

## **BOOK REVIEWS**



**Bracewell, Wendy & Alex Drace-Francis (eds.). 2009. *Balkan Departures: Travel Writing from Southeastern Europe*. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books. 175 pp. Hb.: \$60.00 / £40.00. ISBN: 9781845452544.**

This relatively slim but infinitely rich and engaging volume discussing travel writing in Greek, Romanian, Bulgarian, Serbian and Croatian literatures and cultures promises to change the state of scholarship on the region, as well as the genre of travel writing, more generally. It is one of the four volumes that have emerged as part of a major interdisciplinary research project entitled 'East Looks West' that has engaged over twenty scholars from various fields in the humanities and social sciences, working in over twenty languages. The project is envisaged to examine the various permutations of the idea of 'Europe' and its strategic uses in (south-)east European travel texts over the period from circa 1550 to 2000.

From offering critical insights into 16<sup>th</sup> century early modern Greek travel writing to travelogues in Yugoslavia of the 1970s and 80s as well as post-1990s accounts of English travellers in the Balkans, this present volume is a sequel to the earlier one entitled *Under Eastern Eyes: A Comparative Introduction to East European Travel Writing on Europe* (Central University Press, 2008). It constitutes, in the words of one of its two editors Wendy Bracewell and the project director, 'something of a departure from existing scholarship, and one that offers innovative perspectives on both travel writing and the Balkans' (p. 3).

Travel writing's inherent predilection for sampling difference as regards other cultures sets it right in the middle of discourses on Otherness that have been at the forefront of academic discussion ever since the publication of Edward Said's study *Orientalism* (1978). But the Orientalist critique that assumes a totalizing sway of Western constructions of otherness over projected others and their self-definition, linking it exclusively to asymmetries in power, has long been questioned as overly simplistic and one-sided. That also applies to the burgeoning field of Balkan studies. The primary point of departure with respect to Southeastern Europe, as the title itself signals, is therefore necessarily a shift in scholarship's primary focus on the region, from it being a region travelled *to* to it being a region travelled *from*.

In the process, as questions of how (South-)Eastern European travellers saw themselves in relation to the larger world are probed in no simple terms – and always within the specific historical context of textual production and reception on a single case basis – a far more nuanced and complex picture emerges than any standard narrative of Western ideological impositions or, consequently, of 'writing back' to the centre might suggest. This is not least because we are made to consider to what extent travellers *from* the region were themselves 'responsible for inventing and perpetuating discourses of difference, including the pejorative Balkanist tropes of backwardness and inferiority' (p. 5). If this two-way process of (re-)defining the notion of the Balkans meant that a certain normative cultural model of 'Europeanness' (also featured with the writers from the region), whereby 'Europe' was somehow seen to be located elsewhere, the focus on strategies and uses of these concepts, rather than on their (re-)appropriations, gives rise to fresh and

singular conclusions. The temptation to identify ‘recurring patterns’ is superseded in these studies by attention paid rather to ‘specific contexts and interests’ (p. 2). Herein lies the great value of all the studies published in this volume.

In his superb reading of Dinicu Golescu’s *Account of my Travels* published in Romania in 1926, co-editor Alex Drace-Francis argues that Golescu’s favourable ideas of ‘Europe’ derived from his travels and contrasted with perceptions of the deplorable conditions at home need not be seen as ‘naive acceptance of European models’ but rather ‘in terms of political strategy’, intended to further certain political interests in 1820s Wallachia as well as cater to personal ambition (p. 66). Furthermore, the uncritically accepted link between the text’s ‘modernizing’ influence in Romania is beautifully undermined by the author’s observation, overlooked by most commentators, that ‘few people appear to have read Golescu’s book at all in the seventy or eighty years since it was published’ (p. 55). Publication, reception, and uses of travel writing all come under close scrutiny with respect to the author’s personal and wider history in ways which defies any simple or overarching conclusions – something that characterises all contributions in this volume.

How travel writing could be used as a ‘path to social advancement’ and a ‘vehicle for self-definition’ by catering to a carefully select audience is also emphasised by Maria Kostaridou in her fine analysis of the Corfiote scholar’s Nikandros Noukios’ three-volume travel narrative, entitled *Apodemiai* (p. 26). The relationship of travel narratives with the constitution of (trans-)national identities alongside the question of the genre’s place within the modernist literary culture is explored by Vladimir Gvozden and Dead Duda in their respective contributions discussing set Serbian and Croatian travel narratives. Ludmilla Kostova provides a serious tour of Bulgarian travelogues under the Communist regime, having no qualms about fully acknowledging ‘the politically conformist character of most of [her] material’ while at the same time tapping its full potential to depart from ‘a standardised and uniform narrative of the totalitarian system and its propagandist machines’ (p. 106, 132). Finally, the question of gender in Balkan travel writing, more specifically the trope of the macho Balkans deployed with different intentions and outcomes in travel writers from both outside and within the region, is lucidly analyzed by Wendy Bracewell.

The fact that most travel texts discussed in this volume are texts in the vernacular addressing a domestic audience is in itself a major departure from an agenda that could suggest these writers were in any way concerned with ‘returning the gaze’ (p. 2). Indeed, if there is an underlying thread that connects these various contributions it is that ‘this is the Balkan’s Balkans, with its own points of departure and destinations’ (p. 19). It is bound to lead scholars of the region and travel writing in general, as well as those concerned with nuancing theoretical models of Otherness, in new productive directions.

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**Kirby, Peter Wynn (ed.) 2009. *Boundless Worlds: An Anthropological Approach to Movement*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books. 242 pp. Hb.: \$80.00 / £50.00. ISBN: 9781845455385.**

*Boundless Worlds* takes the anthropology of movement as a point of entry for interrogating Eurocentric accounts of space in social scientific thought. The charge ‘against space’ is laid out in several of the volume’s chapters, most explicitly in Peter Wynn Kirby’s introduction and Tim Ingold’s polemical thought-piece ‘Against Space’, with which the introduction is productively paired.

The argument that these opening chapters develop consists of two broad claims. The first is that whilst space has garnered increasing interest within social research, it is nonetheless often used in unconsidered or ethnocentric ways in anthropological analysis: treated as a static backdrop for ethnographic action rather than as the outcome of social practice, i.e., a passive concept rather than active. The second, stronger, claim is that ‘space’ in its Euro-American conceptualisation (as graphable, traceable and conquerable) has been integral to projects of domination and encroachment into less powerful societies to the extent that ‘it has become difficult to countenance the use of this term [space] without severely undermining research objectives’ (p. 3). This claim is not simply that we need to be aware of other spatial repertoires, or to develop a more nuanced or subtle account of the social and political production of space, but rather, more radically, that we need to abandon ‘space’ altogether as a category of analysis. This claim is suggested, though somewhat ambivalently, in Kirby’s introduction, but is worked out most fully in Ingold’s chapter, which characterises space as the outcome of a ‘logical inversion’ (one of several that the chapter interrogates) in which the pathways along which life is lived are turned ‘into boundaries within which it is enclosed’ (p. 29). Space is thus a redundant term for Ingold (‘abstract and rarefied’ is his characterisation) because it fails to capture the lived, practiced nature of our social environments. ‘Of all the terms we use to describe the world we inhabit,’ space is ‘the most abstract, the most empty, the most detached from the realities of life and experience’ (ibid.). Instead, Ingold advocates attention to the ways that paths are produced and followed: to ‘wayfaring’ as ‘our most fundamental mode of being in the world’ (p. 38). Places, rather than appearing as static points, figure in this conception as the nodal points of intersecting paths, allowing for a more attentive and nuanced rendering of other peoples’ environments and their relations with them.

These two opening theoretical essays are followed by eight ethnographic chapters. The first group are united by a concern to interrogate the relationship between space, movement (or limits to movement) and state power. They examine, in turn, the gradual introduction of a new ‘territorialising’ conception of space on the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century Anglo-Gurkha frontier (Bernardo Michael); the deeply physical, embodied practice of ‘patrolling’ the occupied territories for Israeli soldiers during the first Intifada and the subsequent spatialisation of fear for those who returned to Palestine in peace-time (Richard Clarke); and the spatial imaginaries that underpin Tibetan-Buddhist rituals of world peace-making (Martin Mills).

This is followed by two essays which, in very different sites, draw on indigenous spatial ontologies to question Euro-American readings of Melanesian Island and Duxa Mongolian landscapes. Carlos Mondragon's subtle ethnography of the Torres Islands in North Vanuatu demonstrates how islanders conceive of their 'place' as existing within extended patterns of kinship and exchange – an 'oceanic socio-scape', in which 'no single island is ever conceived as a self-contained entity' (p. 123). By exploring the way in which both kinship *and* particular island places are spoken of in terms of growth and layering, Mondragon develops a theoretisation of space and movement 'informed by Austronesian principles' – that is, to think *with* his informants' spatial referents to question assumptions of 'insularity' in regard to the Torres socio-scape.

Drawing on a rich ethnography in the taiga of northern Mongolia, Pedersen contrasts the 'nomadic landscape' of his reindeer-breeding Duxa informants with the 'sedentary landscape' characteristic of settled agricultural zones. Pedersen shows how the Duxa herders conceive of their landscape as 'boundless', in which even the mountains that ring the valley are conceived more as 'points' than as an edge. This landscape is experienced by the Duxa as limitless, but not homogenous or empty. Rather, it is filled with sites that 'anchor' the herders to ancestral places, and filled with practices (such as the highly ritualised process of packing and unpacking camp, or the bodily practices of circling sacred cairns, *ovoo*), which serve to emplace those who are settling there or passing through, and to render new places 'home'. Like Mondragon, the anthropological project here is not merely to present a nomadic 'reading' of the landscape, but to use this to prompt us to think differently about the way in which nomadic and sedentary spatial practices intersect (such as in the heart of metropolitan London).

The final three chapters take us to industrialised settings, where studies of 'everyday movement' (in urban Japan; in a Japanese multinational in France, and in northern Finland) are used to contest grand narratives of globalisation as characterised by dis-embodied 'flow'. In a fascinating study of contamination anxieties in metropolitan Japan, Wynn Kirby shows how experiences of toxic illness resulting from the installation of a new waste processing facility shaped experiences of urban space and altered patterns of movement through the city, the seemingly 'invisible' movement of toxic fumes bringing about very real and material shifts in navigations of the urban environment. Michael Sedgewick takes us to an archetypally 'globalised' space: the offices of a Japanese multinational in urban France, to illustrate how the 'flows' of knowledge and technologies that characterises the contemporary moment are in constituted through the daily work of navigating social and cultural difference and distance. Eeva Burglund completes the trio by showing the effort entailed in repositioning a 'remote' and forest-dependent economy as 'connected' to the global economy. Drawing on Doreen Massey's critique of accounts of globalisation that would treat it as 'a historical queue', she demonstrates the normative assessments that underlie many attempts at 'connecting' places, in which fixity is bad and flow is good. In northern Finland, repositioning (and re-marketing) the region's forest-based economy as a node in the 'knowledge economy' involves a great deal of social and political work. By studying this work ethnographically, Berglund shows how rhetorics of flow and connection can obscure, as in the Finnish case, 'a reality of control and constraint.' The book is

completed by a conclusion from Wynn Kirby and a visual appendix of ‘movement studies’ by artists Christine Gou and Tapio Snellman.

This is a rich, diverse and ethnographically engaging volume, with several memorable contributions (those by Mondragon, Pedersen and Clarke stand out for their ethnographic insight and depth of analysis). Ultimately, however, the volume is more successful as a loosely connected set of critiques of ‘static’, essentialising, or Euro-centric readings of space than it is in advancing the ‘anthropological approach to movement’ that the subtitle suggests. Several of the chapters address ‘movement’ only tangentially or metaphorically. Others question the tendency to reduce anthropological reflection upon movement to a study of ‘global flows’ or transnational migration, without really suggesting how the ethnography they present allows them to develop a different approach. Few of the contributors, moreover, engage with the rich strain of theorising within human geography which has precisely sought to look to ‘movements’ of various kinds (human, technological, geological etc.) to question static readings of space. For a volume explicitly committed to a cross-disciplinary conversation, this silence is disappointing, and means that the volume will have less appeal to students outside anthropology than it otherwise might.

The second weakness of the volume concerns the degree to which the chapters speak to each other and to the opening theoretical essays. Ingold’s chapter, in particular, sets down a theoretical challenge – to ‘abandon space’ (not just a particular Eurocentric *reading* of space; but against space-as-analytic) – that few of the ethnographic essays either address or refute. Indeed, what the ethnographic essays point to is precisely the value of attending ethnographically to diverse lived encounters with particular spaces and, in Pedersen’s case, productively contrasting this with particular, homely ‘places’. This points to a problem of composition: the reader is left with the feeling that the essays were written *without* the benefit of reading or engaging with the opening introductory chapters. However, it is also indicative of a broader theoretical dilemma that the volume alludes to but never fully addresses, i.e., space is a problematic, and over-used concept; one, that it may, as Kirby suggests in his introduction, be ‘guilty by association’ with an intellectual tradition that leads us away from sensitive engagement with other ways of being in and perceiving one’s environment. However, it is a term that may be easier to critique than to abandon. It is striking, indeed, that it is precisely those chapters that are the most ethnographically immersed that seem to bracket off the calls to ‘abandon space’ and show how the term can do rich and productive analytical work.

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**Barker, Jennifer M. 2009. *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience*. Berkeley: University of California Press. xii+196 pp. Pb.: \$24.95 / £16.95. ISBN: 9780520258426.**

The motion picture is not just a reflection upon the perception of our lived reality, but takes us – its viewers – into a relationship with the world we dwell in. Jennifer M. Barker calls this relationship *inspiration* – ‘a full-bodied opening into and suffusion of one with the other that goes beyond surface, middle, and depth’ (p. 146).

*The Tactile Eye* brings the cinematic experience to the emergence and convergence of our and the film’s bodies. The chapters of the book carry titles such as *Skin*, *Musculature* and *Viscera*, dealing with a diversity of human experience including eroticism, pleasure, horror, empathy, apprehension, heart-stopping, hiccups, or breathtaking. While watching a film, the human body reacts haptically, kinaesthetically, muscularly and viscerally. So does the film’s ‘body’, through the screen’s surface, its shimmering, off- and on-screen spaces, and through ‘breathing’ of the lenses. One concentrates visually as well as ‘auditively’, one feels muscular tension, one’s feelings are shown on one’s face expressions and gestures. The experience of a film is something meaningful to us because of our bodies. One feels it, one actually dives into one’s own body, first to be swallowed and then spit out into the world. ‘[F]ilms can pierce, pummel, push, palpate, and strike us; they also slide, puff, flutter, flay, and cascade along our skin’ (p. 36).

The approach and language in which the book is written is innovative and unique for the understanding of people’s encounter with the film. The author tries to show that ‘touch’ is a profound way of being, a style of being that presents itself to the world. The intimate tactile experience with the cinema is a mode of perception as well as expression. All the tension, balance, energy, inertia, languor, velocity, or rhythm are committed to and drawn into a mutual relationship. Through the corporeal locales, we find ourselves in a reciprocal relationship with others, everywhere and always. Merleau-Ponty’s notion of *flesh* of the world (*Urpräsentierbarkeit*, element of Being) and *chiasm* (another word for flesh in the philosopher’s later work) are important concepts incorporated into the book’s flow. They imply an equivocation of subject and object which are *of* each other, related *to* each other, mingled and interdependent, but never losing their identity. Barker replaces Merleau-Ponty’s *world* with *film*, seeing the relationship between film and spectator as a joined act of making the meaning. In other words, it is ‘the permanent intertwining of film and viewer’ (p. 27). Contiguity – the natural affinity between subject and object – makes vision possible. Their mutual possession makes things to be seen, perceived and reciprocated. When using an example of Andrej Tarkovsky’s film *Mirror*, we are clearly presented by the filmic quality and power of being brought into the ‘*whole of Time*’ (p. 152, italics original).

The first chapter, entitled *Skin*, deals with texture, temperature, tactile and tangible patterns and structures. Although, because of familiarity with a concrete situation, our skin feels and responds to a scene with, for example, getting goose bumps, our hands cannot touch the filmed object/subject. What we see and perceive in the film is only a ‘trace’ of the ‘real’ thing; yet it contains light, colours and emotions. There is something in the image, as Barthes has already written about a photograph that attracts, distresses, or awakes: the *punctum*. We touch this ‘point’,



the film, with our gaze. It can be aggressive, gentle, affective or palpating, depending on our way of watching. We may experience pleasure as well as horror as this is demonstrated in the films of Roman Polanski's *Repulsion* and David Lynch's *Eraserhead*. The skin, however, has its limits. It transmits the feelings into interior of the body, and then pushes them back to its surface.

The second chapter, *Musculature*, talks about grasping, holding, leaning forward or pulling back in one's seat as the viewers are never passive participants. Our muscles feel the sensation of velocity, gravity, stopped motion, exaggerated speed or stillness. The empathy we experience through the filmic story shapes our understanding of it. 'When viewers and films share certain attitudes, tasks, or situations, they will move in similar ways' (p. 85). Barker brings up the figure of Wile E. Coyote and his pursuit of Road Runner in the well-known cartoons as the best example of self-consciousness. Gravity is defined but only for an instant before Coyote realises that he is entirely out of place, doing the impossible. We can confirm that emotion is motion, and 'the physical movement of the camera is the closest approximation of muscular movement of the human body' (p. 110).

The third chapter, *Viscera*, describes a tension between continuity and discontinuity, the internal rhythms of film's and viewer's bodies. As an example, Barker takes Tom Tykwer's film *Run Lola Run*. This action film encompasses not only running, but also yielding, walking, racing and even stillness and inaction. Our internal organs are stimulated by action and their function speeds up or slows down, depending on shocks, drama or stillness in the film. 'The viscera, be they cinematic or human... sustain life, animate us, and regulate themselves without our notice in order to maintain the continuity of our movement and activities at the middle and surface of the body... For us, this role is played by the heart, lungs, liver, and other vital organs' (p. 126-7). The power source, light source, sprocket holes, projector's gate, and other parts of the mechanism pertaining to the cinema are 'vital organs' of the film. In both cases, cinematic and human, we may experience resistance or collapse, get a fever or a cold, and become overwhelmed by rhythms and sounds.

After an intimate and internal cinematic experience, we reappear on the surface. The conclusion of the book puts forward the idea of a continual creative process inside one's own *body* which *is here* (in front of the screen) as well as *there* (on the screen). To conclude means to be inspired and moved, to continue in exchange with the world and the film. The inspiration is transitive, pervasive, diffuse, and reversible. It swings in the space between immanent and transcendent. While walking through a forest, for example, we converge with the world around us; we become an inseparable part of the living chiasmus (p. 146). Using Drew Leder's expression, we become *absorbed* in one. The feeling of apprehension comes in the moment of true reversibility where one's body is neither *here* nor *there*, when we are moved through and beyond the simple looking at the film.

I enjoyed the book very much and I would like to end this review where Jennifer M. Barker starts, with the words of the Russian filmmaker Vsevolod Pudovkin from the early 1920s, whose influential work on montage changed the course of the film-art: 'Film is the greatest teacher because it teaches not only through the brain but through the whole body' (p. 1).

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**Kapferer, Bruce and Bjørn Enge Bertelsen (eds.). 2009. *Crisis of the State. War and Social Upheaval*. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books. 320 pp. Hb.: \$90.00 / £55.00. ISBN: 9781845455835.**

In this interesting volume, twelve chapters, framed by Bruce Kapferer's and Bjørn Enge Bertelsen's introduction, explore historically situated crises of statehood, as emergent in conflict settings in Africa, the Middle East, South America and the United States. In their introduction, Kapferer and Bertelsen generally specify the crisis of state power and its transformations under globalised neo-liberalism. They argue that statehood is characterised by an endemic crisis of power, given the aporetic endeavour to monopolise power as legitimate, while power is always in excess. They draw on Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between a hierarchical, territorialising and totalising 'state dynamic' and the 'war machine' that is rhizomic, a-centered and counter-systemic, whilst warning that actual states and actual wars are cross-cut by both dynamics in complex ways. The 'modernist state' is characterised as focusing on the attempt (as described by Foucault) to institute a 'disciplinary society', thereby minimising the dangers of competing powers challenging the modernist state. Here, the 'state dynamic' prevails, whilst covertly utilising the 'war machine' at its peripheries. However, this form has given way to new 'corporate states', substituting the disciplining project with a model of a (Deleuzian) 'society of control', where the state concern is less with creating society in its own image but rather with protecting 'the agents and agencies of power from the orders or societies of the population the state contains' (p. 19). This is said to entail a radical bringing together of state and war machine at the centre of corporate statehood itself.

The following three sections take up this outlined concern to differing extents. The three chapters of the first section on 'Transformations of Sovereignty, Empire, State' are perhaps most strongly concerned with this envisioned corporatisation of statehood, wild capitalism and violence unbound: June Nash explores the increasing contradictions in US capitalism as well as shifts in the role of the state through the growing corporatisation of the US military-industrial complex in Pittsfield. Focussing on the Chechen wars, Jakob Rigi argues that the analysis of Russian interventions allows understanding the transformations of the post-Soviet state in terms of a globally emergent chaotic form of sovereignty, where spectacles compensate for lack of transparency. Finally, Caroline Ifeka explores market forces, political violence and war in Nigeria, arguing that the power of the traditional nation-state is being squeezed out in the polarising growth of new ethnic and global sovereignties.

The second section, entitled 'War Zone', brings together three chapters on different parts of Uganda, highlighting everyday experiences under severe conditions of war and social upheaval. Kirsten Alnaes provides a detailed account of rebel ravages in the Bundibugyo district, bordering the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and suggests that their extreme violence results from their future-less existence as 'living dead'. Sverker Finnström focuses on the experience of Ugandan civilians in Acholiland, coping with violence exercised by both state and guerrilla at a global periphery that remains largely disintegrated from cosmopolitan global flows. Finally, Frode Storaas shows how the introduction of modern firearms among

pastoralists in Karamoja, whilst important for protection and useful in raids, has profoundly transformed and accelerated violence in the absence of a strong state.

The third and last section on ‘Sovereign Logics’ is the most heterogeneous, bringing together six chapters that explore the changing configurations of state, non-state and anti-state sovereignty in various settings. Investigating pre-genocide representations of the Rwandan dictator Habyarimana, Christopher Taylor uncovers continuities in the imagery of pre-modern sacred kingship and legitimate modern rule, shown to be used to expose Habyarimana’s unworthiness. Dealing with paramilitary violence in Guatemala and Colombia, Staffan Löfving argues that, rather than reducing extralegal killings, the international hegemony of notions and practices of ‘transparency’ has merely led to a delegation of violence to semi-secret military auxiliaries. Bjørn Enge Bertelsen looks at sorcery and death squads in war-torn Mozambique, suggesting that given ‘sorcerous’ accumulation and extralegal violence within the corporate state, sorcery also constitutes a last resort of protection for its vulnerable citizenry. Focussing on the liberation war in Algeria, Rasmus Alenius Boserup argues that the guerrilla combined seven specific types of violence when fighting two interrelated wars – one external against France, one internal against traitors – in order to build their independent state.

In one of the best chapters, Mats Utas traces continuities of state-run violence in the history of Liberia, showing with regard to the civil war of the 1990s, how strategies of deliberate disconnection from the predatory state have maintained some localised control, while the overall weakness of the Liberian state has led to its trans-nationalised incorporation into Hardt and Negri’s ‘Empire’.

Finally, in another excellent chapter, Glenn Bowman productively uses Agamben to argue that the encystation, i.e., the encirclement of Palestinian communities behind the ‘anti-terrorist fence’, and the simultaneous withdrawal of the judicial order from them, reconstitutes them as ‘bare life’ and as the ‘exception’, on which the modern Israeli state builds its sovereignty.

Kapferer and Bertelsen argue in their introduction that this last chapter, besides highlighting Israel’s modernist state-formation, also contains corporatizing dimensions – and evidently refer to Israel’s border transgressions as described by Bowman. Yet, such behaviour could equally be characterised as modernist imperialism. In other words, this example (like others) highlights a certain weakness in spelling out more concretely, how to exactly identify modernist and corporatist elements of statehood in empirical cases. The same applies to the highly abstract and unspecific distinction between ‘state dynamic’ and ‘war machine’ – a problem directly imported, of course, from Deleuze and Guattari. Furthermore, the definitional thesis of the endemic crisis of statehood resulting from its necessary failure to monopolise excessive power, seems far too general, but then strangely disappears as the central concern for the corporate state. At least this reader is left wondering whether, for instance, the analytical distinction, proposed by Joel Migdal and Klaus Schlichte, concerning the dynamic between ‘the image’ and ‘practices of the state’ does not provide a more productive take on such issues than evoking a seemingly monadic state logic that squeezes itself through reified machines of war and state.

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**Miller, Daniel. 2010. *Stuff*. London, Cambridge: Polity Press. 169 pp. Pb.: 14.99 £. ISBN: 9780745644240.**

From his base at University College London, Daniel Miller has put ‘stuff’ at the centre of social science analysis. Miller’s latest book is an original and accessible text for undergraduate students and lay readers. The book is neither a theoretical treatise nor an ethnography but something of a combination of intellectual autobiography, insightful journalism and educated travelogue. The book was originally conceived, Miller tells us in the prologue, as a ‘retrospective examination’ of his own ideas, which sets out to convince readers that the ‘best way to understand, convey and approach our humanity is through our fundamental materiality’ (p. 4). By examining his own academic trajectory through the social sciences and by drawing on the prodigious range of ethnographic materials collected by his collaborators (notably Mukulika Banerjee) and the large number of doctoral students whose work he has supervised, Miller wants the reader to ‘face up to stuff, acknowledge it, respect it and expose ourselves to our own materiality rather than deny it’ (p. 6). ‘We too’, as he puts it, ‘are stuff’ (p. 6).

To this end, the book is written in an intimate and informal style that appeals to and engages with the reader as if in conversation with them over a glass of wine or beer. The text is dotted with personal anecdotes, pop-culture references and jokes that reveal something of the author’s irreverent academic style. For the reader who comes looking for a more scholarly entry point into Miller’s writings, these may grate at first, but they eventually become quite endearing and offer an antidote to the turgid dullness of much academic writing.

The book is broken into five chapters and an introduction. Four of these chapters draw primarily on ethnographic material around specific arenas of material culture. Chapter one takes on clothing, chapter three focuses on homes and housing, chapter four deals with media and communications technology, and the final chapter explores the materiality of life and death. In each of these, Miller maps the ethnographic landscape, shows how things make people as much as people make things in a diverse range of global locations. One of the most successful repeated arguments is Miller’s approach to the ethical and moral discourses surrounding consumption in Europe and American societies, including those associated with excessive consumerism in post-affluent Britain. *Stuff*, Miller reminds us, is ubiquitous and problematic. We cannot keep ourselves pure and sacrosanct, and the notion that it is possible to do by limiting our investments in the material world of clothes and goods tells us more about a Euro-American ‘depth ontology’ in which the body’s surface reveals the person’s inner truth.

Chapter two is the theoretical chapter that offers us a whirlwind tour of Miller’s philosophical and theoretical roots. We are taken through Hegel, Marx, Simmel, Levi-Strauss, Bourdieu, Gombrich and Goffman (though not necessarily in that order). Anybody hoping for academic depth will be disappointed. This is theory light, but it achieves what it sets out to do. Miller’s brief exegesis of a Hegelian dialectic approach to material culture, for example, is accessible and convincing. While acknowledging that purists might see

his approach as ‘vulgar and academically sinful’, (p. 42) he neither assumes too much of the reader nor is condescending.

Throughout the book, Miller presents himself as an academic outsider and disciplinary radical, who has struggled over the course of a career to make things matter to anthropology. If this book makes clear to students why ‘stuff’ is important, it sometimes fails to give a satisfying account of anthropology itself. While Miller is at pains to locate the study of material culture between disciplines, in doing so he has created a rather caricatured portrait of anthropological work and research. The representation of anthropology – ‘we don’t have hypotheses’, ‘we go and live with other people’ – does some injustice to the blurred nature of disciplinary boundaries. In sociological studies of science, technology and markets, for example, there is strong interest in ethnography as a field method.

If there is a major gap in the text, I would say it is precisely here: in its failure to truly engage with the approaches to materiality taken by actor-network theorists Bruno Latour, John Law, Annemarie Moll and Michel Callon. Actor-network theory – with its demand for symmetry between human and non-human actors and its emphasis on the relationships or associations between actors – has had a major impact on the way that biomedical and communication technologies are understood to move between global locations, as they are shaped by and reshape persons and social relationships, but there is no evidence of that here. A brief, cursory mention of Bruno Latour (p. 75) fixes the point of divergence with Miller’s approach as the Hegelian dialectic. It is a shame that Hegel is placed in the way because Miller’s emphasis on the comparative method and his commitment to ethnography actually has much more to bring to actor network approaches than he lets on.

The book demands to be seen as an attempt to spark an intellectual flame in novice anthropologists coming to the study of material artefacts for the first time. As an introductory text for use in first-year undergraduate courses, it has much to recommend it. As a retrospective examination of Miller’s own writings, however, the book is less convincing. A more challenging retrospective would be better curated by somebody other than the artist himself.

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**Kürti, László and Peter Skalník (eds.). 2009. *Postsocialist Europe. Anthropological Perspectives from Home*. Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books. 336 pp. Hb.: \$85.00 / £50.00. ISBN: 9781845454746.**

László Kürti and Peter Skalník, two authors well known for their contributions to the anthropology of Europe, and specifically for their problematisation of the complex relations between 'western' and 'eastern' European scholarship and for their critique of anthropologists' roles in producing and reproducing ideological divisions and stereotypes, come back to these questions with a newly edited volume on post-socialist Europe. The book covers a diversity of ethnographic research on the ongoing transformations in eastern European societies, in both rural and urban contexts. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that all the contributors – young as well as those more established – are natives of the eastern European countries they study.

In their introduction, Kürti and Skalník introduce the main problem addressed by this volume: twenty years after the fall of socialist regimes, with the continuation of the EU enlargement process, they question the contemporary limits to notions of 'centrality' and 'marginality' and the still asymmetrical power relations, both inside and outside academia, between 'old' and 'new' Europe. They also attempt to renew the discussion about the virtues of and deficiencies in indigenous anthropology as a method for the comprehension of actual processes of change in post-socialist Europe. The editors of the volume condemn the residual imbalance leftover from the socialist period between internationally recognised knowledge produced in the theory centres of western Europe or the US and indigenous knowledge. They see a divide installed between native and foreign scholars of Europe since the late 1960s, when a separation between western anthropologists and native ethnographers took root due to the distinction at that time between anthropological (known as *Völkerkunde*) and ethnographic (known as *Volkskunde*) approaches. They are critical of the almost systematic neglect by western anthropologists of local ethnographies, considered rather as banal contributions within the *Volkskunde* tradition, and even more critical of the lack of attention paid to local ethnological theories and discussions among indigenous scholars. The authors object to this disregard and marginalizing view since it makes local scholars feel like second-class anthropologists and forces them to struggle to legitimise themselves by adopting the dominant theoretical, methodological and analytical tools, most notably the English language.

The main argument of the volume is that anthropologists living and working in the societies they study may offer alternative views to those of their colleagues who may have made only brief visits by comparison. Because of their position, native scholars also have different responsibilities to and engagements with both the local and the academic communities within which they work. Whereas local scholars characteristically adapt to models and theories emanating from the West, the authors suggest that foreign anthropologists pay more attention to the styles of anthropology produced by eastern European academics. Such alternative perspectives, when compared to the works of other anthropologists in other parts of the world, could do much to promote anthropology as a significant comparative and critical discipline.

The complexity and variety of situations observed in the field are well represented by the eleven chapters that follow. By presenting two case-studies, from rural Poland and rural

Hungary, respectively, Michał Buchowski (Chapter 3) and László Kürti (Chapter 7) give two examples of ‘successful’ economic transformations in agriculture, controverting the negative images about the consequences of decollectivisation and privatisation in the rural sector that scholars usually observe. Two other chapters, Gabriel-Ionut Stoiciu’s (Chapter 11) comparative analysis of multinational enterprises in Romania and France, and Hana Červinková’s (Chapter 4) work on the Czech army, deal with the changing identities and statuses workers and officers learn to know as a result of the reformations of the abovementioned institutions. The paper presented by Alexandra Bitušiková and Katarina Košťalová (Chapter 2) on increasing female engagement in local politics in rural Slovakia as well as Peter Skalník’s (Chapter 10) work on contrasting images of democracy and pluralism in the Czech Republic provide a focus on political transformations. Vytis Čiubrinskas’ (Chapter 5) study on Lithuanian diasporas in the US and return migration along with Zdenek Uherěk’s chapter (Chapter 12) on labour migrations from Ukraine to the Czech Republic question the new individual and collective identities emerging due to migration and transnationalism. Finally, some peripheral groups and social minorities and their rights activism are given voice through Grazyna Kubica’s (Chapter 6) work on gay and lesbian movements in Krakow, Terézia Nagy’s (Chapter 9) article on poverty and homelessness in Hungary and Rajko Muršič’s (Chapter 8) paper on rock-alternative music in Slovenia as an entry to a partisan and critical anthropological scholarship.

The volume gives a balanced overview of the different ways the ongoing transformations in Eastern Europe are experienced by different social actors. Still, scholars and cases from southeastern Europe (former Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania for example) are much less present. Furthermore, as Christian Giordano points out in the book’s afterword, the authors’ intention is to take a critical stance towards both the folklore and socialist ethnographic traditions that have dominated eastern European scholarship since its foundation as well as towards the western ‘transitology’ that prevailed in post-socialist studies during the last two decades. Indeed, this intention is a very important one to pursue. However the reader does not see so many differences between the volume’s chapters, in neither the styles of writing nor the topics selected, in comparison to other texts written by native or foreign scholars about post-socialist Europe. From this point of view, one could say that the result is somewhat disappointing. Perhaps the volume would have benefited had the authors further clarified the ways indigenous theoretical schemes differ from western ones. Finally, by emphasizing the antagonistic relations between native and foreign scholars and devaluing the cases of cooperation between them, the book tends to reproduce the ideologies of east-west divides its authors wish to criticise and/or overcome.

In sum, this volume is a valuable collection, providing us with significant insight into recent ethnographic works produced in eastern European universities and research centres – insight of great use to scholars interested in the changing processes of everyday life in contemporary post-socialist Europe. Its most important contribution is that it is an engaged text, calling for more sensibility on the parts of both ‘foreign’ and ‘local’ anthropologists with regard to the dangers associated with hegemonic power relations, those produced inside the discipline and among its practitioners.

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**Vannini, Phillip (ed.). 2009. *The Cultures of Alternative Mobilities. Routes Less Travelled*. Surrey, Burlington: Ashgate. 279 pp. Hb.: £60.00. ISBN: 9780754676669.**

In *The Cultures of Alternative Mobilities: Routes Less Travelled*, Vannini has collected an impressive body of essays examining how people move and what this says about the cultures in which they are, in fact, moving. This book is separated into three parts: Performing Space and Time; Mobile Biographies, Identities, and Lifestyles; and The Materialities of Mobility.

This book, simply put, is amazing. All too often, people somewhat ‘turn off’ when they travel, failing to note how they are getting somewhere, with whom they are travelling, and what getting somewhere means both for society and for cultural transmission. Vannini’s work is an academic wake-up call to the fact that the facets of our lives we take for granted can be sources of engaging academic investigation and serve as excellent perspectives on the world in which we live.

The book excels in providing information that, at least to this reviewer, was amazing and new. For example, in Christy Collis’ chapter, ‘Walking and Sitting in the Australian Antarctic Territory: Mobility and Imperial Space’, it is noted that Australia claims 42% of Antarctica as its territory, an admittedly controversial claim that is not recognized by many (p. 41). This article is also adds depth to this book in that it takes the concept of mobility and firmly plants it in a realm of politics and imperial exploration – definitely something very different from studying populations using bus transportation or river-borne mechanisms. Indeed, herein is the beauty of this book: it unites such diverse topics together in a single, accessible volume.

Another outstanding chapter, one that led this reviewer to ask many questions of himself, is Lucy Budd’s ‘The View from the Air: The Cultural Geographies of Flight’. This article explores the transition of how an airplane flight, once considered an exciting part of a trip, is seen as just a method of getting to a destination where your trip or vacation actually begins. I have noticed this phenomenon during trips to South America. Obviously, an overnight flight offers little chance for observation. Further, as Budd points out, the speed and altitude of jet travel make ground observations less gratifying than they used to be. However, passengers on international flights I’ve been on regularly checked the available map (in the headrest display used for entertainment services) to see where the plane was currently flying and often exchanged observations of those places with aisle-mates. I have heard such comments as, ‘Have you been to Puerto Rico?’ or ‘I miss seeing Tobago’ while flying. These comments built community out of a group of strangers: truly something amazing to witness.

Jeffrey Kidder’s chapter, ‘Mobility as Strategy, Mobility as Tactic: Post-Industrialism and Bike Messengers’ takes an in-depth look at the use of bike messengers in major cities around the world. Kidder notes that the demand for messengers is not an industrial development, but one of post-industry. Even in the Information Age, sometimes original documents or other tangible items must go from Point A to Point B in minutes, something that cannot be achieved via e-mail or standard delivery service like UPS or government



postal services. Kidder notes, 'Most bike messenger companies have delivery options ranging from same day service to deliveries completed in 15 minutes. It is this 'on-demand' aspect of messengering that distinguishes it from services offered by the US Postal Service, DHL, FedEx and UPS. FedEx, for example, can deliver something to Angola by tomorrow, but only a bike messenger can get something across town by lunchtime' (p. 180). Kidder does an excellent job of exploring the difference between strategy and tactic. As good as this is, Kidder's best work is done in exploring the behaviour of the bike messengers and how they hone their skills in a dangerous environment and how this in turn creates a bike messenger culture that is unique, but globally similar.

Vannini has created a book that is accessible and outstanding. It would be a great textbook for undergraduate anthropology students interested in conducting social anthropology research. Students, having read this book, could then be turned loose in any environment and study how people get places and what these mechanisms mean. They could study human behaviour in environments they have ready access to, without the need for learning new languages or customs. The book would prime students to become the observers we all need to be in doing research.

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**Mlekuž, Jernej. 2009. *Burek.si?! koncepti/recepti*. Ljubljana: Studia Humanitatis. 202 pp. Pb.: 22 Eur. ISBN: 9789616262903.**

My immediate association when reading the title – *Burek.si?! koncepti/recepti* – was of pleasant surprise. Mlekuž's rewritten and published doctoral dissertation strongly symbolizes the long-lasting efforts of Slovenian anthropologists/ethnologists to distance their scholarly endeavours from the long and burdensome national tradition of ethnology. *Burek* was undoubtedly one of the (strategically) ignored topics in Slovenian ethnology, as Mlekuž illustrates well in his brief but telling analysis of Slovenian ethnological production on food and eating habits. *Burek* is baked or fried filled pastries made of a thin flaky dough. It can be filled with cheese, minced meat, or vegetables, most often potatoes and spinach. It became a popular part of Ottoman cuisine, and is today an important part of everyday eating habits in South Eastern Europe. Mlekuž's much-needed attempt to bring it into the focus of scholarly research highlights the current anthropological aim of turning attention towards those elements of everyday life (in the process of an obsessive quest for authenticity) that have previously been marginalized or completely ignored.

Mlekuž thus attempts to present different and ambivalent interpretations of *burek* in present-day Slovenia. In tracing the diverse meanings people attach to *burek*, he draws mostly on the theoretical perspectives on discourse and power developed by Michel Foucault. He notes that the discourse about *burek* has changed dramatically in the beginning

of the 1990s, when the Slovenia as well as other ex-Yugoslav republics experienced severe political transformation, which have also contributed greatly in the process of (further) degradation and stigmatization of the food of the 'Other'. At the same time, this process has also offered possibility to resist the dominant, often nationalistic discourses. To tackle the questions of continuity and change, the author had to dig deeper into the past and offer a historical perspective on the appearance and transformation of burek and its diverse meanings in the Slovenian context.

He argues that burek has crucial position in the current discourse of healthy life, where it represents the typical and dangerous unhealthy and greasy food. This has led some Slovenian food companies to produce a more acceptable burek for Slovenian consumers. Its part in the healthy-life discourse had an important role in forming present-day youth culture. Here, the eating habits that grant a special place to burek (not only because it is always available after a night out) serve as a medium of resistance not just against adult culture, but also against the nationalistic discourses, in which burek stands for a significant 'Other', hence the people and cultures of ex-Yugoslav republics. Young people, therefore, construct their identities through their consumer activities and eating habits that oppose the disciplinary mechanism of their parents.

Exclusion of 'Others' is also well illustrated through valuable observation formed on the analysis of newspaper articles, where burek is condemned for physically re-creating or even Balkanizing the city, for example by building stands in the city centre of Ljubljana, which is perceived as a valuable Slovenian architectural heritage. Here as well, the burek is seen as the pollution of Slovenian 'national culture'. However, the reactions to burek, as well as the altering of space are diverse.

To demonstrate different, clashing discourses about burek that coexist in Slovenia, the author relies on very rich material gathered through the years in Slovenian media, popular culture, in cyberspace, literature and travel guides; however, the reader might feel that there was more fine-grained ethnography actually done than the author was able to present in the written form. What might be missing (although author admits it is not his main intention to analyze) is the deeper insight into practices of people, not just their statements about burek. Focusing on practices might be truly informative in revealing how the discourses transform the eating habits and what are their (unintended) consequences. One of the strengths in this book is the way Mlekuž draws attention to the inherent contradictions in these discourses, thereby not only examining their coexistence, but also their entanglements.

At times the need for exposure to diverse voices is apparent. For example, the author sometimes juxtaposes in a simplified manner the discourses of Slovenians about the burek and the discourses of people from the other ex-Yugoslav republics currently living in Slovenia, in a way that unconsciously legitimizes the already present nationalistic optic, which he mostly argumentatively criticizes. Not only that, he claims that the burek is most important for identity-construction just for Bosnian Muslims or Bosniaks, where he neglects the fact that burek in the Balkans is actually part of the Ottoman legacy that has been, at least in the Bosnian context, accepted among all its population as

a important part of everyday menu and also culture. However, he also – although with clear discomfort – still connects tradition and burek in immigrant communities, showing just a glimpse of the entanglements of these (here too aggressively separated) discourses. Therefore, this argument could have been developed further. In that way, it is important to point out that this book would have benefited from a wider reflection of the broader ex-Yugoslav context, since it would explain diverse strategies of appropriation of burek among the people and also discard some of the stereotypes regarding the consumption and identity-relevance of burek.

Despite this criticism, the book is a valuable contribution to an emergent field of study of cultural appropriation as well as appropriation of negative, hegemonic discourses of the Balkans as Western culturally inferior ‘Other’. Although author is writing about the (discourses on) burek, Mlekuž exposes the process of introducing stronger Balkanism into Slovenia after its independence, but at the same time, through burek, he also shows Slovenian resistance to the dominant atmosphere and the opposition to processes of ethnic exclusion. As a final remark, it must be said that it was pleasant reading this well-researched scholarly book, which has been written in a playful and teasing style. Through his unusual writing style, the author communicates well with the scholars as well as with the general audience.

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**Strang, Veronica. 2009. *What Anthropologists Do*. Oxford: Berg Publishers. 224pp. Pb.: £ 14.99. ISBN: 9781845203559.**

Generations of students of anthropology have been coming to me with the questions like, ‘What is the scope of anthropology?’, ‘What kind of jobs can we do after we do anthropology?’ This book attempts to answer all these and more in a very comprehensive manner. It is a commendable exercise to gather a huge amount of information on the application of anthropology in almost every possible field in the contemporary world and to disseminate this knowledge in simple and easy-to-understand language to its young (or not) readers. The author has, at the same time, been keenly informed by the ethics of anthropology as we understand it in the context of a just and equal world: an attempt that has been made by post-colonial anthropologists to lift anthropology out of its colonial past.

As the author introduces the subject, she makes the profound statement, ‘Anthropological research generally involves working with a host group or community to create an “ethnography”’ (p. 2). This emphasis on anthropological knowledge being a combined exercise, a collective effort on the part of the researcher and the community is the underlying theme of the book that, by foregrounding those who were only regarded as ‘subject matter’, makes the entire goal of anthropology different from merely the collection and analyzing of data. If we lose the dichotomy between researcher and community, we automatically lose the dichotomy between pure and applied research, a point that is made explicit here.

The author highlights the strength of anthropological theories, their ability to look under the surface, their cross-cultural perspectives, their ability to generate empathetic understanding of the others and their ethical humanity; thereby answering the question as to why anthropologists can do what they do.

The book also dispels many stereotypes held about the subject, like its association with the 'exotic'. Numerous examples are brought up to illustrate the ability of anthropologists to contribute to the understanding of every aspect of human life, situated in the most 'ordinary' of spaces, like the offices of computer technologists, modern hospitals and government offices, business firms and advertising agencies. For example, a 'corporate Margaret Mead' can connect a 'customer-centred insight' with 'work-centred intelligence' (p. 113).

The work that anthropologists can do across a range of possible locations, however, draws upon very similar assumptions and methods, i.e., a human involvement with others, and an ability to empathise and communicate across cultures. Based upon the very traditional anthropological techniques of qualitative research, of field work and immersion in 'other ways of life' an anthropologist can carry out, 'cultural translations', found so helpful in international business, and governance of multi-ethnic societies.

The basic understanding that language is not about words but about cultures, about meaning systems, so ingrained in anthropological theory, enables those trained in it to understand the process of 'cultural logic', an understanding that may have very effective results in terms of productivity in an international business situation and global advertising. At the same time, anthropologists are the most severe critics of globalisation and international capitalism; they have advocated for and won many victories for the people who have protested against erosion of their ways of life and resource bases. The contribution of anthropology has not been to merely make a sentimental case for preservation but to show the practical, environmental and technological rationality behind the acceptance of 'pluralism'.

It is in the interest of the global environment, of global peace and coexistence that the deeper understandings about human behaviour and culture that anthropologists generate be put to use in governance, in the making of public policies and in almost every area of public life, including health, housing and urban planning, in development, food security and international relations. Anthropologists have also turned to studying the internal workings and hence the 'politics' of institutions of governance and policy making, such as Chris Shore's work on the European Parliament in Brussels and works of scholars on corruption, on the 'social production of indifference' (Michael Herzfeld 1992) and others quoted in this work.

A significant contribution of this volume lies in the inclusion of the voices and careers of anthropologists, who have done work in various areas of research. It is immensely illuminating to know, especially for those who have yet to make a career in anthropology, just how and why some people came to do what they did. It is important to hear from the scholars themselves, how they came into the subject, how they developed an interest in doing their research and what they think about the work that they have accomplished. It is

also helpful to know about how one can contribute, what are the diverse ways (teaching, setting up organisations, joining governance institutions, working as independent consultants etc.) by which one can become a part of the professional category of anthropologists. The career graphs make both interesting and informing reading and as well as inspire a new generation to take it up. As Chris Shore ( p. 81) says, '[F]or those who are interested in otherness, or for those who want to understand the conditions of their own existence, I would say anthropology is a must'. The author quotes Kay Milton states, 'I would advise anyone who wants to change the world to go for anthropology' (p. 162).

Towards the end of this volume, Strang provides useful guides to resource materials on various dimensions of anthropology, a guide for students to enable them to take up anthropology as an academic subject and a comprehensive bibliography that reflects the enormous resource base on which this volume is based. While the author has included a wide range of cross cultural research areas in her work, I wish she had made some explicit reference to the differential research requirements of the developed and developing world; for example, issues of environmental racism and of neo-colonialism.

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**Leutloff-Grandits, Carolin, Anja Peleikis and Tatjana Thelen (eds.). 2009. *Social Security in Religious Networks. Anthropological Perspectives on New Risks and Ambivalences*. Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books. 248 pp. Hb.: \$90.00 / £55.00. ISBN: 9781845455767.**

In times when welfare states are struggling to respond to the increasing demand for care, the alternative providers of social security become increasingly more important. The institutionalised social and health care systems and services for people in need of care, either for themselves or their family members, are no longer able to meet all the needs of their citizens and, due to the significant and profound changes in family patterns, neither can family members. So, who will provide care in insecure and turbulent times ahead? This most relevant and thought-provoking question has been occupying policy makers, social, care and health workers, as well as scholars from a variety of academic fields. Their discussions are crucial for understanding the major extent of the problem, and are especially welcome when they draw from everyday situations and circumstances. Therefore, sound ethnographic research material combined with good theoretical debates can most significantly contribute to answering the above question. The contributing authors of *Social Security in Religious Networks* offer just that. Focusing on a specific social support system that exists alongside (and is interrelated with) the state and family, they provide interesting discussions based on empirical work conducted in various parts of the world. Religious networks as providers of social security in times of globalisation are discussed

in ten case studies, grouped together into three parts: responding to new risks and crisis, ambivalences of religious gifting, and transnational networking.

The first part addresses risks and challenges, including new diseases, war and political reforms, that induce transformations in the provision of social security by religious networks. Focusing on faith-based charities and their role in various social crises, four contributing authors discuss Christian church assistance to families affected by HIV/AIDS in Uganda (Christiansen), analyse the charity campaign of Caritas in post-war Croatia (Lutloff-Grandits), focus on the network (and individual biographies) of Protestant women engaged in a charity association in East Germany before and after unification (Thelen), and compare social security provision by Qigong and Christian networks in relation to the dismantling of state social-security arrangements after the Cultural Revolution in China (Kupfer). These four case studies present how religious networks in different states respond to a variety of crises that challenge the established patterns of social security provision.

In the second section, the ambivalences in religious gifting are presented on the case of religious charity networks of African Pentecostalism and Islam (de Bruijn, van Dijk), volunteers and nuns in Czech Republic who fundraise and provide care for the elderly and infirm within secular, state-dominated structures of health care provision (Read); and immigrants' engagement in religious networks in Malawi (Rohregger). While de Bruijn and van Dijk emphasise that charity and gift giving do not aim at or result in reducing the vulnerability of the African population, Read in contrast shows that the care offered by the nuns and volunteers is emotionally warm and highly personalised.

The final part of the book is most relevant and interesting, not only for scholars and professionals engaged in social security studies, but also for migration scholars, as it takes up the issue of migration with a specific focus on transnational relations in religious networks. As noted by the editors in the introduction, the relationship between religion and transnationalism has indeed not attracted much attention in the social sciences (although it needs to be emphasised that there are some good references available on the topic).

The three case studies presented in the book are therefore a welcome contribution to understanding how specific transnational religious networks were established and how they complement or supplement the other agents of social security provision at distinct points in time. The examples include German and Lithuanian Lutherans in the Curonian Spit (Peleikis), a Catholic women's congregation (Hüwelmeier), and Haitian transnational religious and family networks (Drotbohm).

All in all, the book offers a variety of relevant and interesting case studies that do a good job of presenting the ambivalent character of religious networks in their role as social security providers, and are bound together by an excellent introductory chapter.

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**Daniels, Timothy. 2009. *Islamic Spectrum in Java (Anthropology and Cultural History in Asia and the Indo-Pacific)*. Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate. 210 pp. Hb.: £55.00. ISBN: 9780754676263.**

The author has made an intensive effort in this book to explain socio-religious images and their role in overall life in Indonesian society by elaborating Islam's presence as a visible and public form of cultural expression. A wide range of issues and topics have been covered in the book, with the support of in-depth ethnographic data, to present the main argument in an elaborative and comprehensive manner. Starting from the presentation of the locale of his research, the author argues that even though the Eurocentric understandings of the Javanese people, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, presented them as 'surface level Muslims', the presence of Islam is quite deep rooted in the apparent plural structures of the society. The process of Islamizing the Hindu-Buddhist ideals of spirituality was reinforced by Muslim Sufis and became part and parcel of the everyday lives of people. While explaining people and making comparisons among various sections of society, the author views that the categorization of people on the bases of social status and religiosity is something that is not fixed or constant. However, in most of the sections of the book, the author uses the same categories as units of data analysis.

Exploring alternative medicine systems prevalent in the society, the author views faith healing as a common practice and analyses it with a functionalist perspective. The indigenous healers usually apply a variety of Islamic, normative, magical, spiritual and sorcery-based techniques to cure people. However, the famous healers usually criticize the methods of other healers to prove authenticity of their own methods; the critique usually revolves around the point that which healer treats people in a way that is more 'appropriate and according to Sharia'.

The same holds with the debates concerning the performing arts, dance and the local form of dance: the *Dangdut*. There is a change in perception about the recent and traditional forms of dances. Modern dances and new styles in *Dangdut* change the perception of people by changing their focus on 'lyrics and music fit with body movements' to the 'body movements dominating lyrics and music'; the latter is viewed as socially undesirable by reformist Muslims. The resistance to undesirable body movements became widespread in the country and there were violent, physical attacks on dance gatherings. However, the counter-resistance by secular and traditional parties was shown by their use of performing arts and dance as a part of their political campaigns. While the author explains the modern socio-political dynamics of *Dangdut* and their impact on society, the old styles of *Dangdut* and their clientele with their socio-political outlooks are not the part of analysis.

The author traces the history of Islamic reformist movements during the period of colonization of the country. The modernist interpretation of Sharia law was the response of reformist Muslims to the colonial masters. The reformist organization, Muhammadiyah, was established in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with an aim of 'purifying' the cultural practices of Muslims. Although the movement gained a wide audience throughout the country, the generic response of masses toward this movement was not that of a warm welcome

towards their rigid and cold interpretations of the everyday life issues and public forms of cultural expressions. Within the reformists, there is a difference of opinion about what are acceptable or unacceptable forms of cultural arts and their performances. Some reformists focused on the modification of public forms of cultural arts and maintained that these arts and cultural expressions could be used to propagate their message. On political levels, some 'compromises' were made by reformists and pro-Muhammadiyah parties to gain the attention of voters near elections by using cultural arts and performances as a tool of campaigns. The process of reformation is even visible within reformist's efforts to use various ways of analysis ranging from literal explanation of religious text to contextual interpretation with a perspective of social sciences and also using intuitive, subjective and personal experiences. The impact of their cultural reformation is visible and can be seen at both the government and establishment levels, as well as the national and global levels.

The author also explores the stream of theatrical performance as public form of cultural expression and performance, especially student theatre. Theatre has represented the socio-political trends of consent and conformity as well as resentment and resistance in the modern history of Indonesia. In the post-Suharto period, the theatre played a vital role in highlighting the corruption and other social evils of society. The major themes played by student theatre are power relations in society and their dynamics, anti-capitalistic jargon, hypocritical middle-class moralities, religious elites and their corruption as well as issues like domestic violence against women and gender discrimination. There is a growing trend of using theatrical performances by reformist groups to spread their vision of Islam. What all different streams of theatrical performances reflect in common is the impact of globalization on the individual as well as the understanding of individuals about socio-political phenomena under the influence of globalization.

This unrest of the individual with multiple perspectives created a space for the Maiyah movement in Indonesia to grow fast as a recent phenomenon. Maiyah is a gross root level piety movement that focuses of purity of the self and the heart by giving a sense of *communitas* to its followers. The aim of the movement is to increase spirituality and compassion among its followers. The movement operates under similar principals of Sufism in Islam, but it has followers and sympathizers even among Catholic Christians and Buddhists. Rejecting categorisations like religious and secular, Maiyah focuses on some values and principals, like faith, patience, steadfastness and knowledge, which guide individuals to feel the presence of God. The organization reflects the plural trends in society while aligning with religious and cultural orthodoxy in terms of behavioural practices by disapproving of 'deviancy'.

The book as a whole presents a wider picture of different streams of people within Indonesian society and their approach as well as practice towards various public forms of cultural expressions, keeping in view the impact of Islam at different levels of these multiple streams.

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