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REGNA DARNELL and FREDRIC W. GLEACH (eds.), *Anthropologists and their traditions across national borders*, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2014, xi, 279 pp. ISBN 9780803253360.

Anthropologists and their traditions across national borders is an eclectic collection of essays on the history of anthropology. Ostensibly integrated around ‘how anthropologists’ careers have intersected across professional generations and allowed them to navigate national boundaries and national traditions’ (ix), the reader will find it difficult to connect an account of Berthold Laufer’s early anthropological expedition to China under Boas’ auspices (Kendall), an appraisal of A.M. Hocart’s life and works (Laughlin), a critical essay on the parallels between Malinowski’s functionalism and the doctrine of indirect rule (Lamont), an institutional history of Radcliffe-Brown’s administrative practice in Cape Town and Sydney (Campbell), an intriguing story of the succession to S.F. Nadel’s chair of anthropology at the Australian National University (Gray and Munro), three essays in praise of Lévi-Strauss’s legacy (Darnell, Rosman and Rubel, and Asch), an application of Sahlins’ theories of history to two nineteenth-century massacres in the United States (Rodseth), and a reflexive essay on anthropology as oral tradition (Flynn). Although the collection is eclectic, each chapter stands as an interesting addition to the wider project of the *Histories of Anthropology Annual* series, of which this is the eighth volume.

The interest of this volume is twofold. On the one hand, it is an invaluable source of information on non-canonical trends in the anthropological tradition(s), whether or not one concurs with the generally laudatory tone (with the exception of Lamont’s critical essay on Malinowski). Laughlin, to give one example, makes a great summary of Hocart’s contributions to anthropology, showcasing how his views on myth, ritual, methodology and political organization could be seen to anticipate the works of Malinowski and Lévi-Strauss, among others. Asch, for his part, delves into Lévi-Strauss’s work on kinship to find evidence, *contra* the view of his works as being ahistorically rigid, that he engaged with issues in universal history, such as the origins of inequality and the origins of agriculture. Likewise, one may cite Rodseth’s in-depth engagement with Sahlins’ arguments in *Apologies to Thucydides* as an exemplar of the kind of little explored yet refreshing intellectual genealogies traced by the volume.

On the other hand, the collection embodies the manifold ways in which a history of anthropology can be practised with relevance to contemporary anthropology. Lamont’s essay is a good example of critical scholarship committed to showing the insertion of anthropological theory in its wider historical context, by making a convincing case about the parallels between

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Malinowski's functionalism – 'an early example of academic branding' (78) if there ever was one – and his promotion of social anthropology as an ally of colonial administration. The more conventional historical writings on Laufer's early anthropological expedition in China (Kendall), or Radcliffe-Brown's ambitious projects as a university administrator (Campbell), or the corridor intrigues behind Nadel's succession (Gray and Munro) confer interesting lessons on the institutional settings within which anthropology was – and sometimes still is – practised. In so doing, such essays reflexively illuminate our own insertion in academic institutions which, as much as they may invoke a language of 'necessity' to impose certain reforms, seem largely contingent in light of the detailed histories presented in this collection.

In a further twist of reflexivity, Flynn's decision to publish an undergraduate essay on her university lecturers as storytellers invites us to reflect on the importance of orality in the transmission of anthropological knowledge, which tends to be overshadowed by the role of reading and writing in our pedagogical discourse. Furthermore, this essay acts as an interesting primary source for the historian of anthropology, implicitly broadening our outlook on the kinds of materials that are available to trace the discipline's intellectual and institutional legacy. Upon reading this essay one wonders what a history of the transmission of anthropological knowledge through a serious examination of undergraduate student essays would look like.

The main criticism one could address to this volume are its lack of coherence and its sometimes overly deferential tone to past theorists, as their lesser known writings become drawn into a process of canonization that may obscure their insertion into wider intellectual and institutional trends. On their own, however, both criticisms would be too harsh, considering the wider project in which this volume is situated, as well as the wealth of insights into the discipline's history provided by each chapter. This collection therefore acts as a series of interesting contributions to the history of anthropology, with some interesting implications for our contemporary practice. It is worth a look for anyone specializing in the history of anthropology, as well as any scholar or graduate student with an interest in exploring atypical avenues into the intellectual tradition of which s/he is becoming a part.

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ERNESTO DE MARTINO, *Magic: a theory from the south* (transl. Dorothy Louise Zinn), Chicago: Hau Books 2015, xvi, 204 pp. ISBN 9780990505099.

Ernesto de Martino's study of magic, ritual, lament, possession, the evil eye, fascination and tarantism in southern Italy draws innovatively from a range of intellectual sources. Although ethnology, philosophy and psychology, as well as literary theory and sources, make for an original and engaging framework, de Martino's work is little known outside his native Italy. This is a shame because his thought has much to offer. However, this new translation of his 1959 *Sud e magia* might be a step towards greater recognition of his work in the Anglophone world.

De Martino's study of ritual and magic is set within a larger context of historical exchange between enlightenment thought and vernacular practice in southern Italy. It aptly demonstrates that the dynamic between dominant and subaltern cultures is often one of complex interaction and tension between ways of knowing and engaging with the world. He shows little interest in the question of whether magic is rational or irrational, choosing instead to focus on how magic subverts dominant categories of truth and knowledge to present a meaningful alternative for being in the world. His theory of magic emerges from a series of field expeditions in the 1950s to the southern Italian province of Lucania (present-day Basilicata), a few hundred kilometres south of Rome, but an altogether different world. The ethnographic descriptions bring to mind Carlo Levi's sensitive portrait of southern Italian peasants in *Christ stopped at Eboli*. Like Levi, de Martino approaches his subjects without condescension; the result is not only an engaging piece of ethnography but also an original theory of magic, precariousness and truth that remains relevant today.

De Martino develops his theory in three parts. The first is an ethnographic documentation of vernacular magical techniques for dealing with anything from headaches to possession as they double and permutate from town to town in Lucania. The second part places these within their socio-economic context by relating magical practices to the day-to-day plight of poor peasants in the south. The final part provides a historical discussion of these practices in relation to hegemonic religious life, or Catholicism with a particular southern bent, as de Martino explains.

De Martino's ethnographic description is matter of fact and delivered with little initial commentary. By letting magic techniques and incantations stand by themselves within their ethnographic context, he restores a certain dignity to their practitioners at a time when Italy's politically sensitive 'Southern Question' was being hotly debated. By exploring subtle variations in technique and spells while drawing attention to the promiscuous intermingling of magic and Catholic thought, he weaves a convincing narrative of magic as neither irrational nor anachronistic but above all a timely way to engage with the here and now. It does so by introducing and

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navigating competing notions of truth and reality. Faced with extreme hardship, Lucanian villagers are kept in an emotionally distressing double bind: they are continually acted upon by an external world whose small accidents might turn into existential disasters, yet have few options for engaging with this world through conventional means. This toxic mix of precarity and powerlessness leads to what De Martino calls an essential loss of presence in the world, an alienation from one's surroundings and from oneself. It is no coincidence, remarks De Martino, that the fundamental theme in southern Italian magic is that of binding, a state of mental and physical paralysis connected to the experience of being acted upon by forces outside of one's grip.

In this dire situation, the constant repetition of magical rituals and sayings serves to introduce a ritualized horizon against which the existential risks individuals face can be inscribed in a meaningful representative universe. The extensive use of rituals and formulas creates their own self-referential world in which repetition establishes magical ways of knowing as truth. A rather different version of truth from the one forwarded by the Enlightenment, this representative horizon serves to de-historify the perils faced by Lucanians, thus allowing them "to be in history as if they were not in it" (95) The ideology of binding, omens, possession and exorcism that emerges through the field notes offers techniques for converting loss of presence into a 'meta-historical order' where personal risks can be inscribed in a larger narrative against which the re-integration of the person can take place. The Lucanian answer to 'the Southern Question' is a constant de-historicized and re-historicized gesture, allowing the otherwise immobile residents to transit between two very different truth claims about the world.

We can begin to see why the editors of *HAU* deem this a worthy addition to their roster of ethnographic publications. Beside the declared goal of developing an ethnographic theory of magic, de Martino's work also engages originally and deeply with the anthropological problem of incommensurability. This has a special place at *HAU*; at the inaugural issue of the *HAU* journal, editors Giovanni Da Col and David Graeber proposed incommensurability as the creative engine for ethnographic theory (da Col and Graeber 2011), in De Martino's work we see how this might work. The rituals of Lucanian magic become effective in the way that they subvert one version of reality by introducing a competing notion of truth and knowing. In this they can be seen as creative engagements with culture in the sense put forward by, for example, Roy Wagner (1981) and more recently by Martin Holbraad (2012). Indeed, by showing the ways in which these seemingly incommensurable worlds of 'low' magic and 'high' enlightened modernity can co-exist within the same moment should be an exciting contribution of de Martino's theory for any social scientist faced with situations where local customs grind against the truth claims of modernity, science, and capitalism.

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ROY DILLEY and THOMAS G. KIRSCH (eds.), *Regimes of ignorance: anthropological perspectives on the production and reproduction of non-knowledge*, New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books 2015, 215 pp. ISBN 978-1-78238-838-8 (hardback); 978-1-78238-839-5 (ebook).

What is ignorance? What role has ignorance played in cultures and societies? These deceptively simple questions have long preoccupied thinkers, writers and artists alike. Throughout Western history, from Plato to the present day, there has been a tendency to treat ignorance as the negation of knowledge, an obstacle to action and an undesirable human condition. The new volume *Regimes of Ignorance: Anthropological Perspectives on the Production and Reproduction of Non-Knowledge* has two main aims: to problematize the way in which ignorance and knowledge have been treated as antagonistic, and to turn ignorance from a residual category of knowledge into an autonomous object of study by itself. The editors of the volume are highly aware of the challenges that the study of ignorance might pose for contemporary scholarship, particularly for their discipline of anthropology. As they explain, until recently much of the anthropological work has been underpinned by the idea of ignorance as the 'absence of proper scientific knowledge', which has led anthropologists to attribute ignorance to the 'natives' (pp. 2-15). Against this background, the contributors to the volume re-think the ontological status of ignorance in anthropology, as well as the epistemology of research methods. The editors contend that any anthropological study of ignorance should pay attention to three overarching conceptualisations: *regimes of ignorance*, *reproduction of non-knowledge* and *ignorance as positivity*. The aim of these conceptualisations is to frame ignorance as an equal partner to knowledge. Like knowledge, ignorance can be seen as being produced through historically specific practices and mechanisms. In the same way, they both act within the world upon individuals, practices and

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ideas (pp. 20-23). Unfortunately, the editors only briefly explain how they have used sociological and philosophical theories of knowledge and ignorance by Robert Merton, Niklas Luhmann, Giorgio Agamben and Michel Foucault to develop these conceptualisations. Hence readers new to the study of ignorance or unfamiliar with sociological and philosophical scholarship may find the theorisation of these conceptualisations somewhat opaque. On a more positive note, the three conceptualisations are useful for guiding readers through the volume and present the chapters of the volume as a coherent whole.

Overall, the eight chapters are well written and accessible and offer vivid and detailed accounts of configurations of ignorance and knowledge across multiple sites of fieldwork. In Chapter 1 (pp. 31-49), Carlo Caduff analyses the role that ignorance plays in the contemporary discourse of emerging infectious diseases in the U.S.. Caduff argues that microbiologists have accepted and embraced their inevitable ignorance of the natural evolution of new viral strains. Caduff's analysis demonstrates that ignorance of viral evolution does not hinder scientific practices, but can become the basis and justification of its practices. In Chapter 2 (pp. 50-69), Christos Lynteris addresses the 'native knowledge hypothesis' of the pneumonic plague of East Asia in 1910-1911. He shows how scientists misinterpreted Mongol and Buryat practices by projecting the scientist's own principles of epidemiological hygienism on to the locals' interactions with animals. Yet Lynteris argues that dismissing the hypothesis as being the result of misunderstandings would overlook the social and political effects of generated by both knowledge and ignorance in this case-study. In Chapter 3 (pp. 70-90), Trevor Marchand reflects upon his many encounters with ignorance during his training as a fine woodworker in a London college. He observed trainees as they chose to ignore specific aspects of their training and to remain ignorant of specific features of the job market. Thus Marchand demonstrates that ignorance can be used as a productive strategy and that it should be studied as such. In Chapter 4 (pp. 91-114), Casey High examines the way in which the Waraoni of Ecuadorian Amazon claim ignorance of shamanic practices in order to achieve a privileged moral and social position. This allows us to see that, like knowledge, ignorance can be used to actively define ones' role and position in a positive way within societies. In Chapter 5 (pp. 115-137) John Borneman examines the therapeutic treatment of child sex offenders in Berlin. He argues that offenders experience a personal struggle between the need to come to know about their offence and the desire to stay ignorant of the true motivations of the abuse. As Borneman observes, this struggle may be experienced not only by the offenders, but by all those involved in the discourse of child abuse. Chapters 6 and 7 are both based on historical analyses of governmental practices in French West Africa

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and British India. In Chapter 6 (pp. 138-158), Roy Dilley analyses the ways in which French society officially concealed uncomfortable truths about the offspring of colonial officers with indigenous women and practices of slavery. Dilley shows that practices of concealment can have multiple effects throughout history, both wanted and unwanted. In Chapter 7 (pp. 159-187) Leo Coleman looks beyond bureaucratic systems of colonial administration to analyse an Imperial British pamphlet. By drawing upon Freud's theory of the fetish, Coleman argues that political power can be achieved and maintained by obscuring 'real' knowledge of power while producing ignorance about the realities of governmental practices as well as about needs of the population. In Chapter 8 (pp. 188-208), Thomas Kirsch draws upon fieldwork in Christian Zambia to argue that practices of secrecy are discursive practices that constitute subjects as Epistemophilic Others. In other words, the concealing of any objects inevitably constitutes others as wanting to know about the objects concealed from them.

The editors can be commended for having integrated the eight contributions into a compelling and coherent whole, creating synergy among the chapters that should be of value to readers from different disciplines. Yet I feel this volume could have benefitted from a broader reading of Foucault's work on discourse. The editors point to the fact that Foucault overlooked the link between power and ignorance (pp. 22-3). Yet in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (Foucault 1998 [1976]), Foucault establishes a dynamic between speech and silence which is very similar to the dynamic between knowledge and ignorance that the editors of this volume have identified. For Foucault, 'talk' and 'silence' act together in the world and transform it. This means that they are related as equal partners and are not each other's flip side. In Foucault's words:

Silence itself – the thing one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers – is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within overall strategies. There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorized, or which form of discretion is required in either case. There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses.
(Foucault 1998 [1976]: 27)

In the same way as speech and silence, knowledge and ignorance may thus be conceived as acting as unified and inseparable systems. This suggests that there might a possibility of adding a fourth conceptualization focused on the inseparability of systems of

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knowledge/ignorance. Such a way of framing knowledge and ignorance as inseparable may also raise the question of whether ignorance functions as an autonomous actor to transform the world, or whether it needs to always been seen in conjunction with knowledge. Overall, this book is a very well-thought-out volume that adds a valuable anthropological perspective to the growing interdisciplinary field of ignorance studies.

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ADI KUNTSMAN and REBECCA L. STEIN, *Digital militarism: Israel's occupation in the social media age*, Stanford: Stanford University Press 2015 (Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures), xiii, 173 pp. ISBN 9780804794909.

During the most recent Israeli incursion into Gaza in 2014, Operation Protective Edge, which left 2,251 Palestinians and 73 Israelis dead (OHCHR 2015: 6), a Facebook page dedicated to ‘bomb-shelter selfies’ drew widespread attention: a wealth of amateur photos of often smiling Israeli individuals and families in their shelters displayed a shocking banalisation of the violent Gaza incursion and, at the same time, a surprising rendering of the Israeli public as victim. In *Digital militarism: Israel's occupation in the social media age*, Adi Kuntsman and Rebecca Stein offer fascinating insights into some of the ideologies behind digital militarism. While their treatment of the militarist use of social media stops at the previous 2012 Gaza operation (apart from an afterword), they suggest their book be read not as up-to-date documentation, but as an “archive of Israeli occupation violence” (xiii) and as a potential resource for different political solutions – which can also be applied to the explosion of digital militarism in more recent Israeli history.

‘Digital militarism’ is defined by the authors as the ‘process by which digital communication platforms and consumer practices have become militarized tools in the hands of state and nonstate actors’, and sometimes even ‘sites ... of militarist engagement’ (6). Aware of the use of digital militarism in diverse war zones, Kuntsman and Stein track its development over the last two decades in Israel, one of the most prominent cases. Explaining both the exponential growth of

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digital militarism and its undergirding tensions, the authors argue across five chapters that the digital literacy of the Jewish Israeli public, growing militarism, and denial of the occupation go hand in hand: ‘public secrecy has taken new forms in the social media age’ (15).

With the help of some of the most viral examples of social media use in times of heightened tension, or war – such as the 2006 war between Israel and Lebanon, and Israel’s 2008-2009 and 2012 incursions into the Gaza strip – the authors show how the ordinary public is being conscripted into the state’s military operations and its support. While in the early 2000s cyber-violence was a matter of war between competing hacking experts, the rise of social media has created a much larger current project of digital warfare. Thus, the deadly 2010 *Freedom Flotilla* incident (the Israeli military assault on activist boats aiming to break the blockade of Gaza) showed a hitherto unseen mobilization of social media activists, both in defence and condemnation of Israel’s actions. In this context, Kuntsman and Stein discuss the initiatives launched by the Israeli military itself or grassroots organisations, such as the 2012 ‘Israel Under Fire’ Facebook initiative (similar perhaps to the 2014 ‘Bomb Shelter Selfies’), which defends Israel’s image nationally and globally in times of war through personal testimonies and digital protests (e.g. pictures of individuals holding up ‘Stop the Rockets’ signs).

One of the most striking examples of the book is the study of the Eden Abergil Facebook scandal, which occurred shortly after the *Freedom Flotilla* incident. In an album entitled ‘IDF [Israeli Defence Force], the best days of my life,’ Abergil published images of herself posing next to blindfolded detainees among a selection of other nondescript photographs. The Israeli public responded in shock, but as it emerged that most current and former IDF soldiers have similar pictures, the ensuing discussion focused on Abergil’s faulty Facebook privacy settings and the dangers of social media, rather than on army abuse and the violence of the occupation – a phenomenon of ‘public secrecy’ in which, eventually, Israel becomes the victim. This is rendered even more starkly in the book’s discussion of ‘digital suspicion’ (59), which emerged after the appearance of a faked picture of a dead Palestinian boy after an attack on Gaza during the 2012 war. The discovery led to an ‘obsession with digital forensics’, which ‘substituted matters of life and death with questions of technological literacy and accuracy.’ (69). This suspicion portrays public secrecy at its height, denying not just the death of Palestinians (since every image of a Palestinian death was possibly faked), but also confirming the image of a military that doesn’t kill, thus turning public secrecy into a ‘matter of ontology’ (69).

Kuntsman and Stein manage to present a convincing narrative that reads well, despite its shocking content. Their arguments are supported by screenshots of social media examples, which are excellently and skilfully analysed. Violence is a difficult topic to research, all the more so when

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focusing on its twisted denial or warped justification. Despite the challenging content, the authors maintain a remarkably academic objectivity, and only rarely slip into the cynicism the object of study could so easily foster. The book is well researched and features good referencing of contextual literature. It would have benefitted from an accompanying ethnography of Jewish Israeli social media use and the militarisation of society, in order to uncover the motivations for sharing posts or taking part in social media campaigns defending the state's military actions. In addition, it would have been helpful to provide greater insight into the parts of society that are drawn to these activities (the impression, perhaps rightly so, is that digital militarism is all-encompassing among social media users). Such data could perhaps have taken the analysis a level deeper, exploring the underlying themes and motivations of digital militarism, such as nationalism and other ideologies, which the authors claim (without in-depth discussion) to have been present since the founding of the Israeli state. While their 'public secrecy' argument is convincing, it will be helpful to read this book in the context of studies of both Palestinian and Israeli social media use in this setting (see, for example, Stein's (2013) separate article), which might present alternative interpretations of the sharing and documenting of violent acts via social media outlets. Overall, for readers concerned with digital militarism, social media use in violent or war-like situations, and the Israel–Palestine conflict in general, this is an insightful and well-executed study.

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WALTER FRIEDRICH OTTO, *The Homeric gods: the spiritual significance of Greek religion*, [Anthropology n. 1], n.p.: Mimesis International 2014, viii, 287/310, ISBN 9788857523996.

Walter F. Otto (1874–1958) was a reasonably well-known German classicist who specialised in Greek religion and is still occasionally cited – for instance, in the standard overview of the topic by Walter Burkert (1985). The present edition mentions the German title and includes the foreword by Moses Hadas, who translated the book in 1954, but is otherwise excessively sparing of bibliographic detail. The translation was of the 3rd edition (1947), which differs little from the 1st edition of 1929. The references, originally incorporated into the German text, have been moved to end-notes, and the 1947 index has been redone. Unfortunately it now omits references to the Homeric texts; should one ask whether, or in what terms, Otto comments on a particular passage in the *Iliad*, the index is less helpful than the German one.

The original date of the book helps to explain some of its curious silences and essentialisms. For instance, predating the influence of Milman Parry and Alfred Lord, it ignores the relationship between orality and literacy, and its views on gender now read very oddly. ‘In Apollo we recognise the wholly masculine man. The aristocratic aloofness, the superiority of cognition, the sense of proportion, these and other related traits in a man, even music in the broadest sense of the word, are, in the last analysis, alien to a woman.’ ‘Woman is more elemental than man and much more centred on indirect existence... Whereas man strives for the general, the impersonal, the non-sensual, her energy is wholly concentrated upon the immediate, the personal, the present reality.’

Indeed, one way to read the text would be to situate its particular point of view within the history of ideas. Otto himself does not undertake this. He cites around twenty classicists, nearly all German, but more for particular points than for general approach. His aim is to present the Homeric gods as offering a type of religion that he both admires as a philhellene and apparently accepts as an individual believer. Certainly he prefers it to the Christianity which, he feels, most historians of religions have mistakenly seen as representing an advance. Though he does not cite Nietzsche (he prefers to cite Goethe and Hölderlin), that philosopher’s influence seems likely.

After the introduction comes a chapter called ‘Religion and Myth in High Antiquity (*Vorzeit*),’ which attempts to characterise a pre-Homeric religion. Dominated by ‘earth, procreation, blood and death’ – interrelated realities which ‘all flow together into a single large essence (*Wesenheit*)’ – this belief system was to be forced into the background by the rise of the Olympians, of whom the most important were Zeus, Athena and Apollo. Although in Homer glimpses appear of the gods as living on the summit of Mount Olympus in northern Greece, they are really visitors to earth from heavenly ether – a realm of light. This opposition between earlier chthonic and later Olympian deities has

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often been made and no doubt goes back to the succession myth in Hesiod's *Theogony*. But the modern student has no need to read the ancient myth as if it narrated real history, and in the light of Indo-European cultural comparativism, I doubt the whole idea. Even if one accepts the usefulness of the category 'chthonian' (which can be challenged – cf. Parker 2012: 316), a category can be a separate and devalued component of a theology or ideology envisaged as a synchronic whole. Indian myths say that the demonic *asuras* are elder brothers of the heavenly *devas*, but few historians would postulate a period when the *devas* had not yet been born.

The eighty-page chapter on the Olympians has sections on Athena; Apollo and his sister Artemis; Aphrodite; and Hermes; Zeus is seen as too all-pervasive for a separate section, and accounts of the other six Olympians are dispersed. Otto's favourites are clearly Apollo and Artemis, 'the most sublime of the Greek gods'; peculiar to them is 'the attribute of purity and holiness.' The relation of Artemis to untouched nature elicits some of Otto's most lyrical and romantic writing. 'The solitudes of nature possess geniuses of diverse form, from the fearful and wild to the shy spirit of sweet maidenhood. The loftiest of all is the encounter with the sublime. It dwells in the clear ether of the mountain peak, in the golden iridescence of mountain meadows...' At the other end of the scale, Otto (understandably) detests Ares, who 'can hardly be considered a god at all'.

More than half the book still remains. First come 'theological' topics – the gods' relationship to time, their aversion to death, their interaction and their anthropomorphism. 'Poseidon is too closely involved in matter to possess the majesty of the divine in the sense of Homeric religion.' Two chapters discuss how the gods relate to humanity in general and to Homeric heroes in particular contexts. Many topics are treated that are familiar to anthropologists under different names. Thus, regarding the sacred and nature, Otto writes of the Greek divine (*Göttliches*) as being 'neither a justifying explanation of the natural course of the world nor an interruption and abolition of it: it is itself the natural course of the world [*der natürliche Weltlauf selbst*]'. Regarding the person and agency, Otto sees in Homer much to meditate on and admire: 'what a man wills and does is himself and is the deity. Both are true and in the last analysis the same.' But, as the final chapter emphasises, even the gods are impotent against Fate or Destiny – which for humans usually implies death.

No doubt some would regard Otto's book as a dated curiosity. But Homer is inexhaustibly interesting, and there is room for a variety of approaches. Even a comparativist like the reviewer, though temperamentally averse to theories that are essentially ahistorical and phenomenological, can benefit from its insights. I like the judgement of Graf (2009: 179), who calls the book 'splendidly one-sided'.

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S. BRENT PLATE (ed.), *Key terms in material religion*, London etc.: Bloomsbury Publishing 2015, 284 pp.

Over the last thirty years, scholars have become increasingly interested in material religion, a vibrant and interdisciplinary field that attends to the 'stuff' of belief. Leading this charge has been the publication of *Material Religion: Journal of Objects, Art, and Belief* and several influential works by its co-editors, S. Brent Plate, Birgit Myer, Crispin Paine and David Morgan, among notable others. The latest product of this collective scholarly effort is the anthology *Key terms in material religion*, edited by Plate. This ambitious overview of the materialist approach confirms its pivotal position in contemporary religious studies. Written by leading scholars in the field and edited with an undergraduate audience in mind, it will be a valuable resource for introducing students to material religion.

In *Key terms*, Plate encourages students of religious life to 'get back to the basics' and consider the 'physical substrate' of people, images, objects and landscapes upon which all religions rest (2015: 3). Where the prevailing modernist tradition of scholarship has relied heavily on textual sources and conceptualized religion as an internal state of belief, the contributors to this volume point out the entanglement of religion in the concreteness and messiness of everyday life. Matter is not merely an expression of higher doctrine; rather, 'religions originate and survive through bodily engagements with the material elements of the world' (Plate, p. 3). Plate's introduction offers a passionate defence of this approach and a helpful working definition of its subject, built around five components: 'bodies meet objects'; 'the senses'; 'time and space'; 'orientation and disorientation of communities and individuals; and 'strictures and structures of tradition'. These motifs run throughout the body of the text, which is comprised of thirty-seven single-authored chapters, each dedicated to a key concept in the discipline. The chapters are a mixture of hard-hitting theoretical contributions (Meyer on 'media', Latour on 'fetish-factish', Morgan on 'thing') and more

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ethnographically grounded pieces (Zito on 'body', Gaskell on 'display'). Happily, however, all contributors have avoided simply listing influential theorists or publications, and readers searching for an annotated bibliography will have to look elsewhere. Rather, the chapters offer 'short, creative and ideally evocative essays' (p. 7), each centred around a different ethnographic case study and accompanying photograph, which plunge the reader into the tangible, multi-sensory experience of religious traditions. Anthropologists in particular will be gratified by the diversity of these case studies, from Japanese zen 'aesthetics' (Prohl) to Victorian spirit photography 'magic' (Pels). Indeed, as several of the contributors (Prohl, Ch. 4 and Maniura, Ch. 14) argue, it is precisely the coupling of religious studies with an iconophobic Protestant tradition that has often led to materiality being dismissed as unimportant, inauthentic or sacrilegious. Whilst the book can be read entire, the chapters and case studies are self-contained, making the text a useful reference resource and ideally suited for dividing into modular readings to accompany undergraduate lectures.

The list of key terms has been derived from prominent themes emerging in the first ten years of publication in *Material Religion*, expanding on the journal's highly successful 2011 Special Issue. Whilst there is an inevitable degree of arbitrariness in the various inclusions and exclusions of an anthology such as this, a survey of its contents does provide valuable insight into the discipline's current intellectual landscape. Plate's list both presents a view into history and 'chart(s) a course for the future' (p. xvii), solidifying theoretical gains where they have been made and directing the reader towards fertile new areas of enquiry. Thus we see established concerns of religious scholarship, including 'ritual', 'belief' and 'sign', alongside perhaps more surprising contributions, such as 'brain-mind', 'city' and 'technology'. For those unfamiliar with recent developments, even a cursory glance at this book demonstrates the breadth and ambition of the materialist approach, which supplies multiple new inroads into an already interdisciplinary field. In his introduction Plate earmarks two areas of enquiry as deserving of further attention. First, critical studies of 'race' (Ch. 22) and 'gender' (Ch. 13) still have to be sufficiently conducted through a materialist lens. And, secondly, whilst studies of the body in religion have become increasingly popular, the sensory dimension of religious life, with regard to 'taste' (Ch. 32) and 'smell' (Ch. 28) in particular, is still under-explored. *Key terms* serves as a powerful illustration that materiality is not just a specialist sub-set of religious studies, but an expansive new framework through which to address all its concerns. Finally, for scholars with a background in material culture studies, it is notable that certain contemporary trends in this field have yet to make an impact on the *Key terms* list. Most prominently, this includes the shift from studying the consumption and production of social artefacts to considering transformations in material properties, as well as work on the processes of

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disposal, destruction and recycling. Much could be gained from greater cross-fertilisation between these closely related disciplines.

Key terms in material religion is beautifully presented, with glossy colour photographs marking the beginning of each chapter. A renewed focus on materiality within the social sciences demands not only new theoretical models, but also new methods for conducting and presenting research, among which photography is one of the most powerful. Too often, these methods are restricted by publishing constraints, but both Bloomsbury Publishing and the editor should be praised for the high production quality of this volume. This accessible and attractive volume will be of equal interest to students of religious life and to more established scholars seeking to broaden their understanding of the implications of the material turn.

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CARLO SEVERI, *The chimera principle: an anthropology of memory and imagination*, transl. by Janet Lloyd; foreword by David Graeber. Chicago: Hau Books 2015, xxxiv, 362 pp. ISBN 9780990505051.

What is a chimera, and how do pictographs function as such? Carlo Severi introduces the reader to a world of chimeric evocations provoked by visual representations to participants in a ritual context. This highly engaging and deftly written book is the fruit of exemplary scholarly work and is likely to become an indispensable reference for future research on the anthropology of memory and the so-called 'oral' cultures.

The chimera principle starts with a story from the Hasidic Jewish tradition. The story is about what is lost, and what remains, in a religious tradition from one generation to the next. Its relevance to the book is diligently unfolded as the author invites the reader to follow his outstanding analyses of pictographic systems of ritual communication. Unlike the Greek chimera, in which 'an imaginary creature [is] depicted in relatively realistic terms' (p.67), Severi takes the case of the Hopi chimera to illustrate that it is instead 'a collection of abstract visual indices' that yield 'an interpretation of what is implicit', generating the 'invisible part of the image' in 'a mental, not a realistic, space' (ibid.). The author seems determined to do justice to 'one of the most persistent prejudices regarding Native American pictographs' (p. 123), a point applicable to pictographic elements from non-Western cultures from around the world in general. Far from being unintelligible 'private drawings', or 'imagistic monologues that only one individual, their creator, could decipher' (ibid.),

Severi shows instead how they were complex but identifiable visual languages transmittable through memory techniques and used in ritual contexts.

In a carefully deployed analysis carried out throughout the book, the author brings several examples of pictographic systems of ritual communication to a new light. Drawing on important, but not always remembered works of scholars and thinkers such as Erland Nordenskiöld (1930), Hjalmar Stolpe (1927), Diego Valadés (1579), Emanuel Löwy (1900) and Aby Warburg (1923), Severi sets out to unravel the nature of mnemonic evocations and to decode non-Western drawings and pictographs. One of the principal aims here seems to be the construction of an elucidatory way to grasp not just the kinds of stories that these pictographs could tell, but exactly *how* they were told. In sharp contrast to notions associating ‘oral’ cultures with a memory void, Severi masterly illustrates this subtle and sophisticated ‘art of memory’.

Through a mental process that involves decoding and associating heterogeneous features, the ‘parallelist cognitive organizing force’ that guides the ‘exercise of memory’ is described by the author as ‘an organizing technique that leads one to manipulate linguistic features and iconic features in the same fashion, like pieces in a *mosaic*’ that will eventually create a unified entity. Form is particularly important here. Much like, for instance, ritual songs in eastern European folklore (p. 246) that are built upon verbal repetition while having other parts open to improvisation and change, the author compellingly illustrates that it is not the stories but rather ‘typical scenarios’ that acquire a certain stability within a specific context. Sound, and a special use of speech, are equally important. In a ritual context, what shapes the *effect* upon the listener/participant ‘over and above the meaning of the words’ is determined by certain ‘pragmatic aspects of communication’ that are highlighted and subjected to ‘an unexpected elaboration founded upon a reflexive and parallelist definition of the locutor’ (p. 224).

Looking closely at Lévi-Strauss’ study of the Kuna song ‘The Way of Mu’, in his article ‘The effectiveness of symbols’ (1963), *The chimera principle* probes into, and calls for a redefinition of, the ‘nature of belief.’ It also invites anthropologists to broaden conventional understandings of ‘belief’ in a ritual context, and to ‘consider belief from a psychological perspective’ (p. 234). Making space for an understanding of ritual where incredulity and doubt play an essential role in establishing belief and acceptance, Severi is directing our attention to the unique, reflexive, relationship created between a person and a (visual/aural) representation in a ritual context.

From the Plains Indians to the Inuit, to the Kuna and Amerindian peoples, Severi illustrates with brilliant adeptness how they ‘all obey common criteria from the point of view of the mental operations implied by the drawings’ (p. 189) that generate and shape social memory. Of course social memory, in any context and time in history, is never unitary and can be antagonistic and

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painful. Nevertheless, it proves to be more resistant to confrontation or suppression than one would perhaps expect and successfully operates in cultural and political conflict, as the last chapter of the book skilfully shows. However, in understanding the creative ways of the ‘figurative mnemotechniques’, the mechanics of social memory of many so-called ‘oral’ peoples will fall between memorization and iconography (p. 198).

There is one minor point about this otherwise excellent work I would like to raise here. It has to do with the author’s use of the terms ‘traditional societies’ and ‘traditions’, which in some cases appear to be substituting ‘peoples’ or ‘cultures’. Closely related to this, at several points the author seems to be addressing a specific (Western) public (‘our own tradition’, ‘distant peoples’). Severi uses these terms throughout the book and in various contexts (e.g. ‘European tradition’, ‘pictographic tradition’, ‘traditional societies’) something that leaves the reader wondering about the referential breadth these terms encompass in different parts of the book. It would perhaps have been useful to have such definitions set out in the beginning in order to avoid misconceptions or the reproduction of contested terms.

Overall, Carlo Severi’s *The chimera principle* is an exceptionally detailed and analytical work of great academic value, which can nevertheless be read by non-specialists and be of interest to a broad and diverse reading public. Putting the old argument about the supposed fragility of memory among so-called ‘oral’ societies, as well as the common view that pictography was either a communication system that is forever lost to us or an ‘unsuccessful attempt to invent a type of writing’ (p. 14) on an entirely new basis, *The chimera principle* is a fascinating work that makes an important contribution to the anthropology of memory. This is especially the case with regard to non-Western, ‘oral’, societies- as well as to the anthropological study of ritual and belief. Lastly, and given that this review is being published in JASO, I could not help but mention that this book appeals especially to Oxford anthropologists. Given Severi’s insightful examination of some of Pitt-Rivers’s own work, having read this book one can never walk amongst the Museum’s collections again without being urged to look beyond ‘abstract’ shapes and trying to grasp the ‘hidden transcripts’ of even the ‘simplest’ of forms.

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VIBEKE STEFFEN, STEFFEN JÖHNCKE and **KIRSTEN MARIE RAAHAUGE** (eds.), *Between magic and rationality: on the limits of reason in the modern world*, Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press 2015, 380 pp. ISBN 9788763542135.

Between magic and rationality: on the limits of reason in the modern world is a collection of ethnographic studies examining forms of reflection and interaction that inflect the ways in which different societies create and challenge the limits of magic and reason. The study of magic and rationality as a contemporary interdisciplinary field has drawn strength and substance from anthropological inquiry. Using ethnography, this book explores the emergence and development of approaches to 'rational' and 'magical' frames of understanding as coexisting rather than in binary opposition to each other (p. 11). The editors of the book argue that, in order to provide a deep analysis of the complex ways in which the notions of rationality and irrationality are intertwined, it is necessary to understand how people engage in their practices, as well as 'their attempts to make sense of and argue over the meaning of the world' (p. 14). As such it can be argued that this collection is at the forefront of key debates in the study of the 'rational' and the 'magical' in that it examines how the study of these concepts as evoked in social processes allows for the frictions between the dynamics of the local and the global to arise.

Between magic and rationality opens with a section entitled 'On the limits of institutional rationalities'. This section provides an exploration of the marginal position of magic with respect to the tensions that arise when formal institutional practices meet unorthodox means of pursuing

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individual goals. Morton Hulvej Rod and Steffen Jöhncke explore these tensions by examining the unforeseen social effects of evidence-based practices in welfare-state institutions. Also included in this section is Cecilie Rubow and Anita Engdahl-Hansen's exploration of the practical symbology of the wedding horseshoe as an entry point to the investigation of the diverse ways in which Christianities are enacted within a single church institution. The final study in this section is Tine Tjørnhøj-Thomsen and Helle Ploug Hansen's ethnographic account of the complex ways in which magic is embedded even within institutional contexts such as hospitals, a study of the 'uncertainties caused by infertility, cancer and medical treatment and how magic is a common, mundane way of dealing with these uncertainties' (p. 96).

This book thus represents an important contribution to examining the complexity and nuances of the intersections between magic and rationality by highlighting the ways in which these debates have often been mired in simplistic reductions. This is best illustrated in the second section of the book, which begins with Martin Skrydstrup's chapter on climate modelling and magic. He describes understandings of magic in anthropology and its resonance with 'non-linearity' in contemporary climate research, where what has been understood as 'science' echoes with what these scientists claim about 'linear' community' (p. 125). Inger Sjørnslev expands on this discussion by using some examples of gestalt-making in science. Gestalts, Sjørnslev explains, are 'holistic, visual complexities shaped into some kind of material form' (p. 150). Further discussion of materiality is provided in the chapter by Mikkel Bunkenborg, who suggests that spirit mediums in rural North China offer a solution to this problem by foregrounding processes of dissolution in which things are divested of their materiality (p. 177).

Expanding on the theme of science and materiality, Bunkenborg also presents the idea of unmaterialized transcendence as a problem for signification because, within the process of signifying something, what is materially absent will in effect make it present. The study presented by Vibeke Steffen in Part 3, on the individualised character of personhood in spiritual cosmologies, provides a micro-analysis of 'the transgression of the boundaries between individual selves and bodies, and their implications for notions of personhood' (p. 236). In terms of the macro-level social changes, also in Part 3, Nils Bubandt's examination of ghosts and of regimes of the self in Indonesia allowed for the globalisation of psychological understandings of the self to emerge and be analysed. This study successfully raises the complexities and nuances of how rationality and irrationality, while discursively held to be separate, 'are in social practice folded in upon each other' (p. 225). The final chapter of Part 3 focuses on the phenomenological analysis of how the voice-hearing experience is interpreted as meaningful by people in the Hearing Voices Movement. Tying in with the overarching theme of the book, Sidsel Busch demonstrates the tension between magic

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and rationality by revealing how the ‘meaning-making process entails a recognition of a different kind of reality than the one prescribed by conventional rationality, at the same time as it draws on resources from our cultural repertoire of trauma’ (p. 262).

The final section of this book, Part 4, focuses on the limits of ontology and epistemology. This section in particular provides a valuable resource for social science researchers. For instance, Maria Louw’s ethnography on ‘Dream omens and their meanings in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan’ provides a micro-analysis of the ambiguity behind Kyrgyz’s people’s belief/disbelief in dream omens. Through her ethnography, Louw captures the moments in which people reach for strategies to deal with things they do not believe in. Also in this section is Kirsten Marie Raahauge’s study of haunted houses in Denmark, an excellent topic for exploring strategies of reasoning, as well as examining the particularities of ‘perceiving something on the limits of reason, lacking natural explanations, adequate concepts and social resonance’ (pp. 315-16). Diverging from current academic assumptions that modern societies are characterised by disenchantment, Jenkins reconceptualises enchantments in the empirical plural rather than using a monolithic concept of enchantment. Doing so illustrates the extensive bricolage of narratives about the world that go beyond what is ordinarily visible locally (p. 344).

Overall, this book offers both a broad approach and a nuanced analysis of magic, rationality and the limits of reason in the modern world. The approach adopted here is intended to be of use to scholars in a range of different disciplines and locations. This book offers an innovative, engaging and theoretically rigorous account of the dynamics of the local and global tensions that shape ideas and experiences around magic and rationality. It will be essential reading for those researching, theorising or working with religious and spiritual groups of people.

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MICHAEL STODDART, *Adam’s nose and the making of humankind*, London: Imperial College Press, 2015, xxi, 258 pp. ISBN 9781783265183.

Smell has been largely neglected in anthropology. Indeed, Brian Moeran, noting Claude Lévi-Strauss’ description of ‘olfactory intoxication’ in *Triste Tropiques*, has suggested that, ‘if taken into account at all, smell tends to act as an entrée or afterthought to other more “important” matters’

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(2007: 155). In contrast, Michael Stoddart, a biologist, zoologist and professor emeritus at the University of Tasmania, has put smell front and centre in his recently published work, *Adam's nose and the making of humankind*. In the book, Stoddart argues that one of the most significant developments for humanity occurred sixteen million years ago, when a particular gene mutation, nicknamed ADAM by the scientists who discovered it, appeared in our primate ancestors. This gene served to disrupt the flow of information received by the brain from the vomeronasal organ (the VNO), a sensory organ located above the palate of the mouth. The result of this disruption was to remove the ability of males to gauge, through smell, the time of female ovulation. As a result, smell is not the preeminent force behind human sexual activity, as it is for the majority of the animal kingdom. Stoddart goes further, however, to contend that the advent of the ADAM gene is one of the key reasons that our ancestors organised themselves as sexually monogamous yet communal, a key determinant of our 'success' as a species.

Adam's nose and the making of humankind is written in the populist style of academics turned authors, abounding with illustrations and easy-to-understand analogies. In the introduction, for example, the extent of human evolution is explained in relation to the Empire State building, namely, if we take street level to represent the time that the Earth was formed (approximately 4.6 billion years ago), humankind would only be in existence from the Empire State's 102nd floor (the top floor) onwards. The first half of the book establishes the prevalence of human attempts to alter our smell, through perfumes and bathing rituals, and compares this curiosity to the animal kingdom, where no such pretensions are made. The science behind olfaction is described, for humans and a range of other animals, and we learn that, unlike sight and sound, smells pass directly to the emotional quotient of the brain first, only sometimes continuing onwards to rational processing. The implication is that 'your first reaction to a smell is always emotional; only secondarily do you rationalise it' (p. 81). Midway through the book, the chapter 'Sex, smell and "ADAM"' outlines the book's core assertion: that we are not behaviourally driven by 'pheromones', or sex smells, in the same way as other animals (despite the claims of many perfume manufacturers). For this reason, Stoddart assumes, we have 'developed' beyond other animals. Having established this biological consideration, *Adam's nose* then turns to the cultural significance of smell for the latter half of the book, looking predominantly at Western history, art and literature.

As readers of this review may have already gathered, a number of Stoddart's assertions will raise the pejorative anthropological eyebrow. Monogamy, Stoddart argues, is the biologically informed state of human sexual relationships, enforced by the need to care for human children, who are helpless far longer than animal young. So that we could live communally and grow as a species to 'dominate the world' (p. x), certain gene mutations such as ADAM ensured that males were not

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waywardly controlled by their sexual impulses. As such, the family unit (male, female and child) could live productively with other families without the negative effects produced by polygyny, such as violent competition between males and infanticide. While conceding that there is a wealth of anthropological data to contradict such biological determinism, Stoddart rounds off his argument by dichotomizing culture and nature: 'I don't deny that 21st century humankind has organised its societies differently from the way in which natural selection arranged them' (p. 152). As Tim Ingold has discussed at length across multiple works (cf. 1986, 2006, 2007), such an argument, which treats biology 'as a constant of human being, and of culture as its variable and interactive complement', is not only 'imprecise' but incredibly problematic, forcing us to 'endlessly recycle the polarities, paradoxes and prejudices of Western thought.' (Ingold 2006: 376).

Without delving into the alternative proposed by Ingold, the extent of this problem becomes particularly evident in Stoddart's final chapter. Having argued earlier in the book that humans generally choose mating partners that have different immune systems to their own, thus boosting the immunity potential of their children, Stoddart also suggests that smell could be a determinant of these choices. This then provides the tenuous basis for his later proposition that children raised without the smell of their 'natural parents' (p. 224) may make biologically less advantageous partner choices. This suggestion is made despite admitting that there is no longitudinal study to support this speculation. This consideration is followed by another concerning menstruation, in which he suggests that menses may occur earlier in women who do not live in the presence of their paternal father's smell. It is not shown why this would be at all detrimental to the future of humankind, yet nonetheless Stoddart warns that, in an era 'where the modern family is changing...our lack of knowledge [with regard to olfaction] is verging on the dangerous' (p. 224). What is also dangerous, one may counter, is biological reductionism. Given that the book is intended for a wide, non-academic audience, such 'suggestions' are not only controversial but also negligent, supporting the odorous idea (pun intended) that familial environments may be either 'natural' or 'unnatural'. While Stoddart does caveat his work with the acknowledgement that, 'if you don't accept that humankind is the product of Darwinian evolution, you'll likely find much to rile against in the following pages' (p. xix), a more comprehensive detailing of his particular brand of Darwinism and its apparent conflation with the philosophies of Herbert Spencer (cf. Ingold 1986) would have been preferable.

Ultimately, the value of *Adam's nose and the making of humankind* lies in its bringing smell into focus. In accordance with Moeran's observation, cited earlier, the anthropological consideration of olfaction is under-theorised. With visual anthropology now an established sub-discipline and sound (often in conjunction with landscape) now a subject of ethnographic

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consideration (see Stokes 2010; Feld 1990), we may well expect smell likewise to become a site for anthropological inquiry. In the meantime, however, as Ingold has asserted, anthropologists should be working to make ‘our voices heard’ in matters concerning the progression of humankind, rather than leaving the discussion to those who ‘find in [Darwin’s] work a holy grail that consigns all else to worthless idolatry’ (2007: 17).

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