

BOOK REVIEWS

Smith, Daniel Jordan. 2008. *A Culture of Corruption: Everyday Deception and Popular Discontent in Nigeria*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 296 pp. Pb.: \$25.95. ISBN: 9780691136479.

One immediate appeal of Daniel Jordan Smith's book lies in the extremely vivid and varied examples of corruption and deception in Nigeria it discusses. Thus, intimate relationships can be undertaken and described as a '419' – a reference to a section of the Nigerian penal code that deals with fraud and a way to characterize methods of monetary profit based on manipulation, deceit, and illusion and as epitomized in email scams, the securing of buyers' down payments on otherwise occupied properties that are actually not for sale, the peddling of fake medical drugs, and the services of false professionals, to name but a few. These are followed by situations such as extortion at police checkpoints, the need to grease public officials to obtain various documents and assistance, string pulling and bribing for placements at educational institutions, paying one's way through exams, corruption through contractual work, and in the NGO sector. Further up the social ladder, one encounters political corruption and '419' on a grand scale; this is attested to by forms of political patronage, the misappropriation of public funds, election rigging, and Nigeria's thwarted development.

Smith notes the widespread belief in 2004 that the condition in which this otherwise oil producing country had no working refinery and was thus dependent on the importation of fuel was engineered by the highest political elites inclusive of the then civilian president Olusegun Obasanjo. As these elites were understood to control fuel importation and distribution, keeping domestic refineries broken down was seen as a deliberate strategy through which they could maximize their financial gains (pp. 20–21). Last but not least, there is also the internationalization of corruption: enticing emails that few non-Nigerians with an internet connection are not unaware of, the collusion of international actors with domestic economic inequality and exploitation, the globalization of Nigeria's oil economy, and the way many non-Nigerians appraise all Nigerians as deceitful, venal, and criminal.

The further importance of Smith's study, however, not only lies in the sincerity with which he often writes as a direct participant in the instances he lays bare, but also in his tracking of the dynamics of victimhood, denunciation, and connivance in them. Thus, while one obviously does not refuse payment to a demanding armed policeman, individuals otherwise condemnatory towards corruption may nonetheless willingly participate in its practices. Crucially, these may be the only means of survival and/or getting things done available, supplementations of meagre or unpaid wages, responses to larger chains that either demand illegitimate payment for their services in turn and/or other patron-client and kinship networks that can function as systems of reciprocity, redistribution and welfare. Therefore, while engaging in the national pastime of criticizing corruption, many Nigerians may see their own corruption as either unavoidable, morally justifiable or attractive anyway, especially when they factor in the wealth it may generate or contrast it with practices of '419'. And yet, although practices of '419' go beyond 'the boundaries that can be explained by ties of kinship, obligations of patronage, and duties to the communities and groups to which an individual belongs', they have become so pervasive that they dominate perceptions of Nigeria's social fabric (p. 226). Smith hence captures what he calls

the ‘multidimensionality’ of popular responses to corruption in the assertion that: ‘Nigeria’s is as much a culture *against* corruption as a culture *of* corruption’ (p. 224).

This dialectic helps explain why many views of history and power in Nigeria can sometimes seem so inconsistent. One constant, however, that determines shifts of approval and disapproval with regards to army coups, individual military rulers, and civilian governments, is corruption. Smith cites a newspaper headline from 2003 reflective of popular views and in which the image of Olusegun Obasanjo was commented upon with words: ‘Worse Than Abacha!’; worse therefore than the most despised and venal military head of state Nigeria has had to date (p. 115). Smith provides an excellent analysis of an example of Obasanjo’s public correspondence in the aftermath of the making and breaking of political patronage in Anambra State in 2003 and that reveals Obasanjo’s willing acceptance of corrupt practices. Smith argues: ‘Political corruption is no less prevalent under the new civilian administration – indeed, many Nigerians argue that it is worse – but under democracy, people’s sense is that they have more leverage to demand part of the spoils’ (p. 136). This gives Smith’s key concept of ‘ambivalence’ about corruption, and by which corruption is marked by criticism as well as allure, an added collective spin. Thus, the future of the country may depend on how Nigerians will be able to navigate between rising ‘expectations of democracy’ on the one hand, and an ‘idiom of accountability tied to patron-clientism’ on the other (p.137).

Smith convincingly argues that perceptions, movements, and events not immediately discernible as critical responses to corruption can nonetheless be read as such and as is the case with accusations of witchcraft that accompanied the 1996 Owerri riots and that were directed against ‘419 men’. Corruption can also come to characterize broad attempts to the contrary (the vigilante group the Bakassi boys; the rise of Pentecostal Christianity) and Smith’s discussion of the rise of neo-Biafran Igbo ethnic nationalism again captures the need to read forms of popular discontent as actual yet also ambivalent reactions to corruption: ‘Ordinary Igbos who support or at least sympathize with the idea of independence from Nigeria express both the desire for a bigger share of the patronage pie and the aspiration for a less corrupt and more equal society’ (p. 193).

Of course, the multidimensionality of corruption is not confined to Nigeria alone. Examples of email scams that exist because greedy Westerners fall for them, hypocritical expatriates who denounce corruption while being the beneficiaries of immense privileges, and various NGOs that are internationally funded but that can be just ‘419’ fronts for siphoning off donor money, should keep in check any ‘holier than thou’ feelings outsiders may have towards corruption in Nigeria. Indeed, Smith’s valuable insights on the situational nature of corruption and how it is also fuelled by global structures of inequality that otherwise remain mostly unchallenged, can further remind the reader that Nigerians are not the only ones who are marked by ambivalence about corruption nor are they the only ones to face the dilemma of broad change or elite continuity. In this sense then, Smith’s arguments pertain not just to Nigeria, but should hopefully inspire further similarly informed studies of the heterogeneity and dynamics of corruption and deception in other settings as well.

NIKOLAI JEFFS
University of Ljubljana (Slovenia)

Jeffrey, Craig and Jane Dyson. 2008. *Telling Young Lives. Portraits of Global Youth*. Philadelphia: Temple Press. v–viii +232 pp. Pb.: \$23.95. ISBN: 1592139310.

This book aims to break the mould – and it does. If you are looking for a book that provides a neat theorisation of youth in a globalising world, you will be disappointed. The authors of this book have deliberately set out to avoid the common practice of fitting fragments of young people’s lives into set theoretical pieces. The book consists of a series of 13 portraits of young people, produced by different authors to provide insights into life in eight different countries (Tanzania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sierra Leone, Germany, South Africa, India, the UK and the US). Framed by a perspective on political geographies, the portraits reveal the importance of context – temporally and spatially – for understanding youth and young adulthood. It aims to produce a spatially and culturally sensitive political economy approach to the geographies of young people that goes beyond the ‘global north’ and ‘global south’. In a conscious effort to make these stories accessible and ensure that they have relevance beyond the academy, the authors adopt a highly descriptive approach, drawing as much as possible on each young person’s story in their own words.

The 13 portrait chapters are framed by an introductory chapter and an afterword, which provide a conceptual overview of current thinking in the field of political geographies. The introduction and conclusion invite the reader to make their own conclusions about resonances and disjunctures across young lives in very different locations, physically and socially. These framing chapters identify three thematic ideas through which readers might interpret the stories about young people’s lives.

Firstly, the portraits illustrate the idea of ‘reconstructing youth’. This is an important theme, because only through such a spatially and culturally nuanced treatment of youth is it possible to understand that youth is not a universal construct or experience. The book shows how adolescence is disappearing for the poor in parts of Asia and Africa, as rapid social change and health challenges mean that children go directly into adult roles. In other countries (for example, in the Indian Himalayas) youth has become a prolonged stage of life as increased educational participation has reduced the capacity of young men and women to afford to marry. Many of the portraits illustrate how youth and adulthood are fluid, contested concepts, and how adulthood, once achieved, can remain partial and be reversible.

The second theme running through many of the chapters is that of ‘imagining youth’. This theme invites the reader to think about the ways in which young people negotiate their lives and develop ways of living that go beyond the stereotypes (for example, framing youth simply as cultural consumers). The young people in these stories are also cultural producers as they find ways to achieve valued forms of adulthood.

The third theme is of ‘political geographies’, exploring a new politics, grounded in everyday circumstances and events but often connected to international issues. For example, Kabir, a young Muslim living in Scotland is passionate about doing community work, helping the local Muslim community as well as campaigning against the war in Iraq. Across each of these themes, the portraits represent space as imbricated in their struggles.

The book achieves its aim of presenting portraits of young people's lives without the heavy hand of academic interpretation or theoretical determination. Yet in some respects, the lack of conceptual depth is also dissatisfying. While the book draws on the idea of 'political geographies', it provides very little in the way of explanation as to what this might mean. It claims to link the experiences of youth across global north/south divides, but because the substantive chapters do not explore the wider implications of the individual portraits; this work is left to the reader. In addition, the introduction and afterword draw on a relatively out-dated set of reference points for understanding youth. Although the Birmingham School of Contemporary Cultural Studies and related work in the 1980s and 1990s has been of historical importance, it is disappointing to see this collection ignore recent work in the field of youth studies. Claims of avoiding academic closure are a little hollow in view of the weight given to British studies of youth (four of the 13 contributions focus on youth in the UK).

These criticisms will not present a barrier for many readers. The portraits are the strength of the book. They provide an excellent resource for teaching about a variety of topics, including globalisation, social change, civics and citizenship and youth studies. The individual chapters, framed by the introduction and the afterword would very usefully be employed to 'unpack' more theoretical and conceptual works that abound in these areas. For this purpose, the minimal overlay of theoretical discussion in the chapters keeps options open for a variety of ways of using this book. I recommend the book as a companion reader for those teaching and researching in the broad field of youth studies.

JOHANNA WYN

The University of Melbourne (Australia)

Jackson, Michael. 2009. *The Palm at the End of the Mind. Relatedness, Religiosity, and the Real*. Durham: Duke University Press. 240 pp. Pb.: \$ 22.95. ISBN: 9780822343813.

Throughout his life, Michael Jackson – a nomad, a poet, a storyteller, and an anthropologist – has relentlessly been on the move. A meditative soul, who has always pondered over his as well as other people's experiences, has in the present book focused on the border situations and critical junctures in people's lives. These kinds of circumstances arise when life drops out of regularity and stability. Jackson explores relatedness and connectedness that go beyond the known, and which encompass not only people but also animals, things, ideas, and feelings. Although fond of William James' concept of 'pure experience', and the questions posed by existentialism and phenomenology, he moves away from pure academic and highly philosophical writing, and uses anecdotes, poetic images and juxtapositions to investigate the relationship between religiosity, intersubjectivity, and the liminal situations with which people are faced in everyday life. He quotes John Dewey: 'The visible is set in the invisible; and in the end what is unseen decides what happens in the seen; the tangible rests precariously upon the untouched and ungrasped' (p. 6).

Like in his other writings over the last fifteen years, such as *At Home in the World* (1995), *Minima Ethnographica* (1998), *The Politics of Storytelling* (2002), and *Existential Anthropology* (2005), Jackson continues to explore the complex issues of intersubjectivity. Shortly after taking up a position of a Distinguished Visiting Professor in World Religions at the Harvard Divinity School in 2005, he comes across Ari Goldman's book *The Search for God at Harvard*, and plays with a thought of exploring the universal notion of 'religious experience' – and not some kind of institutionalized 'religious belief' – in a similar way. This book is the outcome of his search for this kind of reality.

From the beginning of the book, the focus on liminality and in-betweenness as experienced through ritual, oneiric, poetic, and imaginary manifestations comes to the fore. The stories from his life, caught between the academic job and the reality of the world, between town and bush, between mundane routines and reverie, between complete shadow and complete illumination – for which he uses the image of penumbral – are interwoven with the stories of other people who crossed his path through either intimate relationships or incidental acquaintances, through an oral or a written account.

Sixty one short essays are organized into four parts: Ancestral Roots, Primary Bonds, Elective Affinities, and Competing Values. The book begins with fieldwork in London where Jackson meets his Sierra Leonean expatriate friends. Sewa's, Isata's, and Khalil's stories are intertwined with Jackson's own experiences at the same time: turbulent flight to Europe, organizing US emigration papers after losing permanent residence, a visit to Paris. With Sewa, he engages in a discussion about the importance of living in the presence of ancestors and how dreams influence the perception of reality. Sewa's wife Ade suffers complications in her pregnancy and loses their long-expected child.

In the second part, Jackson explores the boundary between remembered and mythical time, reflecting upon his maternal grandfather, fieldwork among the Warlpiri of central Australia, and how relationships are played out over time. He scrolls through the journal that his mother has been writing over a period of ten years before her death. Long quotes from her diary deal with her childhood, her struggle with arthritis, and her painting, which she took up as an adult. Lunch with his colleague, a renowned medical anthropologist Arthur Kleinman, and reflection on suffering in concentration camps – where one is prohibited from doing or saying anything – do not stand out as detached wholes but, dealing with existential questions of pain, suffering, morality and religion, merge into a coherent narration of people's lives and a threshold between presence and absence, existence and nothingness.

On his way to Wellington where he is about to receive an honorary degree, Jackson recounts many stories of loss. In one of the longest essays, he writes about the personal tragedies of the British explorer Alexander Gordon Laing, who decided to explore the Niger River. He was killed in 1826 without ever reaching its source. His wife Emma Warrington, whom he left behind two days after their marriage, suffered from insomnia and a dread of summer storms and died three years after him.

To give a touch of Michael Jackson's writing and his experiential perspective of being-in-the-world, one can look at his delight when he moved from physical and social

confines of a room that he and his wife shared with their friends into the open space of sensory experience: ‘We leaned back against the sun-warmed stones. I closed my eyes. I could smell the warm earth. Hear the buzz of flies, the tinkle of a pebble dislodged by a lizard scuttling into the shadows of the stones. My wife’s voice came to me with my own thoughts: “If only we could stay on here,” she said. “Just do nothing but let the landscape seep into us. Just dissolve away in this blue light.” “How would we survive?” “We wouldn’t survive. We would live.”’ (p. 112).

The whole book is permeated with twists and often unexpected developments revealing the complexities of human life. Habits are ruptured; restrictive knots of social life are loosened. It seems as if the stories from the book would themselves stand in a twilight zone between day and night, between waking and sleeping, when illusion becomes real and reality an illusion, when poetry is lived and life itself becomes poetry. From the moment I took the book into my hands, I found it hard to put it down. This ethnography of the borderlands of human experience captures the reader enabling him or her to reflect not only upon the intricacies of relatedness and religiosity but to move beyond thought, into the realm of ‘the palm at the end of the mind,’ and look at the world through more sensitive and compassionate lenses.

BORUT TELBAN

*Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts
and
University of Nova Gorica (Slovenia)*

Montgomery, Heather. 2009. *An Introduction to Childhood: Anthropological Perspectives on Children’s Lives*. Wiley-Blackwell. 296 pp. Pb.: £17.99 / €21.60. ISBN: 9781405125901.

Although it has been said that they are not people but children (p. 58), they have always been at the heart of human relationships. Montgomery presents us with a unique corpus of several ethnographic case studies dealing with the notion of childhood and its place in anthropological debates. By bringing children to the forefront, she questions the foundation of every society. She turns the mirror to each of us, because once upon a time we were all children. Each of us became *someone* and each of us carries *something* further from our parents. From an anthropological perspective, there would be no kinship and no society without them. ‘Children are the means by which parents become ancestors and they are also the way that adults understand the relationships between ancestors and mortals in this world’ (p. 64). But how much do we know about children’s lives in different social and cultural environments?

The book starts with birth, actually earlier. It does not offer any particular definition of childhood, but rather looks at the social significance of its different stages. It leads us through the history of anthropological writings and cultural concepts related to the process

of becoming a person. The author emphasizes that there are multiple and various ways and paths how children reach adulthood. These ways and paths depend on a particular cultural context. There are no universals. It may take a lifetime to become an adult, or one can remain a child throughout his or her life. In a variety of descriptions, however, we nevertheless arrive at a common point. Children are never just passive observers. On the contrary, they are active participants in shaping the future of any society. They are essential for both cosmology and social change.

The book takes us through eight chapters or eight levels of discussion about childhood. These include studies considering adoption and fosterage, the role of parents, friends and peers, playing, learning and working, as well as punishment, abuse and discipline. The last two chapters before the conclusion deal with sexuality, adolescence and initiation rituals in particular. The latter correspond to the human lifecycle that is never closed or completed. Contemporary anthropological studies focused on children clearly show that the idea of ending the childhood at eighteen is irrelevant for numerous societies around the world outside the West. Among the Beng of West Africa, studied by Alma Gottlieb, not yet born children are seen as existing in a parallel world to the one of spirits, encompassing complete knowledge of all human languages and cultures. Growing up is perceived as a process of losing this knowledge and becoming less competent. Elsewhere, the children are seen as a kind of economic investment. According to Thai Buddhists, as Tantiwiramanond and Pandey argued, the parents are 'moral creditors' and children 'moral debtors.' Children express their gratitude to their parents by obeying and serving them until the end of their lives. And yet elsewhere, as Philip de Boeck writes about Congo, children are believed to be witches responsible for madness, cancer, or heart attacks amongst their relatives. Following the work of Viviana Zelizer one can say that in democratic and liberal societies, such as North America, children 'have changed from being producers to consumers, from being economically "worthless" to emotionally "priceless"' (p. 67). How do all these diverse experiences of being a child then influence a person's adulthood is rarely mentioned by adults.

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the time of childhood 'is a separate space, protected from adulthood, in which children are entitled to special protection, provision, and rights of participation' (p. 6). This institution is often concerned with physical punishment and abuse of children. In Sweden, for example, physical punishment has not been allowed since 1979 while in USA and UK it continues to be regarded as acceptable disciplinary technique. It is quite peculiar to learn that in punitive Christian traditions, 'children are seen as being born wicked and sinful and in need of punishment, not in response to their actions, but as a matter of course' (p. 156). According to Helen Morton, beating among the Tongans is a way of enforcing people's power relationships and showing hierarchies. The Tongans recognize thirty different terms for hitting children. There are also other culturally specific practices which deal with female circumcision, elongating babies' heads, neck stretching, foot binding or tattooing. Numerous studies were done on those children who are considered as peculiarities of the urban world, for instance, street children, child prostitutes or child soldiers taking part in

the new globalised notion of childhood. Montgomery, however, always brings a counter example to any extreme found in the vast anthropological literature, making these issues never one-sided.

Recognizing kin relationships, marriage patterns and exchange systems is considered essential for any study in social and cultural anthropology. In this sense, what the role of carers in children's lives is mirrors the views and practices of society at large. There can be biological parents (genitor and genetrix) or social mother (mater) and father (pater), optionally siblings and mates living with a child, who are the first taking part in the process of socialization. While acquiring language skills, attending school, playing different games or helping elders at work, children learn the issues of 'dayliness', which then guides them throughout their lives.

Childhood, however, is not only a period of learning, but it is also a period of contestation. The categories of work and play are in many ways blurred, depending on local understandings. School, especially in the West, plays an important and by law ordered role in children's lives. From the point of view of sociologist Jens Quortrup, '[I]t is at school that children transform themselves into the next working generation and the future educated workforce, and therefore their education is a form of production' (p. 153). Western children often find it repressive to attend the school, which is quite the opposite of African or Latin American kids who are eager to go there and learn. This may be due to the fact that in the West the focus has shifted from community to individual. Children are undergoing a kind of 'economic transition', which were not characteristic of more archaic or 'traditional' rites of passage discussed by van Gennep. Whether the transformative stage 'is a bridge between childhood and adulthood or simply one step of many throughout the life-cycle, it raises profound questions about the nature of childhood and the making of social maturity' (p. 232).

The world of children should be understood within its own social and cultural context. This does not mean to separate children's world from the one of adults, but to see the dynamic and inherent relationship between them. Each of ethnographies discussed in this book provides us with significant information not only about children's lives but also about society to which they belong. Studying children, however, also means studying social and cultural change. When social environment is modified, all those practices, expressions, and concepts that are related to childhood will also be modified.

DANIELA RACHEL VÁVROVÁ

*Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts
(Slovenia)*

Pinxten, Rik and Lisa Dikomitis (eds.). 2009. *When God Comes to Town. Religious Traditions in Urban Contexts*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books. 166 pp. Hb.: \$70.00/£45.00. ISBN: 9781845455545.

This is a slim and curious book, based on a somehow bizarre premise. We are told that as traditional religions (more precisely, religions of the Book) originated in small scale, rural societies, the fact that until 2030 the vast majority of humanity will be urban therefore represents a problem for their future appeal. My first thought was that Catholic Church has since long aimed to be ‘catholic’ that is, universal, and appeal to all people regardless of their place of living, ethnic background, income etc. This clearly undermines the basic premise of the book. I also wondered whether some ontological questions, like the meaning of life, basic human relationships and elemental ethical questions which are at the core of the religions, indeed differ radically in rural or urban environments.

I found answers on both questions later in the chapter of de Theije on urban transformation and religion in Recife in Brazil. She mentions a phenomenon observed by herself and many others, that religious fervour and visibility of religions have in fact increased in many cities, and that the number of different religions in the urban space has also increased. Also, she observes that search for religious meanings and answers to mundane questions seem to be ubiquitous.

Nevertheless, I believe in giving the benefit of a doubt, so I started with Hirschon’s chapter on the entanglement of religious and national identity in Greece, despite this country being a part of EU and experiencing increasing immigration. I do not find the strong connection of religion and Greek state particularly surprising because I argue that Hirschon disregards a crucial factor – the autocephaly of Orthodox Christian Churches. Since they are autonomous on their own territories, they are prone to form close entanglements with national politics and/or attempts to represent political interests. Furthermore, the reason why recent increased immigration has not considerably affected the religious situation is also not particularly surprising due to Greece having appalling record with minorities’ rights.

In the next chapter, Drweski mentions little known fact that Poland was not predominantly Catholic until after the Counter-Reformation. He describes why the Catholic Church was given a new impetus during the communist rule immediately after WW2 when it represented continuity with former peasant past for many, then living in the new urban environments. He implies that decades later the Church in the post-socialist socialist context in some aspects represents continuity of some socialist ideals, like social justice.

In the next chapter, Coleman examines affinity between urban environments and religion revivalism, especially among conservative Protestants. Collins introduces intriguing idea of the importance of studying the profane in what is apparently sacred space in his examination of space used by urbane Quakers.

Vozikas describes in a Greek case how the worship of a particular saint gives identity to a particular part of the city inhabited by the relatively recent immigrants from the rural environments. Dikomitis movingly describes a somewhat reverse process: how Cypriot Greek ‘refugees’, now living in a particular city in a Greek part of the island, undertake ‘pilgrimages’ to their former homes, presently inhabited by Cypriot Turks.

The book concludes with a chapter by Vercammen describing the evolution of *taijiquan*. It is not clear why this martial art is considered a religion. I assume that this is because it originated, or for some is still tied to Taoist tradition, or perhaps because the formal recognition of master-apprentice relationship are accompanied by many complex rituals.

That which starts on questionable assumption, as this book does, cannot end well. Most of the essays in this book do not surpass the descriptive level. It is also very surprising that at places some authors demonstrate ignorance of a rather basic social theory relevant to their issues. For example, Collins laments that the theorists tend to ignore the issues of power and spatial (religious) organisation, but in his literature review does not mention Foucault and his famous concept of the panopticon. Vozikas cites Falassi and Turner, when asserting that in rituals society celebrates its core values and itself, but it would be correct to recognise Durkheim who first famously made this argument. Because of these reasons, the book offers rather little to those who are interested in in-depth and theoretically well-informed examinations of the issues of religion in urban spaces.

BARBARA POTRATA
University of Leeds (UK)

Stewart, Pamela J. and Andrew Strathern (eds.). 2008. *Exchange and Sacrifice*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press. 294 pp. Pb.: \$42.00. ISBN: 1594601798.

How do we approach the teaching of a concept and an activity such as sacrifice, particularly forms of blood sacrifice, to contemporary university students of anthropology? Do we begin with lengthy accounts of ancient European and Middle Eastern histories, beliefs and practices or do we begin with the ideas of Hegel, of Durkheim and of Hubert and Mauss, which were written to address particular theoretical interests and concerns of, among others, philosophers and sociologists of the 19th and early 20th century? An obviously useful approach is to share the insights revealed in ethnographic studies by contemporary anthropologists, as exemplified in this book edited by Pamela Stewart and Andrew Strathern. This is the most recent of the *Ritual Studies Monograph* series for which they are general editors.

In their introduction to this collection of nine interesting essays, Stewart and Strathern have written a useful survey of some of the classic discussions of sacrifice, including that by the 19th century biblical scholar W. Robertson-Smith, by Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss and by E.E. Evans-Pritchard. They have also concluded the book with a survey of exchange and sacrifice in Papua New Guinea. Otherwise most of the discussions are of ceremonial exchanges performed by communities of people in the Solomon Islands, particularly on the island of Malaita, but with one account of the practices of the Western Dani of West Papua. Each of the authors share the ways in which their thinking has been informed and expanded by their extensive fieldwork experiences.

In part, this book is a tribute to the work and insights of the late Daniel de Coppet. Most of the writers have followed de Coppet by integrating their focus on the two themes into holistic pictures of the societies that they describe. Each essay also demonstrates the way in which the scholars have read and considered challenging theoretical ideas developed by their predecessors and their peers. All the contributors discuss the effect of introduced economic and religious systems on local ideas about the maintenance of societies, particularly when this is affected by death, including violent death. Several of the writers also review other classic themes in discussions of Pacific communities, such as ranked societies.

The first essay is by de Coppet, translated by Hattie E. Hill. He discusses the use by the 'Are' people of Malaita, in the Solomon Islands, of lengths of shell-money which, together with pigs and other forms of food, are used in a number of ritual exchanges and compensatory payments. The creation and exchange of the shell-money and other items encapsulates physical, emotional and cosmic 'work' by the producers and givers – a conceptual approach which is familiar from that of other Melanesian societies such as the Trobriands. The members of the 'Are' community see themselves as located within the corporate social body, not solely as individuals, but as persons who are intrinsically and inseparably involved in the constant renewal of their society. De Coppet contrasts this with the European notion of the person, in which an individual can choose to actively involve himself or herself with the social, including religious elements acknowledged and valued in his or her society, or actively seek to be disengaged from them.

In his essay, *Myth and Metaphoric Metaphors*, in which he discusses the Lau, who also live on Malaita, Pierre Maranda takes issue with de Coppet with what he sees as that writer's tendency to assign the highest metaphysical and socio-cosmic significance to shell-money in Malaitan communities. He argues that, for the Lau, the ancestors are considered to be the primary agents of human continuity and prosperity through their influence on exchanges, with the shell-money as the tangible as well as symbolic embodiment of the socially and cosmologically significant values. John Liep, who has studied everyday life on Rossel Island, located in the Massim, for more than two decades, also discusses the significance of shell-money. The red shell necklaces, still so important for the Kula exchanges, are produced on this island. Additionally, there is a system of ranking of particular shells which are used as pledges for loans, for bride-wealth and in mortuary exchanges.

Dennis Monnerie, in his chapter, *The Great House and the Marche*, describes the way in which the Arama people of New Caledonia, integrate new and old forms of exchange, both ceremonial and economic, into 'traditional' forms of social relations. The exchanges which occur within the domain of the 'Great House', the term used for each of four ranked hamlets within the Arama village, are dominated and managed by high-ranking men, and enable the ritual affirmations of life-changing events. The Marche is a carnival-like, fund-raising occasion which takes place on Sundays every week, involving low-ranked men, as well as women and children.

In a particularly interesting discussion entitled *Proto-People and Precedence* Michael W. Scott relates and analyses the 'custom history' of the Arosi, a group living on

the island of Makira, the southernmost of the Solomon Islands. In this narrative by a senior woman the intermarriage of strangers (Mendana and later, Americans) with the 'real', 'small' people, that is the original inhabitants of the island, established an autochthonous matrilineage. Foreign visitors to the island are drawn into this narrative as returning descendants.

Shankar Aswani has made a thorough examination of the history of pre-European, inter-island ritualized warfare as exemplified on the island of Roviana in the Solomons. He convincingly asserts that, while headhunting may have intensified after the advent of Europeans, the patterns of conflict reflected earlier histories. There was a complex interweaving of ideas relating to the local form of leadership and the need to honour and placate ancestors by dismembering and sacrificing dead captives. People's body parts became items of exchange between the human and spiritual realms.

This collection contains a set of carefully-argued discussions of the two concepts featured in the title and the way in which these have been linked, not only to the taking of life but to the making of human life and communities. Overall, the content of each of the authors' chapters are complex, but well worth exploring.

WENDY E. COWLING

The University of Waikato (New Zealand)

Donnan, Hastings and Fiona Magowan (eds). 2009. *Transgressive Sex: Subversion and Control in Erotic Encounters (Fertility, Reproduction and Sexuality: Volume 13)*. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books. 280 pp. Hb.: \$90.00 / £55.00. ISBN: 9781845455392.

The cover of the book is suggestive of the burlesque, the somewhat ridiculous and the subtitle talks of 'erotic encounters'; in reality this is a book about borders and boundaries, how societies create and reproduce the critically divisive lines between the acceptable and the non-acceptable and how these lines are informed by the deeper reaches of the social; in the norms, values, history and culture on the one hand and power hierarchies, social control and structures of dominance and subordination on the other.

Thus, as we go through some of the very illuminating chapters in this volume, we discover that transgressive sex is about society and about power and about cosmological and social interpretations of lines that divide and that classify and categorize the social world. At the same time, it is made clear that boundaries and their interpretations are neither static nor limited but are recreated and charged with new meanings at every social dislocation and historical junctures.

The body is not a given condition but a dynamic entity that has its own agency but at the same time is controlled by the very conditions in which it is situated. Thus 'public' space can become transgressed by the acts of the bodies situated in it; or bodies may become 'sexed' or 'non-normative' by their situation, like in a public space or the 'transgressive' can become normative in some other situation, like a carnival. Ultimately 'transgression' is all about going across the line of demarcation, but what is important theoretically is the manner in which this demarcating line is constructed, the debates and discourses that problematize it and the cultural practices that make it visible.

The variety of ‘transgressions’ that have been dealt with in this book span a range of social and cultural practices; the carnival for example encourages ‘transgression’ but ultimately recreates existing hierarchies and norms; teenage sex may be transgressive, it may take place in a ‘no-man’s’ land, like an unoccupied house, yet it does not transgress its own norms. The debate as to what is transgressive may lead one into basic philosophical questions as ‘What is human?’ for it is only the setting of boundaries between the human and animal world that can determine the moral status of ‘zoo-sex’.

Bodies can also be marked through dress, ornaments and dance, thus ‘rituals’ of reversal of create a situation of what can be called, ‘licensed transgression’; the body becoming a mode of communication by itself, as also happens in a carnival or in same sex soliciting, where body language communicates the forbidden that cannot be verbalized.

Forms of sexuality can be seen as metaphors for establishing power relationships as homosexuality was used to mark the ‘other’ in the colonial period, along with other forms of ‘primitiveness’ like matriliney and polygamy. Similarly, child prostitution in Thailand can transcend the mere stigma of ‘transgression’ to attain national and political importance as setting of demarcations of the ‘our’ and ‘western’, raising notions of the First and Third worlds, poverty and exploitation and ultimately of identity politics.

For anthropologists, there are thorny issues of ‘customary laws’ and the transgression of norms of violence or even basic human rights; as also the negotiation of sexuality of the anthropologist, herself or himself. In a rare and candid paper, a woman anthropologist describes her own thin rope walking between the personal and the academic. Thus, customary laws may be concerned only with normative transgressions and not the emotional or even physical violence of an act. How do we as scholars classify them? Do we go with custom and turn a blind eye or we can call a rape a rape if it occurs? Does our methodology teach us how to handle our own sexuality, the presumption, although unstated has always been to regard the anthropologist in the field as ‘unsexed’; but does reality support this? If not then what is transgression?

We get a glimpse of new terminologies and how these seek to redefine existing categories and therefore the norms and possibilities of transgression. For example the development of a ‘queer’ perspective points out the arbitrariness of the ‘two sex’ categorization simultaneously stretching the boundaries of ‘transgression’ far beyond their conventional western usage.

The twelve well-considered and researched papers in this volume are all based on empirical data spread across the globe from Ireland to Thailand. They deal with every possible location of sexuality, in kinship, in witchcraft, in national politics and in fieldwork to name some. The introduction to the volume highlights the theoretical concerns and salient points of discussion. The identity of the researchers however puts them all in the category of the white first world anthropologists with the obvious centre of analysis grounded in a culture specific normative body. How anthropologists of other global locations would analyze ‘transgression’ is a matter that remains to be investigated. In another volume perhaps.

SUBHADRA MITRA CHANNA
Delhi University (India)

Nichols, Deborah L. and Patricia L. Crown (eds.) 2008. *Social Violence in the Prehispanic American Southwest*. Tucson, Arizona: The University of Arizona Press. 288 pp. Hb.: \$60.00. ISBN: 9780816526215.

This book is the result of the Archaeological Division of the American Anthropology Association-sponsored symposium at the 2001 Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archaeology entitled 'Multidisciplinary Approaches to Social Violence in the Prehispanic American Southwest'. Cannibalism and social violence within Native American history is wrought with political and social consequences. This book is successful at separating out what is sensationalism and what are good anthropological approaches to investigating a difficult topic. The participants in this edited volume produced a well-presented and thorough study of social violence in the Southwest. Three chapters, those by Walker, Whitely, and Perez, Nelson and Martin move outside the main research area to explore different methodologies to approach violence and cannibalism. By including these particular chapters, the editors underscore the importance of investigating all possible alternatives through interdisciplinary research.

Cannibalism, controversial in 2001 when the symposium was held, remains so today. A root of the controversy was the 1999 publication of *Man Corn: Cannibalism and Violence in the Prehistoric American Southwest* by Turner and Turner. The introduction of cannibalism into the cultural matrix of Native American lifeways of the Southwest created a sensation but also created deep rifts within the anthropological community. However, the publicity of the Turner's claims made seeking alternative explanations difficult. McGuire and Van Dyke specifically tackle the history of cannibalism. How this term has moulded archaeologist/bio-archaeological approaches to human remains found within the American Southwest is discussed in detail. Of note is their thorough discussion of the power of the term 'cannibalism' and its history within the Western world. Because this term has elicited sensationalism further research into anthropophagy (the consumption of human flesh) has been clouded. McGuire and Van Dyke subsequently challenge the evidence offered by Turner and Turner and highlight their shortcomings both in research and theory. Their chapter, *Dismembering the Trope* is a powerful and informative way to open the book.

Martin et al.'s chapter will satisfy those readers well versed in the osteological approaches to understanding social violence. The discussion of the osteological evidence, mainly healed postcranial fractures in females, and the behavioural consequences for specimens with healed fractures is easily digested (no pun intended) for those not as familiar with this type of technical analysis. Not only was it accessible but its discussion was well-supported and laid out. The authors offer detailed explanations for cranial trauma in lay terms, clear graphics and images that demonstrate the evidence, and a range of explanations that illuminate the complicated nature of research in the area. This was, for the reviewer, a highly informative and provocative chapter.

Perez, Nelson and Martin (also author of the previously discussed chapter) follows the Martin et al. chapter in terms of an interdisciplinary approach. Though this research falls outside the American Southwest, the research is invaluable because of their use of a

variety of methodological approaches. Also somewhat technical, this chapter focuses on a combination of cut-mark analysis and a study of ethno-historic accounts from the Zacatecas region of Mexico that describe ancestor veneration as well as the destruction of enemy remains to explore the distribution of cut-marks on 800 individual bone fragments. Using non-destructive methods to compare the cut-marks, the authors were able to map out the frequency, size and tool used to work the bones. The results of their study suggest that there was diversity in the way human remains were attended to at La Quemada. Though this site and the American southwest were not directly related, the multi-methodological approach used by the authors should be beneficial.

Cannibalism, as almost each chapter reminds us, is dangerous because of the connotation it carries. This book pushes beyond the trope of cannibalism by challenging that which has been constructed over centuries. Social violence is a broad topic but this book assists in clarifying what social violence means in the pre-historic American Southwest and is a solid example for any archaeologist/anthropologist who comes face to face with potential violence in the archaeological assemblage.

More importantly, this book highlights the interdisciplinary work necessary to study groups that have been marginalized. Because marginalization limits the understanding of cultural practice by condemning it and pushing it to the edges, research that reaches beyond the confines of 'standard' methodological approaches stands to produce a more detailed understanding of culturally ambiguous information. Researching across discipline lines means that a range of interpretations can be considered and that information comes from a variety of sources – ethnography, history, archaeology and others.

For non-US readers, this book exposes some of the underlying struggles archaeologist and bio-archaeologists face when studying native groups. Though this book does not bring the issue of racism and domination to the fore, it must be stated that the issue of social violence within and among native groups has been and will probably continue to be problematic because of the stigma that violence carries. For native groups seeking recognition from the national government and/or those challenging a veto of recognition, for example, social violence and undoubtedly cannibalism, can have damaging effects. These are not just past struggles; racism, savagery, barbarism and being uncivilized, despite their nineteenth and early twentieth century roots, still play a large role in people's understanding of native lifeways. This volume successfully offers alternatives to the sensational but simplistic explanation of 'cannibalism' that still plagues researchers of the prehispanic American Southwest. While social violence appears frequently in human remain assemblages across the globe, it is within Native American groups, and most notably the American Southwest, that it is most controversial.

C. BROUGHTON ANDERSON
University of Massachusetts Amherst (US)