her case studies as steps in her journey in understanding how to apply RVP to research on social networks. This perspective creates the only problem that seems to exist with this book – the reader never acquires an opportunity to become fully immersed in the wealth of ethnographic material that Irek has collected, as the book always draws us back to a theoretical discussion of how the informality of human activities should be researched. Even for a reader acquainted with the realities of lives in the countries of the Eastern bloc the jumps in the presentation of the material are sometimes hard to follow, and one regrets not knowing more about the many cases presented. On the other hand, Irek compensates for this by being very logical in presenting her approach, the Restricted Verticality Perspective, and for this goal alone sacrifices the possibility to make her book a fully-fledged ethnography.

The book is divided into six chapters, but it eschews the usual conclusion, replacing it instead with an afterword, a decision in line with her wish to avoid embeddedness in the

history of previous research and her refusal to return to vertical thinking in her own book. Her chapters trace her intellectual journey, not in linear fashion, but presenting ethnographic cases all taken from her ethnographic fieldwork undertaken in 1970s and 1980s in different European countries where she followed the informal activities of Polish travellers. Germany is a crucial location for *Travelling with Argonauts*, but Bulgaria, Romania, the Soviet Union, Turkey and the UK are also included. The case studies are truly kaleidoscopic in making the reader acquainted with men and women who created 'egocentric' (as Irek calls them) informal networks spontaneously in order to earn money for themselves and their families by engaging in selling and buying goods, transporting them across Europe, construction, cleaning, sexual services, working as seamstresses, etc.

Chapter 2 discusses the limitations of formal methods in approaching research participants, and Irek is very honest in talking about the mistakes she initially made in trying to conduct formal interviews on trains and in shop queues and in positioning herself as superior to her subjects. She arrives at a very humanist viewpoint of never building hierarchies and always positions herself like one of her subjects by becoming involved in their activities, trying to be helpful to them in order to meet new people and become 'one of them', and making notes only retrospectively, without anyone noticing (usually in the toilets). Irek also discusses ethical points here, trying to draw our attention to the difference between sympathy and empathy, and bringing to the light the dangers the researcher him- or herself is subjected to in researching informal activities. Thus, Chapter 3 indeed shows the results of the researcher exiting the emic-etic logic and becoming involved with the lives of her participants that very often involved developing tolerance, humility, and physical and psychological strength, as the conditions of fieldwork involved travelling on crowded trains, sleeping over at new acquaintances' apartments and listening to their sometimes very gruesome stories (especially those of prostitutes).

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 describe the components that are important for RVP, that is, a way to think beyond sectors and not make distinctions between formal and informal when researching networks (Chapter 4), a method that escapes a particular locality when researching informal activities (Chapter 5), and a perspective that pinpoints the interfaces between formal and informal and finds them in the actors themselves (Chapter 6). In Chapter 4 Irek engagingly shows how many actors from various employment sectors and occupations create networks where it is hard to tell who belongs to the informal and who to the formal sector of economy, with the same people often being involved in both. In Chapter 5 Irek makes a strong case for site-less ethnography (instead of multi-sited, as suggested by

researchers in a volume edited by Falzon (2009)) by describing interesting cases where the activities were literally impossible to tie to a particular location, as they involved constant travelling between various countries, often becoming a journey of self-discovery, escapism from restrictions of social expectations or simple pleasure, rather than just an economic activity. Irek looks for a fruitful synthesis of the social, personal and economic in presenting the reasons that drive people forward on their journeys.

Chapter 6 finalizes Irek's search for a theory by presenting an equivalent of Malinowski's *kula* ring – a 'Koło' route where goods are bought in particular European countries to be re-sold in others, while these others become the sources of other valuable objects that could be sold in new destinations. Irek fascinatingly shows how much knowledge, social skills and experience participating even in one full route requires, and it is here that she presents her subjects as examples of Norbert Elias's *homo apertus*, who make new connections as they go. This chapter seems to hold out the potential for a whole ethnography, and this is where I regretted the disjointed character of particular case studies the most. It seems to me that in this chapter Irek ceases to position herself as a researcher among her participants, thus making it unclear how she found information about all the travellers mentioned in this chapter, as she uses the objective mode of presentation of information, which is different from that she has used in previous chapters. The humanist dimension of the book nonetheless strikes the reader of *Travelling with the Argonauts*, as Irek aims not only at enabling us to research informal networks and phenomena, but also at teaching us to dismiss our vertical and hierarchical thinking in approaching the everyday lives of human beings, and thus become more human ourselves. This strong moral stance underpins Irek's writing, being an additional layer of potential influence on the reader, thus overcoming one more dichotomy, that between our intellectual and professional versus our personal and emotional involvement with the book.

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BRUNO LATOUR, *Down to earth: politics in the new climactic regime*, Cambridge: Polity Press 2018, X, 128 pp. ISBN: 978-1-50953-057-1 (p/b).

Bruno Latour is an influential social theorist and STS (Science and Technology Studies) scholar. In the seminal work *Laboratory life: the social construction of scientific facts* (published in 1979, with Steve Woolgar) he reveals how the practice of science-making is contingent on social values, human decisions, and the strength and design of institutions in which science is produced. A recent feature in the *New York Times Magazine*, headlined ‘Bruno Latour, the post-truth philosopher, mounts a defense of science’, describes how Latour’s work has been co-opted by anti-science thinkers in order to cast doubt on the objectivity of scientists and the veracity of facts. Of course, Latour cannot be held accountable for the current post-truth era; as Beck, Giddens and Lash write (1994), this is in part a problem of ‘reflexive modernity’, science having become ‘the unwilling target of its methodological scepticism’.

Nonetheless, it is perhaps with this criticism in mind that Latour has turned his attention in the last two decades to the issue of climate change, an early casualty of the post-truth war on science (Krugman 2018). In *Down to earth: politics in the new climactic regime*, Latour makes the case for why we are no longer living in the ‘common world’ and provides a prescription for how to move forward (which, given how few answers are offered up in climate change discourses, is refreshing in itself). He isolates the 1990s as a turning-point when the ‘ruling classes’, realizing the Earth’s ecological constraints, stopped believing in the limitless potential of progress and modernity and started ‘sheltering themselves’ from the rest (it could be argued that this began much sooner, in response to Malthus, Schumacher and the Club of Rome). He draws his evidence from three trends: deregulation, the ‘explosion of inequality’ and the ‘systematic denial of climate change’. Latour argues that, in order to understand the history that led to today’s populism, we must place climate change and climate denialism ‘front and centre’.

Latour sets out trajectories of history by means of schematic renderings of ‘worlds’. The first vector he draws is between ‘Local’ and ‘Global’ worlds. He explains how people are torn today between these ‘two contradictory injunctions’: to modernize (Global), or to remain in their native province, retain their habits and live in the quiet of their ‘old certainties’ (Local) (27). Next, Latour places arrows representing Left and Right political orientations, which go in different directions depending on the issue (regarding the Market, the Left wants to slow down, towards the Local; on the issue of ‘liberation of morals,’ the Left wants to

accelerate, towards Global; the Right does the opposite). This schematic is then complicated by the addition of ‘Globalization-plus’ (multiple viewpoints and ‘modes of being’) and ‘Globalization-minus’ (‘a single vision’, imposed on everyone and representing a small number of interests) (13).

This severe polarization between Local and Global leaves no common ground; it represents the ‘brutalization of politics’. We cannot move back to the ‘ideal past’, as the Local has become a ‘retrospective invention’, a ‘rump territory’. Nor can we accelerate forward towards a limitless Globe given the current situation of our ‘shrinking world’ marked by a scarcity of resources and inhabitable land, the result of climate change (see McKibben 2018). We all feel the threat of dispossession and the existential anxiety of being uprooted. In this time of precarious transition (cf. Tsing 2015), Latour asks, ‘How can we find a place?’ (16).

Before Latour can prescribe his own solution, he must explain the current Trumpist reaction, which he calls ‘Out of this World’. In Trumpism, ‘the State is in disgrace, the individual is king, and the urgent governmental priority is to gain time by loosening all constraints, before the population at large notices that there is no world corresponding to the America depicted’ (35). Latour lays the blame here on the ‘obscurantist elites’ who knew the world was in trouble but decided to conceal it from the rest (hence climate denialism). Trumpism is typified by the U.S.’s withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, which was akin to a ‘declaration of war authorizing the occupation of all other countries, if not with troops then with CO₂, which the U.S. retains the right to emit’ (84). Latour labels this denial of reality ‘post-politics’, a ‘rejection of the world that it claims to inhabit’ (38). Latour also lays blame on science and the ‘Moderns’ for our current predicament in so far as they ejected us (humans) from Nature; our historical (Western) rendering of ‘nature-as-universe’, ‘a Galilean object’, allowed us to treat nature as a ‘resource to exploit’. (77). He takes aim at the ‘Greens’ for framing the political stakes as a choice between society and ecology (ecology to be left alone).

With the above ‘worlds’ in mind, what is the alternative? We can either continue to ‘nourish dreams of escaping’ or we can start to ‘seek a territory that we and our children can inhabit’, that is, ‘look for a place to land’ (5). Latour’s solution is the ‘Terrestrial,’ an ‘earthbound solution’. The Terrestrial, no longer a terra incognita but a world heavily occupied and at its limit, requires us to rethink what ‘belonging to the land’ could mean. He articulates our need to re-orient ourselves toward ‘nature-as-process’, wherein living beings are ‘agents participating fully in the process of generating the chemical, and even geological

conditions of the planet' (he uses the example of our breath contributing to the make-up of air) (75). This 'redistribution' of agencies requires us to break down the walls that separate organisms from environment, subject from object, and to view them instead as 'co-productions' of one another (76) (see also Latour 2014). Perhaps more useful than 'Terrestrial' (which, to my mind, is hard to distinguish from Earth, and is also evocative of 'territory,' with its artificial delineations and possessive quality) is the notion of a 'Compositionist' world (articulated in Latour 2014) that sees the process of human development as one of 'becoming ever-more attached to Nature, and intimate with, a panoply of nonhuman natures'.

Finally, Latour lay out his ideal 'dwelling place' in the Terrestrial world as Europe, with the model of the European Union as a potential 'institutional embodiment' of the 'New Climatic Regime'. He believes that the EU's ability to superimpose and overlap different national interests and its intricacy of regulation are akin to an 'ecosystem', 'showing us the way' and 'offering an example of what it means to rediscover inhabitable ground' (101).

Down to earth is an ambitious, complex and compelling political call-to-arms to take back the future from those who wish to squander it. Latour's central enemy, climate change denialists, are symbolic of the old guard clinging to their privileges, attempting to make their escape (from the 'common world') before the Revolution. On the point of these 'obscurantist elites', whom Latour accuses of promulgating a billion-dollar disinformation campaign to cast doubt on anthropogenically caused climate change (he cites Oreskes and Conway 2010, and Hoggan 2009), Latour could have done more to distribute blame (the way he distributes agency!), particularly at the structural level. Without diminishing the fault of the elites (likely a mix of outright deception and willful ignorance), one can also point to humanity's technological hubris (we can solve anything!), the lack of 'care' we've shown our 'Monsters'/inventions (Latour 2011), and, importantly, to the power of the Market (see Moore 2017, Klein 2014) as likewise culpable for the current climactic predicament and humanity's inadequate response.

Down to earth is an apt title for Latour's political task at hand: to push us to face reality (the world is ecologically constrained, limitless progress is no more) and to recapture (from the nativists) what 'back to the land' can mean (in the form of the Terrestrial). But what of the 'New Climatic Regime'? First, one needs to retrieve its definition from a previous book: it is 'the present situation in which the physical framework that the Moderns had taken for granted, the ground on which their history has always played out, has become unstable' (Latour 2017). The 'New Climatic Regime' thus breathes agency into a previously taken-for-

granted inert object—the ground. Amidst a crowded field of terms to describe the climactic condition (from Latour himself, ‘Terrestrial’, ‘dwelling place’; to other scholars, ‘the Anthropocene’, ‘the great acceleration’, etc.), perhaps the value of ‘the New Climactic Regime’ as a conceptual framework is in its emphasis: unlike the ‘Anthropocene’, which empowers humans as geological agents, the ‘New Climactic Regime’ privileges the Earth’s agency to strike back. This might be useful in humbling us to recognize the limits of our control.

Latour situates climate change, and the constrained Earth it implies, as the preeminent threat to humanity and thus the central axis around which all other political issues should rotate. Granting climate change such centrality is useful in elevating its urgency, in articulating its wider social implications (particularly related to migration and inequality, which Latour does very well) and in tying the fate of Society/Nature back together again. But this is not without drawbacks. In the U.S., the politicization of climate change has converted it from a scientific object into a political subject, a matter of opinion and identity (see Kahan 2014). Latour’s prescription, which requires a further merging of ecological and social agendas, may lead to the end of ‘climate change’ as a contained entity, as it dissolves instead into a catch-all for the world’s many problems. Latour has likely considered this, and perhaps determined that we’ve come too far along this post-truth course, making it futile now to attempt to depoliticize or re-objectify climate change. His proposition, namely to mimic ecosystems’ complex networks and distributed agencies via a European Union-like model, is perhaps our only hope.

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Book reviews

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JEANNETTE MAGEO and **ELFRIEDE HERMANN** (eds.), *Mimesis and Pacific transcultural encounters: making likenesses in time, trade and ritual reconfigurations*, New York and Oxford: Berghahn 2017, 278 pp. ISBN 978-1-78533-624-9.

This volume is a collection of eleven chapters looking at mimesis during transcultural encounters in the Pacific Islands. The chapters are organized under three topics: time, trade and ritual. Although each chapter focuses on a different part of the Pacific Islands and a specific ethnographic setting, they more or less all argue against Darwin's identification of mimicry as an inferior or 'primitive' form of mentality among indigenous people.

In the introductory chapter, instances of mimesis are theoretically classified into three categories. First, incorporative mimesis is a way of incorporating another culture. Secondly, emblemizing mimesis means emblemizing one's own culture in order to distinguish it from others. Lastly, abject mimesis means subordinating oneself in deference to another dominant culture. All the chapters provide evidence supporting the presence of either the incorporative or the emblemizing form of mimesis, or a mixture of both. The book suggests that, unlike in

some South Asian and African societies, where abject mimesis can be witnessed, on the Pacific Islands this kind of deferential mimicry has generally been avoided. As such, while the book's subtitle, *Making likenesses in time, trade and ritual reconfigurations*, implies that the book is about practices of mimicry in different areas of life on the Pacific Islands, it also hints that such examples of mimesis are similar in form, that is, either incorporative or emblemizing, or a mixture of both.

Overall, the chapters in the book suggest that mimesis during transcultural encounters on the Pacific Islands is in fact a mode of communication and bridge-building between two groups of people who do not share a language or background. The book urges readers to look beyond the otherwise unequal power relationships embedded in colonial thinking, which treat westerners as the more superior beings, and that therefore indigenous people want to mimic their behaviour and become one of them. However, indigenous people may perform mimicry in order to engage with or please their peers in their own culture rather than westerners (see, for example, Francesca Merlan on early Australian encounters in Chapter 1). In one of Jeanette Mageo's chapters (Chapter 2), it is shown that, while European art motifs were incorporated into Samoan dress, the latter might also have reworked German art motifs, as Germans dressed in Samoan dress too. Also, in Joyce D. Hammond's chapter (Chapter 4), we are shown that it is westerners who wish to try out and therefore mimic the traditional Tahitian wedding in order to fulfil their desire for an exotic and romantic experience which they cannot find in their home countries. What is more, mimesis should not be seen as a direct replica of the original (see Laurence Marshall Carucci's mimetic example on utterances in Chapter 8). Instead it is an innovative process of reconfiguring one's present cultural and social reality. For example, in Sarina Pearson's chapter (Chapter 3), we are shown that, while Hollywood Indians are the mimetic capital of the Maori, with whom they express their empathy as vanishing indigenes, by mimicking the former, the latter see this as an opportunity to show the others that they are also modern cosmopolitan subjects. Sometimes mimesis involves copying past practices in the present. This is especially the case when indigenous societies try to distinguish themselves from each other in order to bring clarity to their identities (see, for example, Sergio Jarillo de la Torre on woodcraft in the Trobriand Islands in Chapter 5, and Elfriede Hermann on the birthday clothing of the Banabans in Fiji in Chapter 7). Doug Dalton's chapter on Christianity among the Rawa (Chapter 9) emphasizes the importance of looking at the historical processes that might help shape contemporary (religious) mimetic practices: this chapter sheds light on the substantial relationship between anthropology and history.

Book reviews

This book expands the definition of what mimesis is. To move beyond physical or behavioural mimicry, it reveals mimesis in art, clothing, woodcraft, wedding ceremonies, Christmas celebrations and even capitalism. Of all these examples of mimesis, I was particularly struck by the chapter on mimicking capitalism (Chapter 6 by Roger Ivar Lohmann), a counter-example of how capitalism failed to be brought to the Asabano of Papua New Guinea. The chapter reminds one of the importance, as an anthropologist, not only of asking *why*, but also *why not* when it comes to understanding another culture.

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DANIEL MILLER, *The comfort of people*, Cambridge UK and Medford MA: Polity Press 2017, x, 226 pp. ISBN 978-1-5095-2432-7.

The hospice movement is widely celebrated for having re-conceptualized death, transfiguring it from a time of loss into a time of new beginnings. Daniel Miller's sensitive ethnography, *The comfort of people*, explores this conceptual shift, investigating how English hospice patients overcome the obstacles of sustaining intimacy at the end of life by using new media, from Facebook to cell phones, to expand their social possibilities in isolating times. With eighteen richly told vignettes of life in a hospice, bookended by an anchoring introduction, a gesturing conclusion and a practical compendium of recommendations to improve end of life care, Miller's ethnography is a significant contribution to the broader anthropological themes of death and dying, care, relatedness, new media and contemporary England.

The dying have long suffered social isolation in the West, and recent research has emphasized how particularly lonely the dying feel in contemporary England. While anthropological literature often explains this social isolation of the dying through the medicalization and institutionalization of death, Miller astutely shows that the loneliness the dying feel in England is exacerbated by English patterns of social behavior. Looking specifically at hospice life in villages, Miller observes that much English sociality in a village happens in public places, such as pubs or in brief chats on the streets when walking the dog. But dying makes it difficult to participate publicly, as patients feel too ill to leave the house or find themselves too occupied with the exhausting list of doctor's appointments they must attend. The dying in England are not only detached publicly, but also find it difficult to

socialize in private spaces: the English rarely invite people into their homes and are especially fearful of being too invasive and intrusive into others' personal lives. While it is assumed that the dying feel more connected to community life in villages, Miller observes that the public detachment and social reticence of the English make it difficult for hospice patients in villages to feel accompanied at the end of their lives, when they need social support the most.

However, Miller shows how new media help alleviate the social obstacles the English encounter while dying. For one informant, Sarah, Facebook provides a medium for her both to connect to people intimately, despite geographical distance, and to keep her friends updated on her disease, thus casting her news widely and publicly. This updating process has two real benefits for Sarah. The first is that it enables her and her social network to confront the difficulties of death at a helpful distance. Posting online allows Sarah to distribute difficult information about herself more indirectly than calling someone on the phone. It also helps her network to provide support that does not seem to interrupt her private space or take up her time. Secondly, Facebook helps Sarah update most of her social network with one post, thus lessening the emotional and practical labour of continually keeping relations abreast of a fast-updating disease. Like Sarah's experience with Facebook, Miller reveals how other new media, from online social platforms to new digital technologies like iPads, help hospice patients relate comfortably and easily. These conclusions help Miller argue, as his previous studies of new media have done, that face-to-face contact is inherently neither more intimate nor more nourishing, and that new forms of media, especially among the English, can help sustain old bonds and form new ones in death.

Popular wisdom posits historical relations, such as kin and long-lasting friends, as more durable, making new associations through contracted care and new technologies seem weak in comparison. Yet, Miller's informants often connect with others quickly but profoundly over a shared disease or a similar terminal diagnosis in their last months, for example, on online web forums. Further, popular discourses on care for the dying naturalize the family as the best source of nurturance and herald the community as a place of strong bonds. However, Miller challenges these assumptions and examines how the English actually prefer the institutional care of a hospice at their end. Miller observes that his informants found everyday care-giving tasks, like bathing and feeding, too intimate and cumbersome for family and friends to do and preferred that contracted caregivers carry out these responsibilities. Contracted care sets up specific dates and times through phone calls for care-provision in the home, which patients preferred to the unscheduled dropping in of friends and family into the

home. Instead of the hospice and its caregivers being unsatisfactory stand-ins for friends and family, Miller notes that English patients often found them to be preferable sources of care, since they were experienced as unobtrusive and helpfully mediated. Miller's ethnography therefore challenges dominant discourses about right relations in care, showing, through the examination of the social worlds of the dying, how these new relations made at the end of life through new technologies and in the hospice are not poor substitutes for natural, enduring relations, but are nourishing, robust and uniquely comforting in their own right.

Miller's ethnography is layered and extensive, and he leaves open several lines of inquiry that may inspire further avenues of study. For example, his informants rarely mentioned religion and the church in their experiences of dying, which is an intriguing observation given his conclusion that the English appreciate the rather distant role of institutions in the provision of care. England is not the only place where religion is no longer a significant part of the dying trajectory, and it would have been interesting to hear more from Miller about whether he agrees with the common conclusion that medicine or the individual has replaced God in death. Additionally, Miller does not highlight the ages of the dying in his ethnography. The feeling of isolation and the capacity to rebuild networks noticeably shifts throughout the life course of those he studied, where the younger dying were more able to form new relationships with a greater variety of media and where the older dying struggled more intensely, with fewer options for connectivity. How might this attention to age help us think more specifically about the intersection of new media and social connectivity in death? These observations should not be read as critiques of Miller's analysis, but as praise for the richness of his ethnography. As all good ethnographies should, Miller's includes ethnographic detail that his overarching arguments cannot subsume, and therefore leave room for the discerning ethnographic eye to draw its own conclusions.

Dying in England can be isolating, but Miller's surprising conclusion that the hospice and the new media facilitate intimacy in death for the English helps to show how new innovations may enable, rather than impede, older historical norms. Miller's work is timely, full of nuance and takes forward conversations about death. His ethnography shines light on the resilience of the social to adapt care strategies for those dying in contemporary and often fraught circumstances.

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DEV NATH PATHAK (ed.), *Another South Asia!*, New Delhi: Primus Books 2018, 323 pp., \$69.95. ISBN- 978-93-86552-58-7 (hardback), 978-93-86552-59-4 (print on demand).

Through an interdisciplinary prism, *Another South Asia!* allows readers to catch a glimpse of a different South Asia, one that is yet to be captured by nation state-centric narratives. Using the word ‘another’ as a metaphor and a unique discursive trope, the edited book brings together an ensemble of essays to re-imagine South Asia beyond the cartographic boundaries of its composite nation states. Going beyond the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC), the book indeed makes an effort to see South Asia in its messy everyday lived realities, the poetry that transgresses state boundaries, the trajectory of fluid faiths and the travels of artists who re-imagine the region without being chained to the quotidian politics of its nation states. It is, in other words, an exercise in subversion of the dominant political narratives that allegedly fail to realize what ‘South Asia’ is.

Punctuated by artworks by a well-known Sri Lankan artist, Pala Pothupitiye, the book starts with a preface and is otherwise divided into four sections and fourteen chapters. The preface, along with introductory essay by the editor, Dev Nath Pathak, elucidates the significance of the utopia of the word ‘another’ to embark upon a quest to re-imagine South Asia. In the first section, the chapters by Shail Mayaram and Navnita Chadha Behera attempt to challenge the cartographic imagination of South Asia by appealing to the civilizational ethos of the region, which dates back before the formation of SAARC.

The second section uses the motifs of presence and absence to highlight the failure of dominant imaginings of South Asia, as Arjun Guneratne argues. The essay by Ravi Kumar offers an understanding of the region that subverts the abstract, instrumentalist notion in order to make a case for an ‘organic’ South Asian collective consciousness. Again, in Santosh Kumar Singh’s study of the Ravidassia Movement, readers encounter the fluidity of faiths as juxtaposed to the rigidity of religious identities that often becomes a cause of contention in the region. This makes the identity politics that South Asian nation states frequently pitch along lines of religion somewhat fuzzy. In the final chapter in this section, Laxmi Murthy makes a case for feminist theorizing and activism in the region against the background of gender violence faced by women across South Asia during the anti-imperialist struggles and the inter- and intra-state violence of more recent times.

The third section of the book delves into the realms of novel possibilities in the face of manifold challenges. In Irfanullah Farooqi’s lucid account, a vivid image of a local South Asia emerges that is expressed in the writings and poetry of the members of the Progressive Writers Association (PWA). Farooqi’s analysis of the PWA’s works brings out much more about what

Book reviews

South Asia really signifies in the face of dry political manoeuvrings. This comes to the fore through the trope of melodrama, discussed by Dev Nath Pathak and Avanti Chhatre in the next chapter. This chapter presents a vivid, colourful cruise across the performative landscape of South Asia, as the authors trace how historical changes across the region are expressed in shifts in melodramatic form. As a result, the chapter sketches an experiential South Asia, duly translocal in nature. The other chapters in this section by Anushka Rajendran, Jyoti Sinha and Abha Sur, as well as Kiranmayi Bhushi, consecutively engage with the idea of South Asia through the lenses of contemporary art, diaspora and ethnic foodscapes. Rajendran's essay is a critical commentary on how art becomes a crucial site of resistance and negotiations with collective memories and individual trauma. The chapters by Sinha and Sur, which are followed by Bhushi's chapter, are rich ethnographic reflections on South Asian subjectivities that produce and re-produce South Asian cultural identities by exploiting ethnicities and territorialities abroad.

Finally, the fourth section of the book comes full circle, as it concludes by opening windows for newer imaginations of future possibilities. In his chapter, which sketches out the trajectories of artists' travels across the region, Sasanka Perera attempts to draw an 'experiential cartography' of South Asia. Through his engagement with artists' collectives and their projects, Perera suggests that such creative-collaborative ventures often provide spaces for honing collective South Asian sensibilities outside the confines of nation states. The last chapter in the volume, by Imtiaz Ahmed, is an exercise to rediscover ways in which another South Asia can be reconstructed by leaving behind the debris of wars and conflicts that mar its post-colonial landscape. It ends on a note of utopia in which there are multiple possibilities for its future.

This volume is a creative inter-disciplinary curatorial achievement that holds out promises for imagining a South Asia that defies cartographic constraints. However, borders and linguistic confines are often difficult to avoid. This volume too repeatedly falls into such traps. Most significantly, it does not really break through the larger cartography of South Asia as conjured up by SAARC. The chapters in this volume revolve around the confines of the eight member states of a SAARC-drawn South Asia and therefore do little to go beyond the larger territorial contours. Despite such shortcomings, however, this volume is a comprehensive piece of work.

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SOPHIE SEEBACH and **RANE WILLERSLEV** (eds.), *Mirrors of passing: unlocking the mysteries of death, materiality, and time*, New York: Berghahn Books 2018, 362 pp. ISBNs 978-1-78533-908-0 (p/b), 978-1-78533-894-6 (h/b), eISBN 978-1-78533-895-3.

This edited text is a study of human bodily death and material decay, and their significance as central points of reference in cultural life across time and place. The text is positioned as a companion piece to the 'Letting Go' exhibition at the Museum of Cultural History in Oslo, marking the closure of Willerslev's 'Death, Materiality, and the Origin of Time' project.

Seebach and Willerslev seek to offer key insights into human perceptions of time, to unlock death's hidden connections with materiality and time, and to understand its nature, why it is a necessary part of life and how we as human beings cope with the existential challenges it poses. Adopting a multi-sited, multi-disciplinary approach, they seek to address questions of the afterlife that normally remain unconsidered in the social sciences due to their methodological atheism. This text therefore sees relationships with the dead 'as absolutely necessary to the flow of time and the continuation of life' (5). This means presenting human relationships with death not only as what makes us human, but as what defines us as distinctively living human beings. To achieve this aim, the text addresses four themes: Death's Time; Materialities of Death; Life after Death; and Exhibiting Death, Materiality, and Time. While no final conclusion is reached concerning death's relationship to materiality and time, the manner of the exploration and the exploration itself offer extensive insights into the multitude of practices surrounding death and give pause for thought about the role of the dead in our own lives and the lives of others.

Part 1 (Death's Time) is split into five chapters. The first of these is Stuart McLean's study of James Joyce's story 'The Dead'. Going against the reduction of the social presence of the dead associated with the process of becoming modern, McLean proposes that death and the dead are an indispensable and constitutive component not only of cultural memory, but also of the very texture of our being-in-the-world. Using Joyce's story and drawing on Henri Bergson's work on time, he demonstrates that death in literature is able to turn the reader's attention to the immanence of the durational past in the material substance of the world, thus allowing for the simultaneous coexistence of multiple languages and possibilities, of past and present, living and dead. Following this, Marina Prusac-Lindhagen offers a novel reading of a Roman fresco in the Villa dei Misteri, located in the suburbs of Pompeii (first century BC). Drawing on the religious beliefs associated with Orphism, she notes that time in Orphism is thought of in terms of both cosmological eternity and the individual experience of

a limited lifetime on Earth. This perspective allows Prusac-Lindhagen to read the fresco as a picture of an Orphic ritual that cherishes youthful love on earth for the purposes of natural sustainability through resurrection. From here, this section moves on to Rune Nyord's analysis of ancient Egyptian mortuary practices. From the hypothesis that the long-lasting external shape of the mummy had more to do with the mummification process than the aims of the Egyptians, Nyord seeks to understand how these mortuary practices can be thought of instead as the transformation of the deceased into gods through spells. These spells are seen as assisting the function of death as a movement away from the multiplicity of the created world and back toward a primeval unity. That is, as part of a regression to the pre-cosmological world, it is necessary to take on the role of creating the cosmos through differentiation, which itself is achieved through spells. This allows the personhood of the deceased to dissolve and enter fixed mythological and ritual roles in the regeneration of the world, including giving up one's own identity for that of a deity. Chapter 4, by Per Ditlef Fredriksen, seeks to understand how the past can be understood as actively shaping the present through a study of death sites, particularly Nyamaan Bridge in northern KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Here, death sites are thought of as places that attract death and may cause more deaths, thus making practices associated with securing the dead important for the fate of the living. There is no clear divide in this study between the world of the living and the world of the dead, challenging modern thinking's tendency to organize our messy being tidily into sealed and binary ontological compartments. In the final chapter in this section, Theresa Ammann reads Ebola as a life-altering rupture or a possibility of death to those who come into indirect or direct contact with it. Through death, insecurities, uncertainties and/or hardships, this contact alters the past, present and future of individuals and their materialities. By tracing the factors of loneliness and the fear of touching a loved one associated with Ebola, the author shows how, even after Ebola has left a community, its persistent traces continue to ripple through survivors' lives (and thus, time) both temporally and materially as it permeates their bodies, minds, memories, relations and professions, eradicating both present and future.

Part 2 (Materialities of Death) consists of four chapters, each focusing on the role of materiality in death practices. Rane Willerslev and Jeannette Lykkegård's opening chapter on the Siberian Chukchi reveals how materials such as a reindeer skin death suit, spirit food made from reindeer fat and fur from a white rabbit, and bells for scaring off devouring spirits, as well as practices of taking care of the dead and destroying the body, are not only important for the journey of the dead to the realm of the ancestors, but also for the living community.

Following this, Matthew Walsh and Sean O'Neill focus on materiality in death practices across seven different indigenous groups in the North American Arctic. Here, while death practices and beliefs such as reincarnation or naming children after an ancestor vary between Inuit groups, practices surrounding valuable commodities are shaped by environmental necessity. The authors demonstrate that, in this setting, the crafting of miniature versions of items carried by a now-deceased individual allows those same items to be reused in an otherwise resource-limited environment. Thus, human materiality becomes something that is not solely altered by death and time, as it is also contingent on the whims of the living, from which objects are conferred value. In Malthe Lehrman's subsequent chapter, the function of sacred stone cairns in Mongolia or *ovoos* is examined. These stone structures are shown to be a meshwork of offerings, continually requiring repair and food to function as a gateway between the worlds of the living and the dead. *Ovoos*, as described in this chapter, become a means of both transforming multiple worlds and showing respect to the dead ancestors and spirits, thus protecting oneself from potential harm. This produces an intrinsic connection between people and the dead for a short time within an open-ended cosmos of opportunity. In the final chapter in this section, Clarissa Martins Lima and Felipe Vander Velden call into question the Othering of the dead through their examination of the connections between the dead, materiality and time from the vantage point of the territory inhabited by two native South American peoples (the Karitiana of the south-west Brazilian Amazon and the Xukuru of the semi-arid north-east Amazon). As a result of this study, they highlight two themes that stand out for both communities regarding the world of the dead. First, there is a nexus between death, time and materiality that reveals how the dead cannot be taken away or completely alienated because their presence is necessary to the continuity of life on a soil that is always very specific. Secondly, given that there are multiple kinds of death, the idea of the dead as Others must be questioned. This chapter therefore exposes the flaws in an Othering of the dead that ignores their multifaceted status and their interplay with the living.

Part 3 (Life after Death) also consists of four chapters, each of which concerns, in one way or another, the social role of the dead in communities. Dorte Refslund Christensen and Kjetil Sandvik's opening chapter brings to light how the grief work of parents, through the Danish website *Mindet.dk*, allows for grief as a making presence of a child, as a keeping presence of a child, and as a performance of parenthood. As a result of this grief work, the authors posit that, though death may end a life, the relationship is still able to continue. Following this, Susan Matland switches the focus to how social identities, the personal histories of an individual and the relationships of the dead individual to others change when

someone dies. Examining the identities of Aslak Jacobsen Hætta and Mons Alaksen Somby, Sami indigenous people of Norway who were beheaded on 14 October 1854 following the Kautokeino rebellion of 1852, the author traces their identity from their being sent to the Department of Anatomy in the University of Christiania (Oslo) to their repatriation and burial in 1997. From this, Matland notes that changes to a person's identity are gradual, happening over time as new narratives emerge. These changes are linked to both the deceased's identity at death and their physical remains. Johanna Sumiala's subsequent chapter examines the becoming-immortal of the Finnish skier Mika Myllylä. Reading the manner in which Myllylä's life was reported as a form of death ritual, Sumiala sees Myllylä's death as offering the opportunity to ask questions about contemporary Finnish culture, identity, masculinity and heroism, his death also revealing something about contemporary Finnish society and the dilemma between the ideals it exalts as heroic and the reality of pursuing them. In the final chapter in this section, Christiane Falck questions how people interact and appropriate new things that have only recently become part of their life-worlds, including anthropologists, specifically concerning death practices. Focusing on the Nyaura village of Timbunmeli in Papua New Guinea, the author describes a context in which the materialities of the living and the dead are linked, understandings of this materiality and its associated temporality being played out through mortuary rituals, and new technologies – such as cell phones – being appropriated to connect the visible and the invisible worlds of the living and the dead and to materialize the presence of the dead. The most intriguing part of Falck's account is how she herself became part of the death rituals through her whiteness interacting with local beliefs about the appearance of the dead. Here, death can be seen not just as something to be studied, but as something that affects the process of the study itself and that anthropologists must therefore take into account.

In Part 4 (Exhibiting Death, Materiality, and Time), Alexandra Schüssler examines the attempts made to represent the aspects of death explored in the edited text in the form of a museum exhibition. Reporting on this, she recounts the struggles involved in staging this exhibition and conveying its messages to its audience.

In *Mirrors of Passing*, Seebach and Willerslev have successfully revealed novel ways of approaching death from the perspectives of time, materiality and the social role of the dead. While, as they admit, no final concluding statement about the relationships between death, materiality and time appear possible, this edited collection does not require one. The value of this text comes not from any one particular statement, but from the range of perspectives it offers and what these perspectives can themselves offer those persons wishing to understand

death beyond the assumptions about it that are hidden in modern life. This volume is highly relevant for anyone interested in cultural anthropology, social anthropology, museum studies, religious studies or sociological studies of death.

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KATHERINE SWANCUTT and **MIREILLE MAZARD** (eds.), *Animism beyond the soul: ontology, reflexivity, and the making of anthropological knowledge*, Oxford: Berghahn 2018, 160 pp. \$27.95/£19.00. ISBN 978-1-78533-866-3.

The focus of this collection of articles is the anthropology of ontology, but with an awareness of the concern for reflexivity that emerged from the ‘Writing Culture’ debate of the 1980s. Using the theme of animism, the editors deploy the notion of ‘hyper-reflexivity’, as well as drawing on what they call the ‘reflexive feedback loop’ between the researcher and his or her interlocutors. The aim is to illustrate the mutually influencing knowledge-making dynamic between native epistemologies and anthropology itself in order to prompt new insights into understandings of animism and personhood.

The six authors represented in the collection, who more or less echo one another in their own chapters, are united in the belief that native views of the soul and anthropological reflexivity are mutually constitutive (5-6). ‘Hyper-reflexivity’ is adopted as a way to illustrate the encounters between native animism and ideologies that come from the outside, as shown in Mireille Mazard’s research among Nusu Chinese in Chapter 1. The ‘reflexive feedback loop’ can also be found in Diana Espírito Santo’s notes on her spiritual relationships with her interlocutors in Cuba and Brazil, as well as in Kathleen Richardson’s work revealing a mutually influential relationship between science fiction and technological development in the world of artificial intelligence. Some of the authors, who are guided by the notion of ‘hyper-reflexivity’, place special emphasis on the knowledge interaction between themselves and their informants. Olga Ulturgasheva is aware of her role in shaping Eveny children’s and adolescents’ futures by asking them how they imagine their future lives. Katherine Swancutt also provides honest accounts of her collaboration with two native scholars in southwest China, which contain both disagreements over and adjustments to their understandings of the Nuosu ‘soul-spider’ and the tropes of luring and capture in Nuosu sociality. However, not all

the book's authors follow the same approach in responding to the reflexivity debate. Vanessa Elisa Grotti and Marc Brightman point out that the notion of 'double reflexivity' is more suitable for an Amazonian context which is self-internalized on the one hand and constituted through inter-personal relationships on the other. Espírito Santo also emphasizes the concept of 'deep reflexivity' as the reflexive aspect of the cosmos itself.

This awareness of reflexivity endows the book with a sense of honesty. More importantly, this epistemological concern does not conceal the ontological depth of the authors' findings on animism. By looking at animism beyond a concern with the soul, the collection meets its aim of illustrating the various ways the spiritual aspects of personhood may be understood (8).

The book's two editors, who are also the authors of the two chapters on southwest China, both recall E.B. Tylor's original definition of animism, but they also offer new perspectives in the poly-ontological circumstances about which they are writing. In Chapter 1, Mazard elicits the non-dualistic and complex nature of animistic personhood in Tylor's work, which agrees with her findings on the 'algebraic' qualities of Nusu personhood. Mazard suggests that Nusu identity is informed by the pluralized and fragmented selves that can be seen as one of the soul's attributes. Nusu shamans have the linguistic ability to coordinate the pluralism of these attributes of the soul, which vary across gender and species; but the uncertainties involved in this poly-ontological context, such as the encounter between Nusu animism and Christian doctrine, increase the sense of ambiguity in rituals. In Chapter 4, Swancutt focuses on the 'art of capture' enacted in the Nuosu animism of the 'soul-spider', which is non-dualistic and in itself reflexive. The art of luring and capturing one's 'soul-spider' in the ritualized warfare of exorcism succeeds in coming to life in Nuosu people's interactions with the eco-friendly ideology of present-day China.

Two other chapters focus on animism and personhood in Latin America. In Chapter 2, Espírito Santo suggests that the Cuban Espiritismo practitioners' spirits have agency that enfolds within the person. Although having different dispositions, spirits are human-like and have different impacts on people. For instance, a person can be driven to take up a writing career when her spirit appears dressed as a European scholar in a dark suit. In Chapter 5, Grotti and Brightman look at the autobiographies of certain Trio, an Amazonian group, and argue that native Amazonian personhood is related to alterity. Since a person's name is believed to bind his or her body and soul, the utterance of the name in the course of an autobiographical narration becomes a way of connecting the invisible world of the dead,

which contrasts with the original anticipation of Christianity, which introduced literary practice.

The remaining two chapters are also closely engaged in a discussion of animism, being concerned with personhood both human and non-human. In Chapter 3, Ulturgasheva argues that Siberian Eveny adolescents' predictions and fulfilments of their future should be seen as a spatial extension of their personhood, which is similar to the movements of reindeer herding and of shadow-catching by the body. This prior component of Siberian personhood is called *djuluchen*, which are partible, detachable and kinetically enacted with both humans and animals. Finally, the last chapter by Richardson brings the topic of animism out of its classic religious settings into science and technology studies. By examining artificial intelligence fiction and inventions in America and Japan, she argues that the 'uncanny' aspects of humanoid robots may embody a 'non-human' personhood.

In conclusion, the authors in this collection have cooperated in making a bold and meaningful attempt to provide in-depth research on animism through their honest awareness of the significance of reflexivity. They have met the goal they have set themselves of illustrating the different understandings of the spiritual and invisible aspects of personhood they describe.

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TERENCE S. TURNER, *The fire of the jaguar*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 2017, 243 pp. Paperback: \$35.00. ISBN: 978-0-9973675-4-6.

The fire of the jaguar has become something of a myth in and of itself within the anthropological community, as its publication has been highly anticipated and long awaited. Ask any anthropologist, and they are sure to have heard whispers of a canonically comprehensive copy primed and ready and circulating among colleagues, an imagined analysis never realized until now. A seminal work of rigorous analysis, Terrence Turner's *The fire of the jaguar* is a collation consisting not only of a detailed examination of the Kayapo myth delineating the origin of cooking fire, but also of three essays providing an intersectional approach to an immersive understanding of the Kayapo life-world and the methodology Turner employs in dialogue with, and at times against, structuralist and perspectival approaches. Fixating his attention on a single myth, Turner sets out to analyse

each episode categorically and exhaustively, employing structural matrices and graphs as a means of understanding the complexity of each isolated component – spatial, temporal, symbolic or otherwise. Although the complexity and thickness of his structural account can be quite overwhelming, Turner’s repetitious telling of the myth several times throughout Part One, as if unravelling a spool of thread, reveals more and more in each re-visit, steadily unpacking its inherent complexity. Exposing myth as model both *of* and *for* in the Geertzian sense (1973) in Kayapo society, we see the efflorescence of a boy into a man, and of society itself, through the transformational capacity of fire that stems from its acquisition and replication—in other words, through socialization, ‘men make society by the same process through which they make themselves’ (19).

In Part One, ‘The fire of the jaguar: The Kayapo myth of the origin of cooking fire,’ Turner employs notions of dynamic structuralism à la Piaget, systematically unpacking the myth layer by layer (xxxix). Following a brief description of the Kayapo social scene, he embarks on a deconstruction of Kayapo myth and its underlying structures, identified in episodic transformations whose patterning is seen to mirror the ‘dynamic pattern of action’ representative not merely of the myth’s structure, but also of Kayapo social structure (145). These transformations, in Kayapo understanding, are constitutive of ‘Society’ in that Society itself is not formed by human beings, but ‘can be recreated or transformed’ by them (30). Occupying an adversarial position in relation to Lévi-Strauss and the label ‘structuralist,’ Turner’s proclaimed distancing is counteracted by his insistence on the importance of ‘transformation’ and transformative processes as explanatory mechanisms of symbolic meaning and societal creation.

The jaguar in the myth does not have children of his own, but ‘adopts’ the boy whom he and his jaguar wife are nurturing towards manhood. The jaguars are seemingly incapable of reproduction—of producing offspring and fire—in that they subsist on the latter, continuously burning a log as the sole jaguar family to be. However, through their concerned efforts in ‘raising’ the boy, the latter is able to reproduce fire by ‘using fire to make fire’, that is, ‘using the fire to produce itself: in other words, using the transformational process to transform itself into an open-ended, infinite series of uniform replications of itself’ (200-1). By means of his socialization, the boy is able to socialize the fire and in turn, transform, produce and re-produce society itself (38). Human society is differentiable from all others in its ability to re-produce, that is, in its ‘infinite replicability of cultural artifacts and social forms’ (46). The key to Turner’s argument, and fundamental to his disagreement with Viveiros de Castro on how we come to understand origin myths, is that what characterizes

human society is specifically this ability to *reproduce* and not just *possess* things. Essential to this replicability is transformation, which appears as model both *of* and *for* the creation of ‘human culture’, that is, of society.

By the same token, myth as model can be seen to depict the power of transformation through its replication of transformational patterning that gives ‘form’ to ‘mythic thought’, which in turn reveals Kayapo social organization—a notion expanded in the three articles of Part Two. Most interestingly, the book ends with Turner’s article, ‘The crisis of late structuralism,’ a simultaneous homage to and inquisition of structuralism and its postmodern Amazonian offshoots, perspectivism and animism. Rejecting the argument that ‘production is not a transformational process’, Turner derides the ‘orthodoxy’ of Lévi-Straussian structuralism, bringing Eduardo Viveiros de Castro into the mix as well, as a means of attributing agency to active subjects and emphasizing the dynamic nature of ‘structure’ (228). Turner ends with a call to incorporate dynamic transformative properties into theoretical approaches and methodology—involving ‘Marxian concepts of productive praxis’ and ‘interpretationist and semiotic approaches’ in accordance with Lévi-Straussian structuralism—a strategy on which he relies in his analysis of *The fire of the jaguar* and which he incorporates into Part Two as both an aspect of his focused investigation and an emblematic exemplar (243).

Reference

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