

BOOK REVIEWS

N. BANKES and T. KOIVUROVA, *The proposed Nordic Saami Convention: national and international dimensions of indigenous property rights*, Oxford: Hart Publishing 2013, xv, 417 pp.

This volume is a compilation of essays, written primarily by legal academics who specialize in Sámi or other indigenous people's topics, and it evaluates and discusses the draft of the Nordic Sámi Convention through a mixture of legal, historical and social prisms. The Nordic Sámi Convention is a ground-breaking rights document that shares many features of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People and ILO Convention 169, but only addresses issues connected to the Sámi. The book is divided into four parts, each focusing on a specific aspect of the Convention, such as property rights, international law and country-specific Nordic land rights, altogether consisting of fifteen rather disconnected papers. For the purposes of this review, I will comment on the overall feel of the book and some of the more striking ideas put forward before evaluating some of the essays specifically.

As a whole, the book leaves generally eloquent, persuasive, coherent and comprehensible impression regarding the way it portrays, argues and affirms the main ideas. However, it also leaves the reader with a slight disappointment concerning the accessibility, flow and continuity of the way the book has been edited. Each essay is carefully crafted to a very high standard of academic writing, most of the ideas are introduced well, and some of the prior knowledge required of the more specialized topics is addressed. The specifically legal terminology is clarified in most of the essays in a way that can be understood by people outside the field. There is a good balance between the legal, historical and social discussion of the main ideas, and the legally saturated beginning of the book is gradually transformed into a more historically oriented middle with a predominantly social and cultural end in the way the key issues are evaluated. The introduction and conclusion excellently outline and summarize the main aspects of what the volume is all about. Nevertheless, it is rather challenging to read and follow because of the long, sometimes unnecessary footnoted references, the heavy use of terminology and sometimes unrelated historical facts and clarifications that have already been addressed in previous essays in the book. The footnotes were an aspect I found particularly troublesome, especially when there are

Book reviews

many pages where more than half of the page is footnotes, and some pages where the actual text is outnumbered by the quantity of footnotes. The flow is also interrupted by the presumption that the readers are fully familiar with the Nordic Sámi Convention, the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People and ILO 169, which at times leaves the reader with a disconnected feel. Within each of the four parts of the book, the reader is left desiring a better connection between the essays, essay 15 in particular apparently being placed randomly at the end of the book. Despite this, in Part 3 of the book, the country-specific Nordic Sámi land and rights laws are very well discussed and described, with an excellent flow between them. One other drawback is the way the book has been referenced only through footnotes, which does not offer comprehensive reference lists after each essay or at the end of the book, makes it harder for readers to follow up on particular ideas in other writings. Overall, therefore, while the collection is highly informative and persuasive in the way it discusses the key ideas and creates some excellent points about the validity and strengths of the Convention, it leaves readers slightly disconnected due to its editing, which is understandable when dealing with such a broad topic.

Some of the more stimulating ideas discussed in the book include issues connected to property laws, legal pluralism, self-determination, Finnish domestic laws and women's rights. In the opening essay, Nigel Bankes clearly and successfully starts off the legal evaluation of the Convention without making any ground-breaking points, but he does introduce the lines of argument concerning interests in property very systematically. The aspect that grabbed my attention was his reference to James Tully's political theories, with their strong argumentative opposition to John Locke's justification for colonial supremacy to claim indigenous lands without the consent of the indigenous people. Bringing in Waldron's ways of dealing with historical injustices via his argument regarding two models of reparation seems to continue the theoretical evaluation of how the situation with the Sámi could be framed. The 'what if' and 'what now' reasoning that Waldron uses is a very philosophical way of dealing with a primarily legal situation, but it does add to Bankes' already developed arguments that he later linked to the draft of the Convention in a rather brief but to the point manner. In the next essay, Jonnette Watson Hamilton gives generally excellent legal introduction and justification of legal pluralism, except that the lengthy legal historic outbursts, which are saturated with terminology, could have been kept to a minimum, as they do not add much to the author's Convention-specific arguments.

The best point to emerge here is the rather basic but appropriate claim that legal pluralism is a critical component in dealing with a transnational indigenous society like the Sámi, but there is clearly no ‘one size fits all’ (p. 75), and any action in the direction of achieving any pluralistic goals will require recognition, reconciliation and highly gradual processing.

Moving on to the fourth essay, Timo Koivurova addresses the exercise of self-determination among transnational indigenous people and its advocacy in international law. After reviewing the historical representation of self-determination since World War II, Koivurova moves on to dwell rather predictably on the use of the word ‘people’ in international law, which has long been a sore point for anyone dealing with indigenous rights, but then he quickly recovers by discussing the excellent example of the case of Kosovo and ethnic minorities. Koivurova points out that, according to Article 36 of the UN Declaration and Article 32 of ILO 169, self-determination is ‘very much based...within the established Nation States’ (p. 119) and ‘neither document encourages the segments of transnational people to unite’ (ibid.). I do not agree that it is such a black and white situation as Koivurova suggests because the way the articles are written provides some encouragement and a lot of freedom for transnational cooperation. Just because it has not been addressed by an article explicitly demanding such cooperation, this does not mean that an indigenous population divided by modern national borders does not have the right to self-determination across states. Upon a closer reading of Article 36, point 1, indigenous people divided by borders do have the right to self-determination with their own and other peoples across international borders. At the end of the essay, Koivurova addresses Scheinin’s criticisms that the draft Convention seem to resemble a social contract rather than an international treaty, and he puts forward a valuable constructive argument that the members of the Expert Committee should take into account when putting forward the draft as a contentious Nordic law treaty.

Juha Joona’s essay on the situation in Finland that is linked to the draft Convention deals with a particular injustice based on some historical evidence related to the 1673 Settlement Decree for Lapland, the movements of reindeer-herding Sámi into Kemi Lapland, primarily settled by hunter-gatherers, and a methodologically flawed 1962 interview identifying indigenous inhabitants. The outcome of all the above factors was the misleading creation of a definition of the indigenous population in Finland, which prioritized the newly settled reindeer-herders and almost entirely

shut out the original semi-nomadic Sámi population of Finland that has occupied the area ‘since time immemorial’ (p. 241). Joonas’s remarks about the faulty means of identifying the indigenous population in Finland leaves out a huge number of people who are not legally recognized as Sámi, an issue that must be rectified before the draft Convention is implemented. Jennifer Koshan evaluates the lack of articles that address the inequality between men and women when it comes to securing rights within the Convention. The Sámi are historically and traditionally a very gender-neutral society, where men and women are equal in most respects. However, this was affected in a major way after other people started occupying their areas and colonization forced the Sámi to introduce more unequal gender relations. Koshan mentions Åhrén’s criticism of the draft and how it is failing to address issues connected with children, youth and women. I agree with this statement, especially the children and youth aspect, but to me it sounds that for all the purposes of the draft, women form an inseparable part of the adult Sámi population. However, the Reindriftsavtalen 14/15 (the annual Reindeer Husbandry Agreement) in Norway does cover women herders, and even though it is discontinuing the female-oriented grant, it will be implementing organizational techniques and various organizational measures regarding gender equality by doing more than just offering money. Overall, some excellent key ideas are brought up about the draft Convention throughout the book’s essays.

A closer examination of Else Grete Broderstad’s essay on cross-border reindeer husbandry and Christina Allard’s discussion of reindeer rights in Sweden reveals a few more areas of improvement that the draft of the Convention could address before being implemented. Else Grete Broderstad gives a good overview of the cross-border situation between Norway and Sweden when it comes to reindeer herding, but the essay has an overall feel of Norwegian-based subjectivity. One of the first questions raised, ‘How can we explain why it has been so difficult to reach agreement on cross-border reindeer management?’ (p. 151), targets exactly the historical data revealing a centuries-long conflict between the two countries. Broderstad divides the theoretical models for dealing with such political situations into two: norm-based and interest-based policies. This particular section seems to dwell too much on the rather simplistic policies, but it makes an excellent point in using Walton and McKersie’s dichotomy between distributive and integrative bargaining. The Lapp Codicil of 1751 is historically the first and one of the most important treaties for the Sámi, and

Broderstad appropriately compares its importance to that of the Magna Carta and its symbolic representation of liberty and the rule of law. This has also been the one and only document for many centuries to preserve the right of herders to continue their traditional way of herding, which includes crossing the Norwegian-Swedish border with their reindeers depending on the season. Broderstad assesses the historical narrative from 1751 all the way to 2009, when a new reindeer herding convention between the two countries was signed. What Broderstad seems to be doing excessively is to express a more Norwegian-based opinion with examples and quotes primarily covering the Norwegian side of the argument, leaving the Swedish argument lacking in force and credibility. Bearing in mind that this is a cross-border problem, it is only fair to cover both sides and convey the opinions of both representatives. This is not an essay in which the author necessarily needs to take sides, but even if Broderstad decides to argue more for the Norwegian side, the Swedish argument should be done justice by at least being better represented in the paper. The bold and rather inappropriate statement that ‘the Lapp Codicil was ahead of its time’ (p. 174) seems to conclude the essay in a very bitter way. I do not agree with this statement, as historically speaking the Codicil fulfilled its purpose perfectly. The fact that later the governmental systems of Norway and Sweden failed to protect the Sámi does not mean that the Codicil was ahead of its time. It would be more appropriate to say that the two countries were behind in their political, moral and juridical abilities to implement justice for the reindeer herders, but the Lapp Codicil was created and implemented at the right time and under the right circumstances.

Christina Allard’s essay gives a comprehensive overview of how the reindeer herding laws have changed in Sweden through the use of historical data and specific cases. Allard appropriately begins her historical exploration by raising the question of who is entitled to herd reindeers in Sweden under the Act of 1886, which was the first of its kind in Sweden and unfortunately was very Darwinian in its views. The Act laid down that reindeer herding was a collective right for all Sámi. Allard identifies the problems with the Act and then follows its progression through the 1971 Act and 1993 Amendment with the different eligibility conditions imposed on top of being able to identify oneself as Sámi. Membership of a Sámi village seems to be the latest addition to the otherwise collective right to herding. What Allard describes excellently are three specific examples, the Taxed Mountain, the Nordmaling and the Girjas cases, each of which contributes to Allard’s assessment of the conceptual

confusion that Swedish laws have created when it comes to herding laws. Norwegian developments in the legislation connected to herding are also pointed out, but what Allard mostly argues is that the confusing and rather inappropriate collective policy in Sweden should be addressed before the draft Convention goes forward. From my own experiences with Swedish and Norwegian reindeer herding, it is a highly competitive market and has a close to zero entry margin for Sámi who, despite being part of a Sámi village, have historically not been involved with reindeers or have shown no interest in this form of livelihood. Even those who have been herders but have then given up herding for various reasons also stand a very slim chance of getting back into herding due to the peer pressure they encounter. In my view the legislation is strictly formal: when it comes to the actual herders, the laws of social inaccessibility and negotiation with one's peers are more powerful tools. Nevertheless, Allard is correct to identify the flaws in Swedish legislation, which have to be addressed before the draft Convention can be finalized.

MICHAELA PEYKOVSKA

DPhil candidate, School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, 51 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6PE, UK.

YARIMAR BONILLA, *Non-sovereign futures: French Caribbean politics in the wake of disenchantment*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press 2015, xviii, 229 pp. ISBN 9780226283814.

In a rich and historically deep ethnography, Yarimar Bonilla describes political histories of postcolonial 'disenchantment' through the rise of labour activism in Guadeloupe and the French Caribbean. As one of the French *départements d'outre mer* (DOM), or overseas departments, Guadeloupe is often understood as a non-independent exception to its surrounding postcolonial Caribbean neighbours. Over the course of the book's six chapters, Bonilla explores Guadeloupe not 'as a site of problematic sovereignty' but rather as a place for the 'exploration of sovereignty itself as a categorical problem' (10). In doing so, Bonilla argues for re-imagining the Caribbean 'as a non-sovereign archipelago' in which representations of 'non-sovereign societies as sites of paradox and exception' (10) have served only to obscure the larger possibilities for these non-sovereign pasts and futures.

The book is divided into two sections with three overarching goals. The first goal is to explore labour activism and subject formation through the political transformations of Antillean labour struggle and the navigation of unwritten ‘transcripts of the future’ (5). Drawing on Michel-Ralph Trouillot, Bonilla further examines the intersection of ‘historical and political praxis’ in the ‘rich tradition of historically grounded Caribbeanist anthropology’ (5). Practices of contemporary labour activism such as the use of Creole throughout negotiations, drum circles outside labour courts and memory walks through places and practices of slavery and slave resistance beautifully demonstrate the relevance of both history and memory in contemporary ideologies. Finally, she seeks to locate Guadeloupean labour activism within a larger Caribbean negotiation of postcolonial politics.

The first section of the book sets out a broad historical overview of the production and evolution of Guadeloupean political histories. Chapter 1, ‘The Wake of Disenchantment’, begins by reframing the controversial departmentalization championed by Aimé Césaire and the subsequent rise of anticolonial nationalism and syndicalism in the 1970s. By tracing the trajectory of French Antillean thought through different political generations, Bonilla argues that each subsequent set of political activists and leaders has been neither uniform nor easily categorized. She ends the chapter by asserting that present-day Guadeloupe faces ‘a moment of categorical uncertainty’, but ‘also an era rife with emergent possibilities’ (39). These possibilities are fleshed out in the following ethnographic chapters.

Chapter 2 examines contemporary notions of freedom, nation and sovereignty through the use of strategies and metaphors of slave resistance in contemporary labour activism. Bonilla asks how and why unions in Guadeloupe have used this ‘strategic entanglement’ (40) with practices of slave resistance such as *marronage*, a term that refers to the *nèg mawon* or rebel slave and includes a ‘broad range of practices through which enslaved populations contested the system of slavery across the Americas’ (41). In doing so, she continues the intergenerational analysis of shifting Antillean political thought around self-determination and sovereignty through a re-imagined, postcolonial *marronisme* (46). Bonilla provocatively situates Césaire’s own pursuit of departmentalization for the French Antilles over the ‘flag independence’ (xiii) of other Caribbean entities within the practice of ‘pillaging, othering, or marooning’ (52) of slave resistance.

Book reviews

In the book's second section, 'Emerging Transcripts', Bonilla explores ethnographic evidence from nearly a decade of her own fieldwork among contemporary Guadeloupean labour activists. She draws on interviews, public documents, labour negotiations and participant observation with a purposeful intent to 'engage with [her] informants as theorists' and 'reflective actors' (xvi) in order to 'grant them analytic competency over their own acts and forms of cultural production' (xvii). Each chapter draws heavily on Bonilla's work with the *Union générale des travailleurs de la Guadeloupe* (UGTG), the General Union of Guadeloupean Workers, the largest labour union in the French Antilles. She weaves together the reflections and analysis of labour activists, government *fonctionnaires* and social theorists with particular aplomb.

Chapter 3 provides a thick description of 'life on the piquet' (65), or picket line, and details the forging of everyday communities and subjectivities in the liminal spaces of the strike. Bonilla argues that the effectiveness of labour action cannot be measured solely by its material or economic consequences but must also 'be more subtly gauged by analysing the affective and subjective transformations that take place during collective action' (66). Countering the narrative of a strike as a site of inevitable disappointment, Bonilla delves deeply into the 'bittersweet place of the piquet grève', simultaneously a 'space of community and solidarity' (73) and one that can bring destabilizing interpersonal conflict to relationships at home as well as work. Her description of the *piquet grève* as a 'liminal space, betwixt and between the domains of labour and leisure, on the margins of the capitalist economy and enmeshed in new forms of community with those around them' (79) is particularly striking. Chapter 5 expands upon the affective transformation of labour practices by examining the role of history in French Antillean memory walks organized by labour unions. The Creole slogan '*fè mémwa maché*' means to 'make your memory walk' (130) and is used in promotions for UGTG walks, which aim to 'generate [a] feeling of historical intimacy' (132) as well as a 'newfound faith in the political efficacy of the present' (147).

Chapters 4, 'Public hunger', and 6, 'Hope and disappointment,' give accounts of the 2004 'Madassamy affair' and the general strike of 2009. In the first, Bonilla recounts the arrest of a Guadeloupean labour activist of East Indian descent, his subsequent hunger strike while imprisoned and the activists' political tactics in seeking to shape media and labour negotiations in its wake. In Chapter 6, Bonilla

Book reviews

describes the progression of the general strike of 2009. Returning to the postcolonial ‘wake of disenchantment’ of the opening chapter, she argues that the disappointment with the fruits of the general strike was accompanied by high hopes for future political engagement.

In this first book, Bonilla brilliantly blends political, historical and media anthropology to reimagine the historical trajectory and political futures for non-sovereign polities in Guadeloupe, the French Antilles and beyond. Though addressing her framework to the French Antilles and the Caribbean more broadly, Bonilla draws primarily on fieldwork in Guadeloupe. Future ethnographic work could expand upon this excellent foundation for a twenty-first century Caribbeanist anthropology. Indeed, the non-sovereign framework proposed here may have broader relevance for social movements beyond the geographical bounds of the French Caribbean.

KATHERINE E. WARREN

Second-year M.Phil. student in Medical Anthropology. Contact: katherine.warren@hertford.ox.ac.uk; Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, 51 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6PE.

C.A. GREGORY, *Gifts and commodities* (2nd edn.), Chicago: Hau Books 2015 [1989], lxiii, 268 pp.

Chris Gregory’s *Gifts and Commodities* has been republished by HAU, the book imprint of the popular online journal of ethnographic theory. First published by Academic Press in 1982, the book has since been a mainstay of reading lists for students of economic anthropology, iconized as a key work within the gift–commodity debate. Originally inspired by Marcel Mauss’s *The Gift* (2002), one side of this debate has held that the exchange of gifts is distinct from the exchange of commodities. As an example, whereas gifts create social ties between transactors, commodity exchange occurs between independent transactors. The other side of the debate, championed notably by Pierre Bourdieu (1977) and Arjun Appadurai (1986), holds instead that this distinction is largely irrelevant, as both exist for the same reason – to further the self-interest of the transactors. In Gregory’s description, this implied universalization of a particular subjective ‘self-interest’ is a conceptual foundation of neoclassical economics and its associated ‘theory of goods’. In *Gifts and Commodities*, Gregory argues against this theory, proposing instead that gifts and

commodities *are* distinct and that it is this distinction that invalidates the use of economic principles to understand exchange within unique societies. This second edition reprints the original text (save for a few typographical revisions) with a new preface by Gregory and a foreword by Marilyn Strathern.

As the foreword and preface describe, Gregory (an Australian) originally went to Papua New Guinea to teach economics at the University of Papua New Guinea. During his time there, he was struck by the inability of economic theories to describe his observations of trade and exchange. Where commodity exchange had increased, and labour and products became things that could be bought for money, so too did the exchange of gifts – a resurgence that could be neither explained nor accounted for by the economist’s models. The text thus critiques the neoclassical economic ‘theory of goods’ in favour of the political economy ‘theory of commodities’. Extending the latter, Gregory offers a complementary ‘theory of gifts’, building upon the work of anthropological heavyweights such as Morgan, Mauss and Lévi-Strauss, as well as Melanesian ethnographies by Mead and Strathern, amongst others. These theorists, along with Gregory’s own observations in the region, are then used to demonstrate that gift exchange has flourished in Papua New Guinea amidst a growing colonial ‘commodity’ economy. This efflorescence provides the evidence for Gregory’s critique of economic theory, which rejects the idea that all exchange can be explained, *a priori*, by the universalised ‘theory of goods’ or the related ‘formalist’ mantra, or that principles of exchange are constant across societies.

The book is divided into two parts and preceded by a helpful introduction to the complex colonial history of Papua New Guinea. Part One, ‘Concepts’, marries the political economy technique of analysis (which is predominately explained through the work of Marx) with anthropological concepts of kinship and gifts. The final chapter uses these concepts to critique the focus of economics on individual choice, a focus that denies economists the ability to understand the peculiarities of gift exchange, wherein debt, rather than capital, is accumulated. This failure has resulted in the renunciation of such forms as ‘primitive capitalism’ or ‘distortions’ in a universal model. Part Two, ‘Theory’, uses Papua New Guinea to show that gift exchange is in fact a ‘modern’ phenomena, one that has increased alongside commodity exchange in the growing colonial economy of the region. Part two is a particularly impressive synthesis of historical and anthropological data related to the region, illuminating a relationship of exploitation between Australia and Papua New

Guinea that today remains notably absent from the Australian historical imagination. Gregory's conclusion is brief and succinct, offering a final restatement of his approach, as well as his view of the importance of his thesis.

Throughout the text, Gregory works through his propositions and conclusions in clear, methodical and often repetitive fashion. His background as an economist is evident in his generous use of diagrams and mathematical examples, which, while supporting the text, often lose the reader in detail and render reading a rather dry task. This dryness, however, does contribute to the convincing nature of the work, and the reader may wonder whether this was a deliberate aim of Gregory's. One of his key charges against the economic method is that it is subjective and psychological, given that 'the preferences of utility-maximising individuals [that] provide the data of the analysis' (p. 116). The arid prose therefore serves to heighten his contrast between the 'intuitive' neoclassical economics and the 'factual' political economy method. Whether intentional or not, this lack of literary flare situates the work as pre-*Writing Culture* (cf. Marcus and Clifford 1986). In contrast to most anthropological works today, the text is resoundingly free from the subjective voice, and as a result is likely to be less appealing to students than more recent works in the discipline.

Despite the difficulty the reader may have with this text, the original work remains an inspiration for any student wishing to publish anthropological theory that reaches and engages with debates outside the discipline. As Gregory states, many countries have been 'developed' based on economic theories. Economics as a discipline is an, if not *the*, authoritative voice in domestic and global politics (cf. the 2010 documentary *Inside Job*). Hence the charge outlined by Gregory, that the economic method is insufficient, has potentially huge ramifications. Yet, as Gregory notes in the preface to the second edition, much of the book's reception has remained within in the discipline, and to his disappointment it 'has had no impact on the thinking in the dominant mainstream paradigm: members of the economics discipline have simply ignored it' (p. x1iv). This new edition, we hope, will maintain and perhaps help to elevate the work's status as a rigorous counter-argument to theories that remain largely unquestioned in political decision-making.

REFERENCES

- Appadurai, A. 1986. *The social life of things*, Cambridge: University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. 1977. *Outline of a theory of practice*, Cambridge: University Press.

Book reviews

Clifford, J., and G.E. Marcus (eds.) 1986. *Writing culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography*, Berkeley etc.: University of California Press.

Inside Job. 2010. United States: Charles Ferguson (first released in Belgium, 2 February 2010. See <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1645089/releaseinfo>

Mauss, M. 2002. *The Gift*, London: Routledge.

CYNTHIA SEAR

Senior Consultant at Forethought Research, Melbourne, Australia. Awarded the Master of Science in Social Anthropology at the University of Oxford in 2015.

CHRISTINE HINE, *Ethnography for the internet: embedded, embodied and everyday*, London: Bloomsbury 2015, 221 pp.

The internet as a theoretical and methodological concept has stoked the interest of several academics in the last twenty years. From media theorists to anthropologists, researchers have looked into internet communities and other internet-supported social networks to understand multi-modal layers of peoples' lives. In recent years, the immersion in internet realms has become an ordinary activity. One uses extensively smartphones, online services, and other related technology in daily interactions, and as a result, one's connectedness to the internet, and also, to other internet users, is enhanced.

Christine Hine, in her seminal book *Virtual Ethnography* (2000), looked at internet-based social research in the 1990s. Her recent publication *Ethnography for the Internet* (2015) gives continuity to the theme of the social study of the internet in the early twenty-first century, acknowledging change in relevant technologies and practices related to the use of the internet. Hine's latest publication is a textbook aimed at students, researchers, scholars, or other internet researchers. In many ways *Ethnography for the Internet* is a guidebook for doing ethnography online, as it provides information regarding practices, strategies, and challenges in internet research.

One of the key arguments in *Ethnography for the Internet* is that the term 'virtual' is no longer helpful when discussing the internet (p. 87). Today we are a long way from romantic, exotic, and futuristic notions of the internet as a cyberspace or an information superhighway, areas of virtual reality based on concepts that were

prominent in early 1990s cultural studies literature. Internet-based activities often have physical manifestations; the internet is entrenched in our daily lives in so far as we have the capacity to be constantly online and putting to use internet services, be it shopping, communicating, reading, being entertained and more. The acknowledgment of this social transformation of internet use was imperative in updating Hine's published work, although it has been previously discussed elsewhere (see, for example, Miller and Slater 2000, Boellstorff et al. 2012).

The book contains seven chapters which can be perceived as a two-part division. The first three chapters comprise the introduction, literature review, and methods section. In chapter one, Hine situates the book's place in the broader literature of internet research. Following Geertz's interpretative framework, she stirs the methodological direction followed in *Ethnography for the Internet* towards ethnographic methods. As Hine herself argues, the book addresses an audience interested in doing ethnography in contemporary societies in which various forms of computer-mediated communication are employed. Hine aims at a holistic understanding of this context by searching for meaning and meaning-makers. She also argues that new technologies suggest new strategies for knowledge production (p. 2). On the one hand, she discusses the banality of the internet (pp. 8-9) and how it has become part of everyday activities. On the other hand, she explains certain challenges and limitations that this change presents to ethnographers as well as certain ways of dealing with these.

Chapter two explains the three epithets Hine attaches to the internet: embedded (the ability to connect to the internet using everyday objects, p. 32), embodied (the internet as part of us in daily experience, p. 41), and every day (the internet as a mundane medium that offers the infrastructure for doing other activities, p. 46). She states that she is interested in multi-modal sites, be it online or offline (p. 23). Based on previous literature and her own research, Hine highlights that we cannot talk of a holistic understanding of the internet (p. 26), as it is immense. Thus, she moves towards an open approach to ethnographic holism and seeks the meaning of the internet in people's lives (p. 27). In this respect, Hine examines the internet as a 'contextual and contextualising phenomenon' (ibid.).

In Chapter three, Hine centres on strategies for engagement with the field and for collecting and analysing data from the field. She develops a methodological toolkit that can be applied and modified by ethnographers who seek to generate knowledge

from internet fieldwork. Here, Hine discusses certain characteristics of internet ethnography (multi-sited, mobile, flexible, adaptive, reflexive and networked) that are useful in exploring the connections of people online. Secondly, she analyses data collection methods for internet research such as writing field notes, activity logging tools, scraping, sentiment analysis, visualisations and interviews. Notably, in this chapter, Hine demystifies autoethnographic methods and argues for their importance for the study of the internet, given that the ‘experience of navigating the contemporary world is so individualized’ (p. 83).

The middle section of the book is divided into three chapters aimed at demonstrating ethnographic examples based on the theoretical and methodological framework described in the previous chapters. Chapter four discusses Freecycle, a network of goods’ exchange. In this case study, Hine primarily uses her autoethnographic account to describe goods’ exchange in the local Freecycle network, as well as its infrastructure from an insider’s perspective, based on her experience as a discussion group moderator. In addition, she explains how other methods such as discourse analysis interviews and scraping that demonstrate evidence of the use of Freecycle on various social media were significant for the understanding of people’s experience of Freecycle.

The second case study described in Chapter five overviews the use of digital technologies in the discipline of systematics. Hine explains her methodological choices, given that her case study was institutionally complex, and participants were involved in a distributed set of activities (p. 155). For example, one of her first choices was the specific field in which she had some knowledge as an insider (p. 131). This was particularly helpful in finding research sites and participants. Hine describes the process of selecting interviewees, analysing online forums to understand the discipline better, and using online visualisation tools such as Touchgraph SEO to map the online field. This chapter also discusses policy pressures and their effect on participants’ involvement in digital initiatives (p. 145). Hine also touches upon material culture in digital practices (p. 149) and ethical commitments in fieldwork (p. 152), but she does not go into greater analytical detail – perhaps an underdeveloped area of the book in total.

Chapter six looks at the third case study, the television series *The Antiques Roadshow* and how people made sense of the show in their everyday lives (p. 158). Here, Hine employs unobtrusive methods based on found data (ibid.) that were

primarily online traces of comments and discussions that the fans engaged in on the internet (for example, in Twitter). As she observed, through initial research certain patterns emerge, which she followed up with interviews (p. 163). In this chapter, Hine explains the steps towards cross-platform research and argues how the initial examination of data may lead to pop-up ethnography, that is, ethnographic research that has not previously been intended and/or designed. Here, she adopts a perspective agnostic about content (p. 176), which is in line with Marcus's (1995) proposal to 'follow the people'.

There are various positive comments that can be made regarding the structure of *Ethnography for the Internet*. First, the clarity between the chapters is very helpful in working one's way through the book without reading it cover to cover. Secondly, at the end of certain chapters are summaries of key components (see Chapter 3), or points for reflection (for example, Chapters 4, 5). In all, the book is very well signposted and the key concepts are constantly reiterated – although certain repetitions could be omitted (particularly, the arguments for the banality of the internet throughout the chapters). There is some reference to ethical considerations spread throughout the book, and a section regarding the need for emergent ethics for adaptive ethnography in the conclusion (p. 187). However, given that *Ethnography for the Internet* is a textbook, a more complete analysis and explanation of ethical frameworks in internet research would be beneficial, particularly citing key sources such as the ethical decision-making document published by the Association of Internet Research (which is currently absent both from the main text and the list of references).

REFERENCES

- Association of Internet Researchers 2012. Ethical decision-making and internet research: recommendations from the AoIR Ethics Working Committee, <http://aoir.org/reports/ethics2.pdf>, accessed 3/11/2015 (Version 2.0)
- Boellstorff, T., B. Nardi, P. Pearce and T.L. Taylor 2012. *Ethnography and virtual worlds: a handbook of method*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Hine, C. 2000. *Virtual ethnography*, London: Sage.
- Marcus, G.E. 1995. Ethnography in/of the world system: the emergence of multi-sited ethnography, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24, 95-117.
- Miller, D., & D. Slater 2000. *The internet: an ethnographic approach*, Oxford: Berg.

MARILOU POLYMEROPOULOU

Postdoctoral researcher, Faculty of Music and St. Peter's College, University of Oxford; e-mail: marilou.polymeropoulou@music.ox.ac.uk. Recently completed her doctorate on 'Networked Creativity: Ethnographic Perspectives on Chipmusic' in the Faculty of Music, University of Oxford.

SHARON KAUFMAN, *Ordinary medicine: extraordinary treatments, longer lives, and where to draw the line*, Durham and London: Duke University Press 2015, xv, 314 pp.

Kaufman's recently published analysis of the American health system arrives on the academic scene as increasing numbers of researchers turn their gaze away from the rituals of death to focus on the process of dying. Dying, and dying well, have been defined, questioned and criticized by theologians, physicians, nurses and now anthropologists, as the threshold is extended by technology and medicine. Kaufman's book is a continuation of an extensive body of academic work focusing on aging, the end of life and the effect of the medical community's focus on healing at the end of life.

Kaufman argues that 'ordinary medicine', a set of radical and intrusive medical interventions, now marks the treatment of the elderly, extending aging lives, but not promising any change in the quality of life. In order to do so, Kaufman traces the care received by aging American patients on Medicare, the medical financial insurance system provided in the United States. Beginning with the effect of evidence-based medicine (EBM), Kaufman argues that the practice of relying on statistical evidence has removed the personalized care that once marked the medical profession.

EBM provides the data to argue for increased insurance coverage of intrusive medical procedures, which then become 'ordinary' and standard practice. For example, implantable cardiac defibrillators are now common treatment for heart disease, with a growing number implanted in patients aged 80 and above. Patients receiving the defibrillators may have their lives extended, but in exchange they must suffer the painful jolts delivered in response to cardiac failure. Similarly, patients suffering from liver cancer at the end of life are given the opportunity to wait for a donation, though they can also opt for high-risk donor organs or livers from donors with Hepatitis B or C. Surgery is now recommended by physicians because they are covered by Medicare, having been recognized as successfully extending life. And yet, doctors and patients continue to struggle with the quality and quantity of life post-intervention.

These questions of exchanging the quantity of life for the quality of life echo throughout the book, as Kaufman examines the questions and choices faced by

patients and doctors at the end of life. The availability of treatment and the possibility of extra years of life place into sharp focus the question of impending death. Different families navigate the pressures of aging differently. Some patients refuse assistance from their children but accept it from other kin, while others expect their children to donate to them or support them at the end of life. In the face of such impossible choices, the issues of an accurate prognosis when the timing of death remains elusive and the increasing pressure of family obligations have become part of the contemporary landscape of dying.

The machinery of the health-care system in the United States is examined with a careful and meticulous eye. Little attention has been given to the ‘drivers’ of health care, namely the influences of EBM and insurance reimbursement. On their own these drivers are benevolent, but combined, Kaufman argues that they lead to interventions that are seen as necessary at the end of life. Physicians caught in the machinery feel helpless and can no longer advise palliation; likewise, patients and their families face impossible dilemmas between life and death that make intervention an easy choice.

And yet, although Kaufman hints at negative health outcomes, most of the cases she presents seem to end well. Patients live happy, longer lives post-intervention, making the ethical underpinnings of the analysis difficult to grasp. Hope and benevolence remain possible. Among Kaufman’s contemporaries examining the same issues in other health landscapes, these issues are placed in sharper relief. Sherine Hamdy (2012) evaluates the intersection of organ donation, religion, politics and economy in Egypt. In countries where the health landscape is more uneven, health outcomes are not assured, payment is difficult, religious perspectives complicate treatment, the question of extending life is even more fraught, and negative outcomes are a real possibility.

These problems can also be found in the American health system. Kaufman illustrates the link between treatment reimbursement and standardized medicine, but in doing so she ignores the huge percentage of the US population that remain uninsured and thus face starker problems at the end of life. Moreover, the approach is strictly secular: spiritual beliefs at the end of life are rarely discussed.

Kaufman delivers a provocative argument, and students examining medical anthropology, geography or sociology will benefit from the book. Among the growing body of work in the anthropology of dying, Kaufman makes an important contribution to the political economy of treatment. *Ordinary medicine* provides a valuable

Book reviews

counterpoint in the literature, arguing that while money can provide the option to delay death, it doesn't guarantee 'a good death'.

REFERENCE

Hamdy, S. 2012. *Our bodies belong to God: organ transplants, Islam, and the struggle for human dignity*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

ELISABETH FELTAOUS

Holder of an MSc in Medical Anthropology from the University of Oxford. c/o School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, 51 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6PE, UK

EMILY MARTIN, *The meaning of money in China and the United States*, Chicago: Hau Books, 2015 [1986], xiii, 160 pp.

The meaning of money in China and the United States is the first publication in a collaboration between Hau Books and the Morgan Lecture series at the University of Rochester. This manuscript, which was originally delivered by Emily Martin over the course of four lectures in 1986, is a valuable (re)addition to the literature for those studying value in China, the United States, or elsewhere. Fitting with the mission of Hau Books, Martin develops a theoretical argument about how and why money has been used differently in these two contexts and does so with rich ethnographic detail. The volume is also enriched by over thirty photographs (though exclusively in the first half of the book dealing with China and Taiwan). Although this is the first time that the four lectures have been published together in a single manuscript, the main thrust of her argument has been influential in the discipline, not least through its extension in Parry and Bloch's theory of the two transactional orders of money (1989: 28-9). The introduction, written by Martin herself, and the afterword, written by Sidney Mintz and Jane Guyer, help to place the work historically and theoretically within the discipline and also provide a forward-looking gaze. Here, I hope to show how the arguments that Martin has made, especially about money in the United States today, may be developed further by looking at the work of philosopher Charles Eisenstein, coincidentally referenced by Guyer as part of 'current popular efforts to "relearn gift culture"' (2012: 501).

Martin's primary argument is that there are two paradoxes that emerge from the use of money and that these play out differently in the United States and China. While in China a paradox relating to the socially integrating effects of money appeared to be prevalent at the time of writing (i.e. 1986), in the United States a second paradox linked to social disintegration appeared more salient. Martin's writing, as highlighted by both herself and Guyer, is heavily influenced by Marx and Polanyi, though she makes a conscious effort to avoid artificial distinctions between materialism and symbolism, seeing the two as equally important for understanding the complexity of reality and preferring to 'look for the traces of mind in matter' to help overcome this distinction (7). While betraying influences of classic economic anthropology, including the debate between symbolism and materialism, these lectures were delivered in the same year (1986) that *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (1986) was published and are a fine example of the same. Unlike many others, according to Marcus and Fisher, who make only implicit comparisons or marginal comments (1999 [1986]: 111), Martin clearly sets out her critical stance in the first lecture, referencing Morgan as an inspirational pioneer of this approach (9). She continues to develop her argument by means of direct comparison, first by looking at money and value, then spirits and currency in China, before mirroring this with an exploration of money and value, and of spirit and prosperity, in the United States.

The first paradox presented by Martin details how money as a means of facilitating exchanges is seen to create webs of both interaction *and* social freedom. Martin makes a clear and convincing argument about money and value in China using this paradox as a central theme. She details rotating credit societies, bridewealth and pigs as specific examples highlighting the socially embedded logic of both exchange and accumulation that tie people together, yet that also give them access to have personal autonomy and/or protection from the extractive power of more dominant classes. For Martin these specific forms of exchange, which centre around kinship and community, are seen to keep 'the disintegrating potential of money in check' (14). This finding echoes that of Polanyi, who argued that 'man's economy, as a rule, is submerged in his social relationships' (2001: 48). Martin also identifies the existence of conversions between spheres of exchange as marked by different currencies – also apparent in the case of spirit money – which she suggests may be another element that helps to keep money's potential for abstraction in check (69). The Chinese view of capitalist accumulation of wealth was also seen to include inherent risk with the

potential for social losses, with greedy gods that could easily take away even more wealth than they had bestowed (77) and architecture whose potential for being influenced by geomancy mirrored the risks and rewards in farming and market exchange (79). As she concludes at the end of her second lecture on China, ‘the value that money measures is concrete, time-worn, messily embodied, and socially embedded’ (82).

Conversely, in the United States, Martin argues that money primarily disintegrates, paradoxically producing both ‘greyness, confusion and feelings of moral uncertainty’ *and* intense desire for the accumulation of more money (83-4). She makes this point by briefly tracing the history of Western capitalism and the development of what Polanyi called the ‘self-regulating market’ independently setting prices and interest rates (89). She goes on to highlight three related processes that have increased ‘the dominion of money or models of money making over all else’ (90). Using Marx’s terminology of ‘general illumination’ for the extension of both market principles and market models into other domains of life (91), Martin describes the use of industrial production metaphors for the female body and proposals for selling body parts to illustrate these first two processes respectively. In a third related process, money is also associated with infinite accumulation through exchange-value (101; a notion developed in more detail by Sahlins 1974), leading to profit-seeking behaviour that can be harmful to others. Martin describes how the logic of money and potentially infinite accumulation has been adopted by the prosperity movement in the Methodist Church, and how this reflects capitalist logics of accumulation and the flow of money, yet she does not similarly consider the social bonds that could be created by participation in these ministries. In other words, while the social embeddedness of exchange in Taiwan is convincingly argued, its disembodied nature in the United States is not as clear. Parry and Bloch, in their development of the notion of two transactional orders, cite Martin’s lectures as a source of inspiration for highlighting the symbolic role of money, but they go further by theorizing a distinction between a short-term market-based transactional order and a long-term transactional order of social reproduction. In capitalist ideology, they argue, there has been a unique ‘conceptual revolution’ so that ‘the values of the short-term order have become elaborated into a theory of long-term reproduction’ (1989: 29); thus, the logic of exchange and accumulation continues to be social, but corresponds to a different set

of (capitalist) values. Martin, alternatively, sees the struggle in the United States to be the result of a clash between moral and economic life (108).

Although Martin's argument about the disintegrating effects of money in the United States is largely convincing and captures various elements that could have caused this shift from a (presumed) prior state of being embedded within and controlled by socially mediated forms of exchange, it is perhaps less developed in explaining the mechanism behind the processes of 'general illumination' and infinite accumulation. Martin does mention interest and usury at various points throughout the ethnography of China and the United States and hints at their importance, at least symbolically, but she does not clearly locate this as central to the processes of the expansion of the monetary realm. The philosopher Charles Eisenstein provides a simple explanation that brings clarity to the distinction Martin makes between the embedded uses of money in Chinese society and its seemingly disembedded use in the United States. Interest-bearing money, Eisenstein argues, is the source of many of the ills that Martin describes: 'The imperative of perpetual growth implicit in interest-based money is what drives the relentless conversion of life, world, and spirit into money,' (2011: 77). In this view, the increasing commoditization of various spheres of life is neither intrinsic to money itself, nor an outcome of the presumed lack of social embeddedness, but rather a property of a monetary system that requires a continual return on investment. This proposal seems to explain neatly the situation described by Martin and should be further explored, or at least considered, in anthropological studies of money.

REFERENCES

- Eisenstein, Charles 2011. *Sacred economics: money, gift and society in the age of transition*, Berkeley, CA: Evolver Editions.
- Guyer, Jane I. 2012. Obligation, binding, debt and responsibility: provocations about temporality from two new sources, *Social Anthropology Special Issue: The Debt Issue* 20(4), 491–501.
- Marcus, George, and Michael Fischer 1999 [1986]. *Anthropology as cultural critique: an experimental movement in the human sciences*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Book reviews

Parry, Jonathan, and Maurice Bloch 1989. Introduction: money and the morality of exchange, in Jonathan Parry and Maurice Bloch (eds.), *Money and the morality of exchange*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Polanyi, Karl 2001. *The great transformation: the political and economic origins of our time*, Boston: Beacon Press.

Sahlins, Marshall 1974. *Stone age economics*, London: Tavistock Publications.

RYAN ALISON FOLEY

DPhil candidate, School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, 51 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6PE, UK.

BORIS PETRIC, *Where are our sheep? Kyrgyzstan, a global political arena*, New York and Oxford: Berghahn 2015, xvi, 170 pp. ISBN 9781782387831.

What role does post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan play within the new order of globalization characterized by a major increase in worldwide exchanges and the transnationalization of power? In his latest publication, *Where are our sheep? Kyrgyzstan, a global political arena*,” social anthropologist Boris Petrić provides an elaborate and in-depth account of the contemporary political regime in Kyrgyzstan, thereby debunking a number of clichés of Kyrgyz identity present in the Western imagination. Through a combination of personal observations and careful, critical analysis, he portrays an increasingly frequent occurrence in the contemporary world – the encounter between newly emerging or reforming states and a body of actors participating in social change. Petrić contributes to the study of major trends in globalization and its multitude of flows by drawing an incredibly detailed account of numerous actors that have come to bear upon Kyrgyzstan's fate and *that* influence the country's future. Kyrgyzstan is thus represented as an arena of international rivalries *between* international organizations, such as the UN, the IMF, WTO or the World Bank; regional organizations, such as the EU or the OSCE; major national powers *like* China, Russia and the United States; large international foundations; and an infinite number of NGOs and aid agencies, *all being* pitted against each other *and* competing in their desire to shape and guide Kyrgyzstan's history. Democratization, *the* propagation of civil society and economic liberalization are the main tenets of these ‘good governance experts’ who *have* initiated an unprecedented transformation of

Kyrgyz identity. Petrić implicitly paints a theory of globalization as neither a natural nor *an* inevitable occurrence, but a carefully crafted process *that* rests in *the* hands of Western or Western-influenced powers.

The author writes an account of *the* unparalleled transformation of living conditions for much of the Kyrgyz population, which ensued upon the fall of the USSR and Kyrgyzstan opening its borders. An exodus of the Kyrgyz European population and subsequent dramatic demographic changes, the collapse of production and the rise of new business elites emerging from trade and tourism as new sectors of the economy, an increasing dependence on remittances and international aid, *the* flight of *increasing* numbers of rural poor to growing urban centres and proliferating international labour are but a few of these extensive changes and certainly do not complete the list. Perhaps the greatest change occurred in Kyrgyzstan's principal industry, sheep-breeding, which was decimated by reforms suggested by international institutions providing assistance. Through this account, Petrić criticizes the international community for creating *the* conditions for its own existence in Kyrgyzstan by *making* the country dependent on its provisions. *One* theme, only touched upon in this work, which I hope Petrić will elaborate on in future publications is Kyrgyz agency.

Although emphasizing that globalization plays *itself* out in the *interface* between local and global forces, there is little attempt to account for Kyrgyz agency. In this book, the author describes numerous encounters, often amusing and ridiculous, as well as tragic and shocking, between the local population and the *usually* well-meaning foreigners who came to reform them. Rarely, however, are the Kyrgyz represented as active agents in navigating *their* present-day circumstances. It is important, in my *view*, to present Kyrgyz people not as victims of globalization, but as agents in its construction, constitution and transformation. Globalization is a concept, not a fact, and whether or not it is mythical or true is a collective evaluative judgement that changes through time and space. This is a political issue *with* regard to how anthropologists write history and from whose perspective.

SARA BENČEKović

Student for MPhil in Social Anthropology in the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, University of Oxford. E-mail: sara.bencekovic@anthro.ox.ac.uk; St. Catherine's College, Manor Road, Oxford OX1 3UJ.

LAURA POUNTNEY and **TOMISLAV MARIĆ**, *Introducing Anthropology: What Makes Us Human?* Cambridge: Polity Press 2015, 330 pp. ISBN 9780745699783.

As the title suggests, *Introducing Anthropology: What Makes Us Human?* is an introductory textbook composed of fourteen chapters presenting an engaging mixture of selected core issues of anthropological enquiry such as ‘personhood’, ‘identity’, ‘ways of engaging with nature’ and ‘gender’, together with various subfields of the discipline and the contemporary challenges that anthropologists face. Authors Laura Pountney, Senior Examiner and Lecturer in Anthropology at Colchester Sixth Form College, and Tomislav Marić, Lecturer in Anthropology at Heston Community School (both in the UK), effectively describe their professional experience of introducing anthropological knowledge at the pre-university level. With A-level students and teachers in mind, this experience culminates in an informative yet approachable introduction to the field for budding social and cultural anthropologists.

Instead of aiming to provide a comprehensive overview of the field, the authors present a selection of appealing topics ranging from body modification techniques (43), animal rights (118), rites of passage (171) and cyborg theory (220) to public health (296) and explore them in a lucid and engaging way. What makes the textbook even more captivating, apart from its suitably chosen topics, is its focus on active classroom engagement and independent exploration, prompted through the numerous lively activities, discussion points and ideas for personal investigation that accompany every chapter. The text also serves as an invaluable beginner’s guide to the often intimidating language of anthropological theory and practice, providing intuitively organized glossaries containing accessible definitions of high-level concepts.

The authors begin their publication by discussing a question that is central to the anthropological discipline: ‘What makes us human beings different from all other species?’ (3). The first out of fourteen chapters, entitled ‘What Makes Us Humans’, explains how early hominids diverged from other primates and examines some of the important physical changes that occurred, such as opposable thumbs. The chapter also discusses the intimate connections between human cultural and physical evolution. While this introductory chapter provides a comprehensive survey of fundamental concepts in evolutionary anthropology, all the other chapters focus almost exclusively on the concerns and perspectives of cultural and social anthropology. As such, the book strongly adheres most closely to the British school of social anthropology, and

less on the four-field approach common in the United States.

The remaining chapters explore different aspects of human culture, from different culturally constructed ideas about what it means to be a male or a female and what is the difference between anthropocentric and biocentric view of animals to how people use the body to express their identity. Classical anthropological themes are accompanied with newer topics, providing the student with an understanding of ritual processes, witchcraft and kinship as much as about new forms of communication through digital technologies, globalization and tourism. Contemporary anthropological research and acknowledgement of the contributions of classical anthropology are skilfully intertwined to provide a cursory overview of the field's past and present. The central position of ethnographic research in social and cultural anthropology is reflected in the structure of the book, which includes many summaries of noteworthy ethnographic studies, as well as in the chapter dedicated to research methods.

The closing chapter, 'Applied Anthropology', explores what anthropologists do with their knowledge and experience of fieldwork and how they use their skills beyond academia. While the first part discusses the theoretical aspects of applied anthropology and advocacy, the second part consists of interviews conducted by the authors with different anthropologists around the world who apply their anthropological knowledge in different fields. Assuming that the book has managed to achieve its goal and that its readers have begun to consider pursuing a degree in anthropology, dedicating the final pages of the book to a discussion of the professional applications of anthropological knowledge and of the job prospects for those trained in the field undoubtedly finds a suitable place in this disciplinary primer.

Overall, *Introducing Anthropology: What Makes Us Human?* presents existing anthropological material in a way that is accessible to a wider student audience. The book does not reach the depths of many undergraduate textbooks, but rather contains selected topics which may be of interest and explores them in an introductory manner. Because of its clarity and approachability, the book will be a useful companion to introductory courses to anthropology at both university and pre-university level, as well as to anyone who is new to the subject.

JOHANA MUSALKOVA

DPhil candidate, School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, 51 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6PE, UK

MICHAEL TAUSSIG, *The corn wolf*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2015, 200 pp.

The corn wolf by Michael Taussig is a work which forecloses its reviewers from the outset. One can hardly extract its arguments and lay them down in a familiar format without succumbing to precisely the sort of academic ‘agribusiness’ writing that Taussig roundly deplors; writing which ‘knows no wonder’ (5), beating into submission the chaotic multiplicity of meanings that the eponymous corn wolf, in a nod to Wittgenstein, represents. This is a particularly refreshing, if frustrating, sentiment for the weary graduate reader with whom Taussig begins his title essay. That Taussig is variously hailed as a rock star and a radical is testament to his success amongst a demographic who arrive at university as dreamers and storytellers and leave as newly qualified custodians of an orthodox, and no less seductive, *knowledge*. For the ethnographer, this loss is a particularly poignant one, as the magic of fieldwork is precisely its quality of unknowingness.

In an effort to salvage this sensuous and elusive quality, Taussig adopts a now infamous style of mimesis which he terms Nervous System Writing (NSW). A surreal, imagistic collage of theories and stories, Taussig’s NSW attends to the sensual and the bizarre, unravelling categories of knowledge and revealing ‘how strange is the known’ (6). This is not a work of classifications; here is a work of delightful living contrasts, conveyed in a juxtaposition of conversational intimacy and disoriented, woozy estrangement: ‘He really lets his guard down, our old wolf, our would-be wolf, when he goes further in imploring us to love the strange, be patient with it, let it get into you, so to speak, and then you will learn what love is – and that will be how the strange rewards you’ (6).

This style of writing is indeed, at times, wondrous, and it transcends mere stylistic analogy. The attention to what is formless, elusive and pre-rational finds its most brilliant incarnation in Taussig’s ‘Humming’ as ‘alphabet soup, wetlands, where all manner of life forms thrive’ (34), citing an unlikely and enjoyable range of examples. From Winnie-the-Pooh’s exclamation of ‘Oh help!’ to the cries of the Trobriand gardener, the hum always anticipates a punctuation; it is a ‘dialectic at a standstill’ (Benjamin, quoted in Taussig p. 35). This particular conceit recalls Michel Serres’s *la belle noiseuse* (1995), the noisy multiplicity at the pre-phenomenological genesis of our understanding which we can only apprehend blindly, without reason or evidence. Noise here becomes method, and for Taussig humming proposes a kind of deontology

which anticipates all possibilities and bears implications for one's role as an ethnographer. We are offered a holy trinity in which subject matter, written mimesis and epistemological position are mutually constitutive. It is an interesting and masterful essay, bound together with a motif of noise-as-epistemology that has been fruitfully explored by philosophers, but has not yet received much anthropological attention.

However, the success of this model is rather patchy elsewhere in this collection. Taussig's writing owes a clear debt to modernist aesthetics – one recalls Woolf's dictum to 'record the atoms as they fall' (1923/2003: 150) – and many of the same charges of navel-gazing and insularity that have been levelled at the latter might also be addressed to the former. As Martin Jay once remarked, 'I can't remember another non-autobiography in which the pronoun "I" appears so frequently as it does in your books' (1994: 163). The spurious premises of the Jay–Taussig falling out, in which poet and exegete were set up as arch-rivals, makes one especially unwilling to adopt the role of the aesthetic disciplinarian, but there is certainly truth in Jay's statement. Taussig records sensations and ideas with a self-perpetuating solipsism that quickly wears thin. Consider the following, taken from 'Animism and the philosophy of everyday life':

Those stripes of the zebra dazzle me. The stripes are things in themselves that have come alive. It is impossible to domesticate zebras and use them like horses, Thomas tells me as we ride along. Might that have something to do with those dazzling stripes? I wonder, and then I think of the stripes on Genet's convicts in the opening pages of *The Thief's Journal*. (13)

The irony of such a passage in the context of animism is that it never quite manages to move outside itself, never quite harnesses the liveliness of the world outside Taussig. The Beat influence is evident far beyond the frequent references to Burroughs; many of these whimsical, romantic encounters smack unmistakably of Kerouac and Co. heading out for an adventure.

But what of the informant in such a work? Against this backdrop of sensation, ghostly characters slide in and out of view, often making little more of an impression than as a miscellany of names: 'I am cycling through the Tiergarten in Berlin behind Brettia and followed by Thomas' (12). In longer pieces, such as 'Two weeks in

Palestine', we find some brief but insightful interviews between Taussig and people living under occupation, but the piece is largely centred around sensual descriptions of the space ('gazelles! I cannot believe my ears' [124]) and theoretical musings which are rightly, and gratifyingly, critical of the role of the Western anthropologist in such a context. However, at points I am left with the uncomfortable feeling that the real stuff of sociality is barely hinted at, and even that social relations do not occur without Taussig's presence forging them. Take, for instance:

the forty-year-old man I met in the subterranean market in Hebron selling spices at the same stall all his life and who has never seen the sea, holding my arm, eyes burning, when I tell him I am from Sydney. Although it is quite close, he has never seen the sea because he doesn't have a permit to travel the necessary roads. (114)

What we gain in terms of style we lose in our understanding of the social. But this is perhaps an uncharitable criticism given that the collection is largely not an ethnographic work. Most essays take the form of extended aphorisms. 'The go slow party' reads like a situationist manifesto, outlining a general strike in pursuit of an 'aesthetic and magical' (149) new practice of time. Beautifully written, it describes this temporal revolution as 'a butterfly on a hot summer's day. It speeds up and slows right down to alight on something interesting or beautiful, making it more beautiful' (149). At other points informal advice is offered, seemingly with the graduate student in mind, as to how to conduct fieldwork. 'Excelente zona social' ends with an exaltation of the field notebook and a 'plea for following its furtive forms and mix of private and public' (76).

It might, then, be more accurate to say that this is an ethnography of the ethnographer and his methods. Taussig attests to this in his final essay, 'Don Miguel', which bemoans the fact that 'the famous "method" of participant-observation tends to be weighted toward the observation end of things and, what's more, tends not, according to the profession, to allow much by way of self-observation' (194). However, by the end of his fieldwork in Colombia, Taussig claims, he and his compatriot had 'become objects in our own story' (195). There are the fragments of a useful point in here; it is the anthropologist's burden that their object of study is always inevitably and irrevocably altered by their presence. But this point is never quite hammered home. It is telling that the entry reading 'Death of the author' (158)

Book reviews

in the 'Iconoclasm Dictionary' does very little to address the question; instead, it is a bizarre detour into Foucault's sexuality. The overriding sense is that the chief subject of this collection is inescapably Taussig himself, to whom other people, animals and things play only an attendant role.

The corn wolf is an exhilarating example of the ethnographic method Taussig has devoted much of his career to refining, but its usefulness to anthropology as an academic discipline is perhaps less clear. At times, one wonders if he has written the very ground from beneath his feet.

REFERENCES

- Jay, M. 1994. Martin Jay replies to Michael Taussig and Paul Stoller, *Visual Anthropology Review* 10/1, 163-4.
- Serres, M. 1995. *Genesis*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Woolf, V. 2003 [1923]. *The common reader*, London: Random House.

ISOBEL GIBBIN

Postgraduate student in social and cultural anthropology at University College London, 14 Taviton Street, London, WC1H 0BW; isobel.gibbin.15@ucl.ac.uk

MARISA WILSON, *Everyday moral economies: food, politics and scale in Cuba*, Chichester etc.: Wiley Blackwell 2014, xxvi, 232 pp.

Marisa Wilson's *Everyday Moral Economies* provides a timely, readable and clearly argued ethnography on the economic realities of life in contemporary Cuba, seen through the perspective of food provisioning, consumption and production. As Wilson argues, as a state run along socialist principles for over fifty years and seemingly cut off from international trade until the recent development of tourism, Cuba is an interesting case for studying the ways in which its citizens deal with the seemingly conflictual realities of the socialist versus global markets in everyday experience. Wilson calls these 'Leviathans', powerful structures that stretch from the micro to the macro level and which deeply influence human behaviour (her definition is inspired by Latour and Callon, amongst others).

Her main aim is to consider ‘how people in rural Cuba rationalize the practicalities of living in this contradictory moral and political economic world’ (xii), using food as the lens through which to study how ‘commodified and non-commodified provisioning processes are morally embedded’ (21), to reveal ‘ideal principles of justice and value in Cuba and uncovering how such principles are adopted or counteracted by particular people in the difficult...conditions of their everyday lives’ (75). In the socialist state of Cuba, food is a basic right to which citizens should have adequate access through the state. However, the reality in Cuba is that state channels rarely provide adequate nourishment, so Cubans must find alternative means of food sourcing in the informal economy, while justifying them as ‘moral’ or acceptable in accordance with Cuban socialist principles, such as struggle (*luchar*), hard work, self-sacrifice and familial and national solidarity.

In keeping with her ethnographic approach, she introduces her ideas in Chapter 1 through a fieldwork experience which demonstrates Cuban food realities (in this case, substandard pizza), the two-currency system and issues of moral and political economies, topics that are to reappear throughout the work. She also skilfully explains her ‘positioning’ as a field researcher, as the study of food ensures that the ethnographer is ‘committed in the body’ (Jenkins 1994, as quoted by Wilson). The author also makes it clear that she is working both as an anthropologist and a geographer (considering this is published as part of a Royal Geographical Society series, this is not surprising), in particular using her ethnographic approach to respond to a ‘need voiced in geography for empirical evidence to unravel the political potentialities of everyday spaces’ (11).

In a subject such as this, it is easy to fall into the trap of either idealizing or denigrating the socialist or capitalist systems, but Wilson manages to avoid this by not critiquing this dichotomization, and also remaining an impartial observer. As she perceptively points out, in her field site of Tuta there is ‘a multiplicity of capitalisms ... and socialisms with political potentialities that are not captured by stark binaries between state and market’ (13).

Chapter 2 provides an excellent discussion and description of Cuban nationalism, introducing us to concepts that will be essential for understanding contemporary national ideologies that are the basis for moral values today, such as anti-imperialism (first against Spain, and then the USA), and how this has developed the ideal of struggle (*la lucha*). Chapters 3 and 4 provide an excellent ethnography of the day-to-

day perceptions of Cubans under study to their interactions in the realm of food, be it in unofficial and illegal exchanges, legitimate relations with the state, or through state-legitimised means which may seem to conflict with the apparent socialist ideal, such as farmer's markets. Her account of the complex mentalities surrounding foods at an individual level is fascinating, particularly how national ideals are applied in situations that frequently contradict the very foundations of the state, for example, applying the national ideal of being a *luchador* (fighter) to the daily struggle to find food when the state is inefficient, or the use of irony in these conditions to criticize the state while simultaneously defending Cuban socialism.

Chapter 5 reveals how shifts to self-employment have changed individual means of food provisioning, and how these lead to re-evaluations of relationships and roles within the local and state systems. Chapter 6 is dedicated to the production side, considering the moral situation of small farmers within the socialist system, as well as providing an overview of the Cuban agricultural system.

There is no dedicated literature review, and considering the huge selection of (at times, seemingly disparate) authors, this would have been challenging. Instead, Wilson continually backs up her statements and ethnographic experiences with regular quotations from a variety of academic sources. While on the whole the literature is thus well integrated with Wilson's own ethnography and personal opinions, at times it felt as if they were drowning out the author's own capacity to make valuable conclusions from her own work. This sometimes creates the impression that she is showing off how extensively she has read around the subject, or is cherry-picking these ideas without considering their context. Wilson should instead have more confidence in stating her own views, rather than perpetually finding back-up quotes in (occasionally obscure) published literature. At genuinely enjoyable moments in the ethnographic chapters, the inclusion of references in the text jarred with her experiential approach, suggesting that dedicating a separate chapter to these authors might have been beneficial for the sake of flow and clarity.

Despite this, the book is an enjoyable and interesting read for anthropologists and geographers interested in food, agriculture, nationalism, economic systems and their moralities. I particularly enjoyed her descriptions of how nationalist ideals are applied and continually embedded in everyday life. Having combined the study of both nationalism and food in my own research, I enjoyed seeing the same approach in a new context. *Everyday moral economies* contributes to a growing literature on how

Book reviews

nationalisms are actually lived, by considering the complex interactions of individuals with the state at both the local and national levels.

REFERENCE

Jenkins, Timothy 1994. Fieldwork and the perception of everyday life, *Man* (N.S.) 29(2), 433-55.

VENETIA CONGDON

Holder of a doctorate and Postdoctoral Research Associate, School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, 51 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6PE, UK; vcongdon@gmail.com

DAVID ZEITLYN and **ROGER JUST**, *Excursions in realist anthropology: a merological approach*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2014, x, 156 pp. ISBN 9781443864039.

Based on an understanding of the world which constrains but does not determine us, a world we understand through our observations and actions, but which nevertheless exists independently of social construction, *Excursions in realist anthropology* asks: ‘what if we accept our limitations and start thinking seriously and positively about partial views and incompleteness?’ (5) This is a symptomatic question for this intellectually provocative book, which challenges readers to investigate the essence of contemporary anthropology, how it should be practised and theorized, where the discipline is now and where it should or could be heading. This gripping investigation of the fragmentary nature of our enterprise sheds light on the challenges, problems and limits of our methodological and theoretical toolkits, and encourages us to question, rethink, reformulate, reshape and improve them. It should be a seminal text.

Today, strong currents aim to pull anthropologists towards extreme postmodernist, (de-)constructivist subjective viewpoints. These paradigms champion complete context dependency and inundate realism and empiricism with all-encompassing social construction. Zeitlyn and Just provide us with an alternative option. As a technique based on fieldwork, their approach provides an interface between realist and relativist objectives by opposing both absolute positivism and the view of universal social construction.

Stimulated by their own ethnographic experiences in conducting fieldwork in Australia, Cameroon and Greece, and inspired by a wide range of theories, the book's nine chapters, three of which take the form of excursions, provide the reader with thoughtful reflections on a broad variety of topics, offering inspiration for further inquiries. The six previously published articles on which the book is based are still clearly recognizable. The chapters stand on their own and can be read independently. What weaves them into a coherent, interrelated text are philosophically inspired contemplations on the nature of anthropological research and the specificities of its products.

Drawing mainly on philosophy, the authors examine forms of understanding, investigating, knowing and believing encountered both by anthropologists and their interlocutors. Incompleteness is presented as a strength, which allows for overlapping and complementary accounts. In calling for a reflexive, nuanced understanding of reality, the authors recognize and respect the complexity of social life. The sophisticated realism they adhere to is bound neither by the requirements of exhaustiveness and certainty, nor by the pressure to resolve or conceal ambiguity. On the contrary, they include and readily discuss any equivocality that arises. Zeitlyn and Just analyse the possibilities of cultural translation and cross-cultural understanding as a dialectic and heuristic exercise, thus challenging the radical translation problem. Additionally, they offer a unique and insightful critique of Bourdieu's theory of practice and probe questions of culture. The authors also discuss various forms of realism and relativism applied by anthropologists when investigating 'ways of living in the world and modes of attending to the world' (6).

The book convinces with clarity of expression; highly accessible writing meets multi-layered, complex, provocative content. But what is novel about this sharp, inspiring account when compared with other works? Highlighting partiality and incompleteness is nothing new in anthropology: indeed, ever since the ontological turn of the 1980s, when postmodern scholars voiced their criticism in the *Writing culture* collection of essays edited by Clifford and Marcus (1986), it has become a *modus operandi* in the discipline. It is not the ideas in themselves that are new, but rather their combination, their interweaving into a unique merological approach connecting a biased and subjective standpoint with a realist view of the world. Moreover, this account radically strips anthropology of the illusion of ever being unproblematic and serves as a timely advocate not only for the deliberate emphasis on

partiality, but also for its reduction. Consequently, inevitable incompleteness does not absolve researchers from their obligation of due diligence. The value added by this book lies in the evidence provided. Zeitlyn and Just render visible the presuppositions and assumptions that accompany our work and call on us to develop ways of limiting them, thus 'avoiding the extreme claims either that the problems are insurmountable or that they do not exist' (111).

However, this is not a book in which readers should look for concrete, practical tips. The authors offer us an approach that incorporates their understanding of anthropology into a methodological framework, an overall attitude, but no explicit methods. In fact, some lines of argument are merely touched upon without being investigated further. Zeitlyn and Just do not attempt to fill gaps where currently they have no stuffing and so live up to the partiality they champion. However, through their unusually honest account of their ethnographic experiences, they unmask stereotypes connected to fieldwork and offer readers lessons to remember, such as how Zeitlyn dealt with his difficulties in believing respondents' statements that cocks could lay eggs and Just that boats were women. They provide readers with critical ideas, possible toolkits with which to construct their own product. The book should thus be kept as a companion, a questioning partner in our anthropological work.

Additionally, the authors are very critical of their colleagues, especially post-modern theorists and researchers like Callon, Behar or Spivak. These sharp discussions are an exciting read, and the often well-deserved criticism encourages readers to form an opinion.

If the challenging questions that this book poses inspire debates about a possible future for anthropology, I am certain they will stimulate our enquiries about how we can best understand and embrace our 'otherness' (122) and accept 'discomfort and elements of bad faith' (126). The book offers a different path on which to continue what anthropologists do best: in-depth, socio-culturally sensitive research, aimed at an understanding of 'how different social groups around the planet live and understand their lives' (1). By being 'realist without assuming a single definitive or synoptic overview' (3), the book is in fact a 'manifesto for a "realist" anthropology, for the militants occupying the middle ground' (10).

Book reviews

REFERENCE

Clifford, James, and George Marcus 1986. *Writing culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography*, Berkeley and London: University of California Press.

LUISA SCHNEIDER

Doctoral candidate, School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, University of Oxford. Contact: luisa.schneider@spc.ox.ac.uk; St. Peter's College, New Inn Hall Street, OX1 2DL, Oxford.