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Book review: West, Paige 2012. From Modern Production to Imagined Primitive: The Social World of Coffee from Papua New Guinea.

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critique and engagement. Detractors, inside the discipline and beyond it, who think of anthropology as a stodgy remnant of colonial oppression, mired in a static abstraction of isolated and bounded cultures, will be hard-pressed to recognize their stereotype here. The futures of Fischer's anthropology are firmly grounded here in the present pluralistic and rhizomatic state of the contemporary discipline as he envisions it. Taken together, the essays articulate his continuing commitment to anthropology as it could, and in his view should, be.

This is not the first time that Fischer has led the discipline in new directions. In 1986, with George Marcus, he proposed a critique of culture alongside the expanded attention to the politics and poetics of ethnographic writing as the core activity of anthropologists touted by Marcus and James Clifford. The excesses of that brief disciplinary flirtation with postmodernism have since subsided to a productive ongoing legacy of reflexivity and experimentation. *Anthropological Futures* continues this initial train of thought, but represents its elaboration in ways that would have been impossible (or at least unintelligible) even a decade ago. Fischer insists on an anthropology that is always already interdisciplinary, both philosophical in a Kantian vein that is itself deeply pragmatic and pragmatic as an index of what anthropologists actually do (89). In the course of his revisioning, he reviews and assesses for the present and future much of anthropology's history – the emergence of the discipline from larger philosophical contexts as well as its internal turnings and preoccupations. The endeavor is historicist, relational, emergent, symbolic or interpretivist, and cosmopolitan.

Fischer relies heavily on metaphors, particularly from science and science studies (which in his hands becomes deeply anthropological, a potent source of reflexive critical theory). He argues that new metaphors are needed because 'contemporary societies construct themselves' around 'technologies and technosciences' (36). He advocates a 'recombinant anthropology' (48), drawing metaphors from the discipline's foundational commitment, unique among the social sciences, to the study of human biology as well as human culture. Fischer's genealogies of anthropological praxis are plural and cross-pollinating. One of Fischer's favourite metaphors is the geoid, 'a material-semiotic object,' a 'transitional object' (212) whose simultaneous mathematical and geological denotations lead him to refigure the geoid as old age and its accompanying changing personhood, personified in his experience with his aging mother's struggle to accept loss of professional stature and activity.

'Culture' is primary among the 'legacy categories' (xii) of anthropology that Fischer attempts to redefine. 'When singularized, frozen or nominalized, culture can be a dangerous concept' (1). 'Cultural analysis,' in contrast, is experimental, pluralistic, and increasingly 'aware of its own historicity' (46). 'Nature' emerges as 'un-natural,' constructed against the limits of the real world rather than infinitely variable (ditto for the thorny conceptual legacies of human nature and cultural relativism).

Not all anthropologists will buy into Fischer's brand of futurism, and he is far from the only anthropologist to make parallel arguments, but his challenging vision leaves room for multiplicities and potentially convergent critiques. His cosmopolitanism integrates the social sciences and humanities while situating anthropology centrally at the intersection of cosmopolitics, techno-science and the emergent institutions and infrastructures of present and future cosmopolitanisms. Anthropology's disciplinary strength is its capacity to work at multiple scales from ethnographic detail to 'reflexive nostalgia' (270) to policy implications of cultural analysis. The anthropologist of the future renews the discipline by playing such analysis across 'scales, explanations, structures, cultural meanings and social forces' (271). If anthropology is to survive and reproduce itself for future generations, then the widening of subject matter, unabashed disciplinary borrowing, and grounding in the cross-cultural study of meaning that Fischer recommends are necessary antidotes to contemporary anthropology's seeming failure of nerve, its ineffectiveness in claiming a seminal space in the sun within the transnational circuits of a rapidly changing global world where human relations are increasingly dependent on technological innovation and effective communication.

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From Modern Production to Imagined Primitive: The Social World of Coffee from Papua New Guinea

By **Paige West**.

Durham and London: Duke University Press. 2012

Pp. xvii + 315

Price: US\$25.95

In her newest book Paige West sets out to examine neoliberal capitalism, its effects and global connections by tracing the production, distribution and consumption of coffee. More specifically her focus is on coffee produced by the Gimi speaking peoples of the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea (PNG). In an ethnographically rich description West shows how the Gimi produce coffee; attach meaning to it and how coffee production has profoundly changed the Gimi environment and subjectivities. By tracing the movement of coffee, she shows how the Gimi interact with Papua New Guinean buyers, what social worlds coffee creates among coffee workers and coffee producer elites of urban PNG and finally how coffee from Eastern Highlands is being sold in capitalism's centers. Here West focuses on the fantasy images of alleged 'primitive' producers that are being created and used to market speciality coffees and what very real and adverse consequences these fantasies have.

West defines neoliberal capitalism as ideologies

and practices based on the reduced role of the state, decreased regulation, privatization and commodification through the assigning of property rights (p. 26-27). Her discussion on neoliberalism West bases heavily on the works of David Harvey and his use of Marx's concept of primitive accumulation, or 'accumulation by dispossession', which strives for the 'privatization of land and means of production' (p. 30). In relation to coffee and PNG, neoliberalization has manifested itself as the deregulation of coffee markets in the 1980s and the Structural Adjustment Programs, which restructured many coffee-producing states, including PNG, in the early 1990s (p. 43, 44). As a result of deregulation, large companies got even more control of the coffee markets and small roasters, importers gained for the first time entry into the markets and at the same time – in the spirit of neoliberalism - various voluntary regulation schemes emerged (p. 47, 97). One consequence of this has been that producers earn less money for their coffee, while consumers pay more for it (p. 45, 233). Third party certification has not changed this, and by adding value to coffee by conjuring 'fantasy images' of primitive producers, it may have the adverse effects of portraying fair and equitable working conditions as scarce resources and luxuries. When indigeneity and poverty become linked through advertising of speciality coffees, structural causes for poverty become easily omitted and 'culture' and poverty are easily seen as cause and effect.

The great strength of the book is combining rich and vivid ethnographic descriptions of all the links in the 'commodity chain' of coffee with good accounts of structural shifts and events in the markets of coffee. Particularly interesting are the accounts on how and why coffee markets became deregulated and how structural adjustment affected PNG's coffee markets. For example PNG shifted its focus on extractive industries such as mining on the advice of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund or how with the demise of a company regulating the export of coffee, rural growers lost a dependable and fair buyer (pp. 99). Along with large scale structural accounts, West offers rich descriptions of the ecology and production of

coffee at the village level, how the Gimi situate coffee in a moral economy and how coffee creates strong ties between them and buyers and how these social relations benefit all the parties (p. 150).

While the book explores the coffee markets on many levels and on the relevant sites where coffee is produced, moved and consumed, more thorough description of how deregulation and structural adjustment was adopted in PNG by the local actors would have given more nuances to the account. Even though these schemes were imposed by powerful international actors, it would have been interesting to get a more detailed picture of how and why the PNG government agreed to these. West gives a very powerful critique of neoliberalism and especially of certification schemes, which seek to solve problems created by neoliberal practices by adhering to the very same practices that brought the problems in the first place. However Harvey's theories of accumulation by dispossession could have been problematized more in the light of West's own rich material, as the Gimi are – as she herself notes (p. 246) – owners of their own land and means of production and incorporate commodities into their own moral economy that does not follow a capitalist logic.

Despite the critique mentioned above, the book is a very powerful account of contemporary Papua New Guinea and global capitalism. It critically examines the fantasy images so known to us through popular media and advertising of commodities and shows how very real consequences these fantasies have. Written in an extremely clear and vivid style, the book makes excellent reading for courses on environmental anthropology, neoliberalism and Papua New Guinea. It critically examines the seemingly well meaning certification schemes, which raise questions among both academics and consumers alike, and this should allow for a wide-based readership. Finally, it simply is a very solid and well written ethnography based on long periods of fieldwork, which gives a thorough account of global coffee markets.

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