

BOOK REVIEWS

RUTH M. UNDERHILL, *An anthropologist's arrival: a memoir* (eds. C. Colwell-Chanthaphonh and S. E. Nash), Tucson: The University of Arizona Press 2014, xii, 227 pp.

An anthropologist's 'arrival' is a mysterious thing; rarely do we hear the story of their becoming – the intimate, personal experiences of their lives that lead them to the discipline and establish their place within it. Even rarer is the honest voice of a woman anthropologist articulating the frustrations, alienation and failures of her own professional becoming. Indeed, such is the thesis of this edition of JASO, in which the authors have called for greater honesty and a space for 'failure narratives' in ethnographic writing. It is fitting, therefore, that Ruth Underhill's memoir, *An anthropologist's arrival*, should be reviewed here, for it is anything other than the sort of 'success narrative' most memoirs contain. As Underhill herself puts it:

This is not a success story... I have been reading autobiographies, and they have told me of women... who moved in a straight line to achievement. I did no such thing. My course was a zig-zag one, with stops and reversals. Perhaps my life's failures would be interesting to a non-heroic reader. (28)

And of interest they certainly are – for, by laying bare her failures, Underhill gets us to question the very meaning of 'success' and 'arrival' in anthropological scholarship. The debate is stimulated by two authoritative voices in the text – Underhill's herself and the editors'. The editorial voice is a strong one, owing to the fact that the memoir was incomplete at the time of Underhill's death. Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Nash have thus completed it by drawing on 33 transcripts of oral history interviews and public lectures from the 1970s and 1980s, and a collection of 300 photographs which can be found alongside Underhill's unfinished memoir notes at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. While Underhill's narrative is one of failure, disappointment and alienation, the editors of her memoir have employed a framework, structure and title that are more sympathetic to her accomplishments.

The memoir itself is divided into two parts: 'Becoming Ruth Underhill' and 'Becoming an anthropologist'. The first contains the narrative of Underhill's early life before her encounter with anthropology – a light-hearted and often comic story about a young girl growing up in a Quaker family with Victorian ideals of womanhood, perplexities over boys and co-ed picnics (78-107), first loves, heart-breaks (99-100), 'cat-licks' (Catholics) and church-goings. It also charts her early career as a social worker among 'fallen women' and Italian immigrants (pp 93-98), her early marriage (117-

127) and her disconnected memories of World War One (108-116). Here, Underhill articulates her persistent feelings of alienation as an outsider in her sociocultural milieu.

The second half of Underhill's memoir, 'Becoming an anthropologist', records her relationship with anthropology. It tells the story of her time at Columbia University under the tutelage of Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict, and her early fieldwork among the O'odham and Chona. Full of anecdotes depicting the politics, frictions and allegiances among the great personalities of Boas, Benedict, Mead and Gladys, Underhill's narration reads like insider gossip of one of the crucial professional networks in American anthropology. However, it was a network which she was forced to leave when she was unable to find a job in teaching or research. The final chapters are thus devoted to her work in the Indian Service, where she met with much frustration in attempting to apply anthropological methods and ideas to a bureaucratic regime.

In both acts of 'becoming', Underhill documents her 'failures' along with feelings of alienation and disappointment. Her first failure, she suggests, was that 'becoming Ruth Underhill' took much longer than it should have. Underhill was in her forties when she finally 'arrived' at anthropology, and she perceives her earlier life as a phase of stagnant liminality: 'Why did I wait like those larvae that grow to adult size in a chrysalis while other infantile beings are on legs and moving around?', (122-123) she asks herself. Yet, in analyzing the causes of this 'failure', Underhill's critical eye is able to see beyond her personal shortcomings to wider patriarchal structures and 'the power of the unseen forces which constrain us and from which we often struggle to break free' (ibid.).

For the editors, however, Underhill's chrysalis period should be perceived as a catalyst for a future career in anthropology. Her early experiences – grappling with gender role expectations, feelings of alienation, witnessing cultural difference and developing empathy for 'the other' – would later render anthropology familiar and intuitive. Thus, 'the second act of Underhill's life, becoming an anthropologist, is inseparable from the first act of her becoming Ruth Underhill' (15).

What is more, for the editors, Underhill would become a successful anthropologist precisely *because* of her late start; her fieldwork ability was enhanced by her maturity. Indeed, Underhill herself hints at this possibility by frequently contrasting her own maturity with the inexperience of her fellow students, those 'callow young people who had seen less of the human race than I had' (135). Thus she 'was no dewy-eyed babe' (168), but an independent, responsible and capable fieldworker. In describing her fieldwork methodology among the O'odham, she depicts herself as a patient, unimposing, respectful researcher whose life experience had taught her to listen and observe more than to talk and demand. This is contrasted with the story of youthful Henrietta (151-158), a fellow student who 'was at least fifteen years younger than I, awl with curiosity and ambition'. Henrietta was murdered by a young man while undertaking fieldwork among the Apache. In

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Underhill's view, this was the result of Henrietta's inexperience in socializing with young men and her youthful insensitivity to local gender norms.

Her time at Columbia University and research work among the O'odham represents the apex of Underhill's life story, which declines after graduation. Herein lies the 'failure' of her second becoming as an anthropologist – her inability to secure a job in teaching or academia. As she puts it, 'While the colleagues from my Boas story all achieved a certain amount of status, I didn't achieve status at all because I didn't take a teaching job and have students who would be my charioteers' (214). She registers some disappointment around her lack of fame, and one can't help but sense a bit of bitterness and jealousy in her appraisal of her colleagues' success: 'My colleagues...didn't do anything afterwards. They simply had trumpeters to advertise them' (ibid.). A similar undertone can be found in Underhill's dislike of Margaret Mead, to whose gatherings Underhill was never invited. Mead apparently 'demanded a great deal of reverence on the part of her hearers. They had to be pretty quiet and accept whatever she said' (141). Even Ruth Benedict's lectures are described as 'scrappy' and 'sometimes even inaccurate' (135). The only star to escape criticism is Franz Boas, 'Papa Franz' or 'my revered professor' (169), the patriarch of the group. The critique of social structure that Underhill applies to her early life is not as rigorously applied to the structures of academia and her 'failures' within it; as such, her critiques become personal, exuding bitterness and jealousy.

Nonetheless, feelings – jealousy, disappointment, bitterness, frustration, alienation – are the blood of an honest life story, and honest this one certainly is. This honesty is accentuated by an informal register and casual flow of language, which makes the memoir read like an intimate conversation. While informative for anyone interested in the history of American anthropology, this memoir may be especially of interest to those in search of 'failure narratives'. As one woman's unheroic, lived experience of grappling with life and anthropology – of becoming and arriving – it is, as we argue in this JASO edition, precisely what early-career, women anthropologists would like to hear more of.

LEANNE JOHANSSON

E. PAUL DURRENBERGER and **SUZAN EREM**, *Anthropology unbound: a field guide to the 21st century* (2nd edn.), Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010, xxv, 562 pp.

A reader does not open an elementary anthropology textbook expecting to discover a radical manifesto, yet that is exactly what one finds in *Anthropology unbound: a field guide to the 21st century*. In this general introduction to anthropology—or more specifically, to the anthropology of globalism—the

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authors aim to ‘inculcate...more aware, conscious and thoughtful citizens’ (xiv) through anthropological analysis of market globalism, economic liberalism and political power. This is an admirable, exciting goal for a textbook, yet the book’s bombastic title gives some hint to the often immoderate argument that will follow. The introduction informs us that, ‘This isn’t rocket science. It’s a whole lot more complex than that’ (xxv), and from there we are off to the races. The polemics of *Anthropology unbound* mean it is not a textbook for every classroom, but for teachers of anthropology who want to bring current affairs into the curriculum—in particular, critical perspectives on global capital, class systems and mass movements—this volume warrants a look. The reader should also note that this review covers the second edition: a third edition is reported to be in preparation and may be anticipated shortly.

Written by husband and wife team Paul Durrenberger and Suzan Erem, *Anthropology unbound* is intended for undergraduates coming to the subject for the first time. The critical, often combative tone is targeted at this audience and is calculated to engage, subvert and provoke the next generation of thinkers and practitioners. The authors present the building blocks of anthropological thought both with reference to global political-economic forces and as a critique of them. Following the American anthropological tradition, the authors work from the four-field approach, with opening chapters that cover archaeology and biological and linguistic anthropology before they devote the rest of the book to social and cultural anthropology, with chapters on kinship, ecology, economics, religion, politics, stratification and the state. The book is a whistle-stop tour of major anthropological concepts buttressed with ‘real-world examples’ chosen for the critical light they cast on global capitalism and market ideologies. The content—with examples largely focused on production economics—is heavily influenced by the pair’s work as scholars of organized labour. Despite their populist tone and occasionally revolutionary rhetoric, the authors remain positivists in their approach to social phenomena. Their explanatory model is largely materialist and functionalist, a framework that might appear old-fashioned to some readers. A mechanistic turn is evident in the book’s many illustrations, which resemble nothing so much as circuit diagrams, as the authors chart dependent and independent variables to portray self-intensifying loops of political-economic forces.

The style of analysis and presentation will engage some readers and dissuade others. Many readers will find that the format, a slim, introductory anthropology textbook, does not afford the authors the space to present their arguments in a well-referenced or nuanced manner; too often their positions come across as generalizations and thinly supported assertions. For example, in Chapter 14, a long and potentially informative discussion on the decline of cooperatives and the origins of industrial agriculture lacks any citation, and we are left with the impression of an angry, semi-historical narrative:

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[In the 1930s] industrial farming hadn't developed yet in the United States. Family farming was still hanging on. Some of these ag scientists [i.e. US proponents of industrial farming] were about to despair because the realities were so different from their neat theories. They didn't want to give up their ideology of serving business, so they concluded that farmers were backward and stupid. Therefore when Stalin asked whether they'd like a shot at doing what they'd been talking about, they jumped at the chance and Stalin got his new industrial farm managers from Iowa State University and other ag schools....

The aggies tried to help Stalin set up his collective farms because Stalin's image was just like their image of what a farm ought to be. And while the reactionary [US] Farm Bureau was branding cooperativists Bolsheviks and putting them in jail in the United States, Stalin was calling folks with the same ideas counterrevolutionaries and killing them. Neither socialism nor capitalism could tolerate the cooperative movement. And the guys the Farm Bureau liked in the United States were helping Joe Stalin set up his communist farms in the USSR (230-231).

In this tone, historical and contemporary expositions can meander through several pages. The book's folksy talk is intended to be a plain-spoken alternative to scholarly prose, yet at times the device can be tedious, strained or imprecise. Ultimately, the effort given to explication is not always borne out in the logic of the conclusions. The example of the financial collapse in Iceland occupies six pages (275-281) of conversational explication of complex commodities policy, constitutional challenges and quota markets, in order to reach the conclusion that markets function like religions. And further, 'when the people found out that the neoliberals were wrong they changed the government. But they'd all paid a high price of tuition to learn that economists are fools and the neoliberals were wrong. [...] They now face the prospect of becoming another underdeveloped country in debt to the IMF' (280). While forceful, these impressionistic conclusions fail to reflect the complexity of their sources.

Perhaps such a harsh critique is misplaced. This is an introductory classroom textbook, after all, in which generalizations are necessary and whose exciting arguments can draw students into deeper analysis. This is a book that seeks to challenge and inspire undergraduate readers to discover new patterns of thought, and to this end it will often succeed. In its very presentation, it also offers a contribution to the ongoing debate on anthropological engagement in public life and activism.

Regardless of whether one accepts the authors' stance, they inspire an energetic, contrarian approach to thinking and analysis. At its heart are questions of power, inequality and their replication through institutional function. The book proposes a political engagement—and a role for anthropology—that pushes against the mainstream. It is an activist publication that encourages readers to think critically about the institutions and structures at the core of our daily experience. This can be a tonic for more hermetic textbooks that shy away from engagement with contemporary power and global capitalism. If successful in its aim to inculcate critical thought, however, *Anthropology unbound* may inspire a reaction

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that its authors did not intend: the critical student might conclude that the book's arguments are as dogmatic as the dogmas it opposes.

DARRYL STELLMACH

SUSAN FALLS, *Clarity, cut, and culture: the many meanings of diamonds*, New York and London: New York University Press 2014, 224 pp.

In *Clarity, cut, and culture: the many meanings of diamonds*, anthropologist Susan Falls describes the cultural complexity of diamonds in the United States, calling into question both what it means for an object to be a commodity and what it means for a person to be a consumer. Falls depicts diamonds as objects constantly in flux, belonging in several categories – a luxury good for the wealthy, a ubiquitous necessity in the ritual of getting engaged, a family heirloom integral in bonding individuals, and so on. This variability depends on the consumer who makes sense of diamonds through a mix of marketing, media, personal history, social relationships, popular science and sensory experience. Everyone seems to think that their unique diamond has meanings that are completely different from what a generic diamond means.

Falls's theoretical starting point is to acknowledge that diamonds have powerful meanings and that, from a distance, there seems to be a cultural consensus over what those meanings are, based on media and marketing. In Chapter 3 Falls takes a stance against applying a Saussurean model of semiotics, in which signs are comprised of a signifier (a diamond ring, for example) and the signified (romance, glamour, status), in favour of the Peircian model of semiotics, where there is a sign, an object and an interpretant. Falls takes issue with Saussurean semiotics because it is removed from context, from a specific time and space and perspective. Peircian semiotics is more anthropologically relevant, she argues, because it takes into consideration the interpretant, the individual who interprets the object to understand the sign, and this opens up room for idiosyncrasies. In Chapter 4 Falls further highlights how diamonds can be various types of signs all at once: unique symbols of particular ideas, indexes of special moments, or iconic quasi-literal physical manifestations of metaphors. How an individual interprets a diamond could be completely different from how another individual does so. This creative agency, Falls argues, is often neglected in studies of consumption, this being a key contribution of her work to the anthropological canon of material culture studies.

Falls's ethnography is a mix of participant observation with diamond consumers and diamond experts, a history of the diamond industry, an overview of the science of diamonds, and an analysis of diamond marketing through the years. Falls spent a year interviewing people in New York City, and

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her conversations with diamond consumers centred around object elicitations, getting people to talk about their 'diamond stories'. She also conducted participant observation by enrolling in the Gemological Institute of America's 'Diamond Grading Course'. While the excerpts included in the book indicate that Falls's conversations with diamond consumers were incredibly nuanced, detailed and indeed idiosyncratic, the ethnography could have benefitted from being more experiential and less interview-based. The reader's sense of the day-to-day experiences of diamonds could have been enlivened if Falls had described not just 'diamond stories' but 'diamond moments'. For example, she could have accompanied a couple going to shop for an engagement ring to obtain a real-time sense of how they negotiated their own ideas of diamonds with the advertised ideas of diamonds during their shopping experience. Or perhaps she could have accompanied the people she interviewed to social gatherings in which they felt it was desirable to wear their diamonds to obtain a real-time sense of the performativity of diamonds. Too much of Falls's ethnography with diamond consumers relies on what people said, and in ethnography there is often a drastic difference between what people say and what people do.

The research could have also benefitted from a more diverse group of diamond consumers. Falls explains that she used snowball sampling to find people for her research. Her research participants were predominantly middle to upper-middle class white women in their twenties to forties, with some younger and older women and men as well. While there is a nice overlap between the demographics of Falls's participants and the target demographic of people for diamond marketing campaigns, the voices of the diamond consumers seem too distant from the social phenomenon of diamonds as 'bling', which Falls describes in Chapter 5. This fascinating section of the book describes how diamonds and their semiotics have been re-appropriated in poetic, playful and powerful ways by black communities and hip-hop communities in the United States. Falls provides a cultural overview of diamonds as 'bling bling' and 'ice', but the conversational excerpts are still from the upper-middle-class white New York women and men who are sometimes critical, sometimes admiring, but overall distanced from this interpretation of diamonds. A more culturally diverse group of participants might have highlighted the idiosyncrasy of diamond meanings even further, particularly in this chapter.

Overall, Falls's writing throughout the book is clear and vivid. She does an excellent job of providing intellectually rich arguments without the academic jargon that so often alienates readers or the attempts to make arguments more grandiose than they actually are. Falls's book is a wonderful example of how anthropological work can be made relevant, intelligible and interesting to both academia and the general public. The way she weaves together her conversations with diamond consumers with accounts of the history, science and marketing of diamonds, particularly in Chapter 1,

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provides not only a fast-paced, engaging reading experience, but also a tangible feel for the real-life dialogue between individuals and social structures – how information flows and is re-interpreted. From a visual anthropology standpoint, it is refreshing that Falls has provided hand-drawn images of diamonds to illustrate her points throughout the book, making a practical, theoretical, and aesthetic case for doing so at the outset.

This book can be an entry point into understanding not only diamond culture in the United States, but also semiotics, consumption theories and material culture studies. It might also have implications for applied anthropology in helping qualitative researchers come up with frameworks for acquiring a better understanding of the production and consumption of objects, and making those objects more salient in everyday life. The greatest contribution of this book as a whole is not a deeper understanding of diamonds (though it certainly achieves this), but a deeper understanding of creative individual variations in how people experience and make meaning out of material culture.

MARIA CURY

RICHARD FARDON, *Tiger in an African palace: and other thoughts about identification and transformation*, Mankon, Bamenda: Langaa Research and Publishing CIG 2014, xi, 287 pp.

Richard Fardon's rich collection of essays, published as *Tiger in an African palace: and other thoughts about identification and transformation*, serves the twofold purpose of illuminating the important themes of kinship and belonging, while simultaneously codifying Fardon's seminal contributions to anthropological research on West African nations. Containing eight previously published essays that each serve as a full-length chapter, as well as a new introduction written by Fardon for this publication, *Tiger in an African palace* covers a transitional period from the 1970s to the 2000s of 'middling societies' existing in the 'confluence of Saharan and Atlantic West Africa' (p. 1) throughout Cameroon and Nigeria. The ordering of the eight chapters serves to develop a nuanced argument throughout the entire work, ultimately centering on the interplay between the two important and symbiotic processes of identification and transformation, whose interplay comes to define the driving impetus for Fardon's life work.

Grounding these processes in early ethnographic work, Fardon begins with an essay rooted in his doctoral dissertation fieldwork during the 1970s, when he studied the Tiv, a large population (nearly 1.5 million) primarily of farmers in central Nigeria. Fardon re-analyses the segmentary lineage system that famously characterised the Tiv prior to British colonial suppression, arguing that marriage by exchange of sisters was a necessary component of the patrilineal system of descent. This

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analysis comes to bear directly on the discussion of identification and transformation through an intragroup regional comparison between marriage by exchange prior to suppression and marriage arranged through lords in hierarchical chiefdoms in the southeast of the Tiv population area. Continuing with his analysis of the Tiv population in his second chapter, Fardon delivers an essay heavy with historical theory by examining marriage practices through the lens of the Iroquois system of semi-complex marriage. This chapter stands out for two reasons, the first being that it is the only chapter not to have been previously published in English, providing an additional motivation to take in Fardon's work in this collected format. Secondly, this chapter provides some of the most intimate insights into Tiv marriage practices found throughout his work, primarily through an analysis of the kinship terminology. This ultimately birthed an alternative identity theory for Fardon that more closely reflected kinship relationships as opposed to those individuals have with the nation state.

Prioritizing development of thought over chronicity, Fardon's third chapter precedes the second by six years, again giving credence to studying Fardon's work in this current format, rather than essays published fragmentally. Chapter three's placement fluidly continues the theoretical discussion of identity formation by working from Ladislav Holy's folk model to emphasize that ethnicity is polythetic, in that an example of ethnicity must resemble some characteristics from an open-ended list. Fardon uses this development to generate the insight that an identity can neither be invented nor imposed, an important evolution of thought which surfaces again in later chapters. Building upon this elucidated conception of ethnicity, the author explores what it means for individual experience in modern Africa, as well as the articulation between broader ethnic narratives, in Chapters four and five, respectively. Addressing the individual level, Fardon introduces another theoretical thinker, Ian Hacking, and his account of human types in order to address the resurgence of chiefs, and how these elevated individuals influence, whether positively or negatively, the population's sense of relational personhood and the desire for emulation. Returning to his notion of a polytheistic ethnic conception, Fardon argues that the 'African ethic' is best envisaged through a complex of concepts, roughly organized around the terms 'invention', 'narration' and 'imagination', in order to avoid the pitfalls of oversimplifying these phenomena and therefore failing to describe them accurately. Chapter 6, above all others in the book, successfully achieves a succinct summarization of the theoretical concepts being discussed and is essential reading for any scholar concerned with identity formation in complex ethnic situations. In his final two chapters, Fardon homes in on the task of describing the concept of identity, first by examining the transformation of external materials into locally specific identities – thus again bringing the focus down to the level of the individual community – and then finally finishing on a higher level, through an examination of identity situated in modern cosmopolitanism. These final two movements serve to develop the

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dynamic relationship between transformation and identification formally, a lucid achievement that grounds each in its relation to the idea of sameness within a cultural system, a distinct category from that of similarity and an insight that ultimately solidifies Fardon's contribution to the understanding of identity formations. In Fardon's final chapter, he concludes with a penetrating thought on the nature of identity for the Chamba peoples of Nigeria: 'Identity is the vehicle of their interest in belonging to the culturally diverse and unequal national state that is contemporary, cosmopolitan Nigeria' (p. 245).

Given these clear ethnographic and theoretical achievements, *Tiger in an African Palace* will certainly please an audience already familiar with Fardon's work, which conversely, and unfortunately, means that the collection may be of less interest to those readers who have a casual interest in West African societal development. The introduction excellently sets the stage for all the discussions that follow, as well as outlining the genealogy of thought throughout Fardon's career, and is a worthwhile investment alone, particularly for students embarking on an anthropological career. However, this introduction by no means presents an overview of topics or field-specific vernacular, at times becoming laden with technical terminology and research-specific theories, leaving the reader not with a feeling of disappointment, but rather with a longing for greater exposition. A boon for this collection is the inclusion of an extensive index, enabling expeditious research of specific themes through the many years spanned by Fardon's research. Ultimately, through his ethnographic work and theoretical examinations, Fardon expounds not just on the themes of identification and transformation in West Africa, but also challenges the preconceived notions of all those who care to explore his enquiries.

DANIEL OTT

PATRICK KAPLANIAN, *Mythes grecs d'origine, I: Prométhée et Pandore*, Paris: Editions de l'Adret, L'ENTRELIGNE, 2011, vi, 442 pp. ISBN 978-2909623061.

This is a substantial book – 440 pages, around 200,000 words (some of it in smaller print, to address more specialist readers). Its focus is on the story of Prometheus and Pandora as told in the text ascribed to Hesiod (often regarded as a contemporary of Homer – say 700 BC); it does not treat the later development of the story in Attic tragedy or elsewhere. The book must have developed over a long period, since the first footnote says that it was already far advanced by 1992. Moreover, for much of the previous twelve years the author must have been heavily engaged in Himalayan Studies – he published a useful ethnographic book on Ladakh in 1981 – and he has since written or

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contributed to travel guides for various countries. The present book is somewhat elusive about the writer's CV, but it reads as if he originally planned a doctoral thesis within classics, but eventually decided against pursuing that career path.

Let us dispose straightaway of one source of irritation: the copy-editing and proof-reading are lamentable. Words are omitted or misspelled, both in French and in other modern scholarly languages; as for the transcribed Greek, the marking of vowel length is utterly inconsistent, and iota subscript is regularly omitted. Punctuation is erratic, often skipping one or both of the commas marking phrases in apposition. References have not always been checked. Moreover, since the book is presented as the first of three projected volumes, there is no index or collected bibliography to help the reader navigate a complex text. Much of this may be due to the author being apparently the same individual as the publisher. But let us pass on quickly: the book has serious academic content.

Though myth is notoriously difficult to define, myths of origin are near the core of our concept, and Hesiod provides the earliest European texts. Both the poems attributed to him, the *Theogony* ('Birth of the Gods') and *Works and Days* (*WD*), include the story of Prometheus and Pandora, albeit with differences of detail and context. In the former poem the story interrupts a genealogy of supernatural beings and the 'Succession Myth' (Ouranus, Cronus and Zeus are from successive generations); in the latter poem it explains why peasant life is so full of hardship. In brief, Prometheus, son of a Titan, tricks Zeus and originates a basic feature of sacrifice: humans eat the victim's meat, while gods receive the smell of the burnt bones. Zeus, in anger, deprives humanity of fire, but Prometheus steals it back. Zeus retaliates, both on humans and on the thief. A handful of his deities manufacture the beautiful Pandora, who is sent to earth, where she causes affliction in two ways. By opening the jar that Zeus gave her (the proverbial Pandora's 'box' is a mistranslation), this primal female releases countless evils, closing it in time to retain only hope (or Hope). Moreover, simply as a female, she is intrinsically an affliction to her husband, Prometheus' foolish brother Epimetheus; and women in general follow her example. As for Prometheus, he is tied up, and every day his liver is eaten by an eagle, until he is released by Hercules.

Kaplanian's book starts abruptly with Hesiod's cosmogonic figure of the primal Chaos, and offers no introductory account of the objectives and architecture of the volume (let alone of its projected successors). But since the story relates to the origins of many things, including sacrifice, fire, afflictions (such as illnesses), women and gender relations, it provides plenty of material for the first 185 pages. At this point a 'theoretical and epistemological pause' introduces Philippe Descola's fourfold classification of societies, which fails to accommodate Hesiod's Greece. Now (Chapter VI), the field of study is abruptly enlarged, to take in the anonymous and later 'Homeric' *Hymn to Hermes*, which again relates a theft and a primal sacrifice. Returning to Hesiod, we next study the

Myth of Races, which follows the Prometheus story in *WD*, but as the author sees, this is less an origin myth than a theory of time: its account of the decline of humanity from the golden age to the present degenerate iron age can be compared to the irreversibility of the changes caused by Prometheus. Chapter VIII analyses the lengthy prologue to the *Theogony*, which is addressed to the Muses and hence concerns the ‘truth’ of the subsequent myths. Following a study of the children of Night in the genealogical part of the *Theogony*, the book changes key again and criticises various theorists of myth. The targets are Lévi-Strauss’s methodology, Daniel Sperber on types of knowledge, Descola on schemata, and finally Freud and Lacan.

Thus the book ranges more widely than its title or opening might suggest, and a reviewer cannot hope to note all the ideas it contains that might interest anthropologists. As for Hesiod specialists among classicists, reasoned criticisms are addressed to most of the twenty-one papers included in an anthology dated 1996,¹ but references to more recent literature are hard to find. I shall confine myself to one instance of the style of analysis and two reactions to the general approach.

By focusing at such length on a single myth, Kaplanian is able to tease out a whole complex of meanings embodied in Pandora, though, in the absence of a summary or index, the scattered observations have to be synthesised by the reader. For a start, Pandora *is* earth, since Hephaestus makes her from that element; in *WD* he also uses water, and in a sense she is a piece of pottery. In addition she wears a golden crown on which Hephaestus has modelled all the wild creatures fostered by land and sea, and she is also crowned with spring flowers by Aphrodite’s attendants; so, like our planet, she bears the biosphere. She also carries her own doublet, the pot or storage jar, with its contents, which are less material: the afflictions she both carries and embodies are part of the sequence of exchanges between gods and men, and comparisons are possible with the offerings Prometheus made at the start of the sequence. However, the storage jar can also be read as an exteriorised womb (previous humans were presumably autochthonous, i.e. directly earth-born), and the womb can be read as an oven in which the foetus is cooked; but the foetus is generated by sexual intercourse which itself can be assimilated to a man ploughing a field (though this Greek commonplace is not explicit in Hesiod). From this standpoint the earthen Pandora represents her husband’s land – the patrimony that the peasant will toil over and which he will leave to his son. But she not only introduces the need for agriculture: Athena teaches Pandora to work with textiles, and on Zeus’s instructions, Hermes inserts in her the mind of a dog or bitch, together with deceptive language, including lies.

¹ *Le métier du mythe: lectures d’Hésiode*, dir. F. Blaise, P. Judet de la Combe, P. Rousseau. Lille : Presses Universitaires Septentrion.

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If there is a single key to the author's approach, it lies in the term 'coherence'. Prometheus is introduced as a bundle of contradictions, but the author cites a remark of a Caucasiologist, to whose memory the volume is dedicated, and who wrote on Georgian parallels to Prometheus: Georges Charachidzé suggested that such systematic incoherence had to be coherent. The last paragraph of Kaplanian's book (repeating p. 392) is as follows (I translate):

Myth is a cognitive system, a setting in order of the world. Hesiod's myth of Prometheus defines the status of men and women, of gods, Nature, language, sexuality, technology, etc., and ties them together, integrating all these things into a coherent whole. Finally, myth succeeds where modern science, fragmented into numerous branches, fails.

Naturally, any analyst of myth is likely to look for whatever coherence can be found in his material, and if there once existed an individual bard corresponding to Hesiod (which some doubt), very likely he believed his world view to be more or less coherent. But there are degrees of coherence, and not everyone will accept that this particular Hesiodic myth, or any body of myth for that matter, is a coherent whole in a strong sense.

One limitation of a search for coherence is that it emphasizes synchrony. Kaplanian does not totally ignore diachrony. For instance, in a footnote (p. 263) which probably represents scholarly consensus, Hesiod is said to represent the end of traditional, archaic-epoch mythology and to be heralding the philosophers (taken to have been absent from the preceding oral societies). Moreover, the great comparatist Dumézil, with his trifunctional theory of early Indo-European ideology, makes an occasional appearance. As is fairly well known, Dumézil's theory was used by the leading French Hellenist Jean-Pierre Vernant in his analysis of Hesiod's myth of the races. Kaplanian in fact somewhat modifies Vernant's argument, and also applies the theory to Hesiod's Succession Myth. However, the deep historical perspective offered by Indo-European comparativism is marginal to this volume.

Thus it is natural that no reference is made to the reviewer's paper on the Succession Myth, which compares the figures of Ouranus and Zeus with three figures in the *Mahābhārata*.² If one accepts (as I do) that the detailed similarities between the Greek and the Sanskrit are due to common origin, the view of Hesiod's figures provided by a synchronic approach is at least complemented. I hope to return to my comparison and elaborate it, paying special attention to Prometheus, and it will be interesting to explore the interrelation of the two approaches. Meanwhile, I am glad to have

² N.J. Allen, Bhīṣma and Hesiod's Succession Myth, *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 8/1-3 (2004): 57-79 (unfortunately the printer of that number of the journal substituted -ṇṇ- for -ṇḍ-, passim).

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reviewed (apparently for the first time) this unusual work by an independent scholar. Mythology may not be a particularly fashionable topic in anthropology, but it remains as fascinating as ever.

N.J. ALLEN

BRUCE LINCOLN, *Discourse and the construction of society: comparative studies of myth, ritual, and classification*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2014 (2nd edn.), 282 pp.

Published in 1989, the first edition of *Discourse and the Construction of Society* consists of essays Bruce Lincoln wrote in 1984-1985, aiming to decode the alchemy of hypostatization for ‘an understanding of how material and nonmaterial forces interact’, and how ‘mythic and ritual invocations...achieve reality’. If we are to believe Foucault when he opines that people know why they do what they do, Lincoln probes further into why we do what we do, in the name of what we (are told to) believe.

The anthology is organized thematically: each of the three parts opens with a theoretical exposé that lays out a framework for the chapters that follow. Part I demythologizes myths, the foundational tales constitutive of the identity of a collective. Following the Nietzschean-Foucauldian tradition of genealogy, Lincoln defines myth as topologized history retrospectively constructed with narrative intention. However, he rids myth of the negative connotation with which French thinkers of the Marxist persuasion typically associate it, namely that it is solely manipulated by the bourgeoisie. As demonstrated in Chapter Three, the complete levelling of the earth in the Persian apocalypse can be read as a metaphor for the eradication of vertical stratification, hence total egalitarianism or, as an evil intermixture, a catastrophic confusion of social categories. In other words, myth is a value-neutral tactic that can be employed to both buttress and subvert the establishment.

Part II investigates rituals, the gestural implementations of discursive shifts in response to the unravelling and reinterpretation of a collective’s mythical pasts. To Lincoln, ritual is an elastic category that includes, for instance, the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, for it exhibits the ‘chief hallmarks’ of being ‘highly stylized...divinely ordained and religiously legitimated’. Part III explores the problematics of classification, namely the delineation of two diametrically opposed factions in a given society. Taxonomic structures, the vocabulary that comprise the mythic and ritualistic lexicon, are often too rigid to capture the interstitial moment in which anomalies are caught in transformation.

Unique to this second edition is Part IV, in which Lincoln adopts Empedocles of Acragas’s framework of love and strife, the pair of dialectical forces that motivate the separation and coalescence of social groups. ‘The Mythic Sisterhood of Europe and Asia’ traces the schism between

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the two connected continents, the genesis of estrangement rendered anthropomorphically in Greek folklore. “‘We Are All Related’: The Limits of Inclusion at a Lakota Sun Dance’ documents a failed attempt at affinity between native Americans and whites who want to join the nominally inclusive indigenous celebration. Neither of these two accounts offers a particularly promising outlook on humanity; in conjunction, they show that it is easy for estrangement to germinate in affinity, but much harder to foster affinity in deep-seated estrangement. As Lincoln says in the ‘Unconcluding Postscripts’, this is the entropic tendency of humanity.

The human condition, for better or worse, is universal. Lincoln employs myriad ethnographic data to convey this point time and again. The pipe-smoking ritual of the Lakota Sioux shares the same language and sentiment as Christian communion; the Myth of the First Cattle Raid of the Nuer and Dinka parallels the biblical Esau and Jacob with uncanny exactitude.

Excellent at synthesizing, as he has shown, Lincoln brings much more than the mere collecting and regurgitation of other scholarly perspectives. It takes insight to find the common thread in Duchamp’s Fountain, Menenius Agrippa and an all-star wrestling match like he does in Part III. Another tour-de-force is his reading of the Nwala ritual in Swaziland: situated in a broader, world-historical perspective, what initially appears to be a Girardian, cathartic ritual now takes on a whole new dimension of reaffirming nationalism in the aftermath of identity crisis. Combined with a meticulous, blow-by-blow chronicle of Lincoln’s thought process, this panoramic survey of myth and ritual is easily accessible to a non-academic audience while still being immensely helpful for research purposes.

HEIDI ZHENG

MARSHALL SAHLINS, *Apologies to Thucydides: understanding history as culture and vice versa*, The University of Chicago Press 2014, paper (originally 2004), xii, 340 pp., £14.00, ISBN 978-0226-10382-2

In *Apologies to Thucydides*, Marshall Sahlins engages the ancient Athenian historian of the Peloponnesian War to explore the relation of anthropological conceptions of culture to the study of history and *vice versa*. While Thucydides is today cited as the ‘ancestor of historiography’ (1) by historians, political scientists, and even military scholars, his account of the war between Athens and Sparta remains incomplete for Sahlins, as it obscures the role of culture in favour of more universal constructs of human nature, imagined as invariably self-interested (3). Taking this omission as his point of departure, Sahlins weaves together an analysis that spans select examples from the Greek

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islands in the 5th century BCE, the Fijian archipelago in the 19th century, the (not-so-worldly) World Series of baseball in the mid-20th century, and the standoff between Cuba and the United States over the custody of Elián Gonzales into the 21st century – with brief pauses to consider Napoleon, Flaubert and Foucault in between.

Engaging in close readings of the historical examples around which the book revolves, Sahlins addresses his principle aim – to demonstrate the ways in which these events, and the actors who participated in them, were shaped by their cultural context and affected this context in turn. The question is not, then, one of the individual versus society, culture versus history, or social contingency versus pre-destined determinism. The point is to ask ‘how history makes the history-makers’ (155), how culture is involved in the unfolding of history at the same time as it is altered by history. ‘No history, then, without culture. And vice versa, insofar as in the event, the culture is neither what it was before nor what it could have been’ (292) concludes Sahlins. Thus reading Sahlins in his articulate and characteristically witty, twist-and-turn-filled narrative, the reader is brought back to the claims with which the book begins, namely that culture organises history just as it is impacted by it (11). This is no linear analysis.

Sahlins expands upon his principal aim and the questions this entails in three extensive chapters, each of which could be read as a stand-alone essay. The first chapter, and the one that engages with the work of Thucydides most closely, lays out the parallels between the wars of Athens and Sparta from 431 to 404 BCE and the islands of Bau and Rewa in the Fijian archipelago from 1843 to 1855 CE. Both Athens and Bau were powerful maritime powers who acquired great wealth by exploiting the resources of societies around them (sometimes at a considerable distance), and who ruled not through the imposition of their own state on other territories but by grand demonstrations of force and the potential for violence – what Sahlins calls ‘hegemony without sovereignty’ (103-4). But, Sahlins argues, the dominance of Athens and Bau were not in themselves ‘self-evident nor a direct expression of the material or physical coercion involved’ (105). Instead, one must consider how this dominance was derived in relation to, and in the context of, the wider relations between the dominant powers and their subordinates. Indeed, as Sahlins convincingly demonstrates, Athens/Sparta and Bau/Rewa stood in mutually constituted relation to one another. Both were thus ‘structural antitypes, transformations of one another’ (8), such that the ‘synchronic processes of complementary opposition’ (9) between them were based on interdependent, systemically and historically created differences. They were each other’s Other.

The parallels Sahlins draws between the Athens-Sparta and Bau-Rewa wars are many and interesting, although at times they seem too perfect. Certainly, for a reader unfamiliar with the histories and cultures of each, Sahlins makes a persuasive case (what might a classicist have to say,

however?). Yet this reader cannot help but wonder if, in making such a compelling argument for the parallels between the Peloponnesian and ‘Polypenesian’ Wars, Sahlins in effect undermines his basic thesis. Indeed, in outlining what appear to be overwhelming similarities between Athens and Bau, does Sahlins not come close to moving beyond the cultural specificity of each case, to universalising that which is culturally contextual? Could this not then be in accord with the very approach to history for which Sahlins criticises Thucydides, the latter wanting to produce an account that would be applicable for all times and all places? True, the ethnographic depth and rigour with which Sahlins engages grounds his analysis in cultural context, thus acting as antidote to charges of universalising tendencies. However, his reliance on a comparative approach to make the case for cultural specificity nonetheless raises further questions.

In the second chapter, Sahlins tackles the question of who makes history – the collective or the individual – through a discussion of what he calls ‘evenemential’ and developmental histories. The first is described as teleological, given that the already known outcome of certain events effectively determines how those events are memorialised (historicised?). This is the history of paradigm shifts, scientific breakthroughs and Bobby Thompson’s ‘history-making’ home run against the New York Dodgers in the final minutes of a tied game. While the section in Chapter Two that contrasts the latter’s evenemential history with the developmental history of the New York Yankees pennant run in 1939 (it was apparently always clear that the Yankees would win) may not be the most gripping of examples for those with less than a keen interest in American baseball, and thus comes with a second set of apologies from the author (126), Sahlins’ discussion of Elián Gonzales in the second part of this chapter reveals more clearly the relevance of his arguments. Here was a boy, lost at sea, being used to represent both (Cuban-) American values in the US and anti-imperialist struggles in Cuba as families (and nations) on both sides argued for his return. Caught in this tug-of-war, Gonzales was thus constructed according to the cultural politics of those who fought for him, a ‘familial microcosm’ played out in the ‘political macrocosm’ (170). An individual thrust into history-making politics, Gonzales ultimately helped shape history – no Elián, no war in Iraq, Sahlins mischievously suggests, referring to the subsequent loss of Cuban American votes for Al Gore in the 2000 Florida elections (180). Moreover, the synchronic cultural-cum-political differences between Cuba and the US were played out once more in the public eye, essentialising their values/cultures in the media coverage that shaped the public discourse. Historical narratives, one might add, reify culture.

In the final chapter, Sahlins returns to Fiji to focus on a major event in the war between Bau and Rewa – a fratricidal assassination that led to the ascent of Ratu Cakobau, which, we are told, changed the course of Fijian history (Ratu Cakobau would later convert to Christianity and cede the Fijian islands to Britain in 1874). Related in great detail, this account furthers Sahlins’ argument

regarding the interrelatedness of history and culture. Crucially, when Ratu Cakobau killed his half-brother, his half-brother was conspiring to kill him. The recourse of each brother to assassination was, Sahlins tells us, completely logical according to the cultural organisation of Fijian society at the time (the chapter is titled 'The Culture of an Assassination', after all). Indeed, Sahlins pays much attention to the complicated kinship structure and *vasu* relations that enabled sons to make claims on their maternal uncles and the latter's communities. The *vasu* relation is thus 'the privileged structure of the politics of betrayal as well as alliance, and of usurpation as well as succession' (222). However, that either brother *could have been* successful in carrying out the assassination demonstrates the limits of a purely cultural analysis; despite the cultural organisation of history, historical events cannot be predicted. Ratu Cakobau could have been killed, the historical trajectory of Fiji rerouted. Yet even if this alternative ending were to happen, and despite the cultural transformations it would entail, Fijian culture would remain intact. Neither culture nor history has the upper hand. Thus, by the book's end, the reader is convinced of the already convincing argument: culture shapes history, and history shapes culture; any account that omits either is thus incomplete.

While *Apologies to Thucydides* is admirable for the breadth of materials on which Sahlins draws and for the depth of ethnographic and historical knowledge he displays, the book is perhaps best described as a set of meditations on the themes of culture and history. That is to say, the book requires the reader to follow Sahlins as he meanders through historical accounts and across cultures, bringing together the disparate examples he has selected to ponder the power of culture to shape and be shaped by history. Curious however, given the book's focus, is the relative absence of consideration of history as constructed narrative. Perhaps this is not surprising given Sahlins' discomfort with 'current anthropologies of hegemony', which he accuses of deconstructing the concept of culture to the extent of rendering anthropology a 'discipline without an object' (146). If, however, we agree with Sahlins that history is culturally informed – a reasonable if not already given assumption – then surely we must also consider how the very *ways in which* history is produced and read are similarly culturally shaped. It is no small point to note then that the writings of Thucydides were popularised in 17th century Western Europe, thus gaining importance in line with the development of modern capitalism and the philosophies of 'Hume, Hobbes & Co.' (118, 3). But how does ancient Greece come to be seen as the precursor of West European civilisation, one wonders. How does this perceived relation shape contemporary readings of Thucydides and others in turn? Although Sahlins regularly references this 17th century revival, along with celebratory readings of Thucydides in the contemporary context of global neo-liberalism, the rise of American imperialism and rampant militarisation, historicising the production of history – be it through selection,

interpretation, disavowal, narration or translation³ – is hardly his focus. Thus Sahlins' account of Bau and Rewa draws as freely on white missionary accounts as it does on Fijian oral traditions without discussing the power differentials and diverse, culturally specific and *very political* vantage points of the sources. The colonial situation is at once overly present and yet rendered invisible when the different sources are conflated as empirical evidence. Texts are simply treated as historical records in Sahlins' analysis, not as cultural products infused with their own (cultural) historicity. This is a particularly striking point, for was not the colonial project premised upon notions of universalism, that very problematic for which Sahlins takes issue with Thucydides?

Ten years after its initial publication, *Apologies to Thucydides* has a particular, if unforeseen relevance. As protests have increasingly raged across the United States insisting that 'black lives matter', we know it could have been another black adolescent who was killed while walking in the streets wearing a hoodie, just as it could have been another armed watchman that pulled the trigger. Sahlins' observation of the assassination in Bau that 'what happened was arbitrary, but what followed was reasonable' (291) rings tragically true in the present. At the same time, public outrage following the non-indictment of police officers involved in recent killings draws attention to the systemic nature of police brutality. These very protests are now disallowing the placement of lone historical actors in an evenemential history, highlighting the longstanding (developmental) history of systemic violence that has condemned so many to death. These are applications of Sahlins's musings that develop in one's own internal conversation with the author as he converses internally with the Athenian. Sahlins's Thucydides-inspired connections thus open the door to further connections as the reader meanders through a variety of historical and cultural situations. Sahlins' discussions of evenemential and developmental histories alongside individual and collective (systemic) actions take on a contemporary urgency, displaying as they do their political implications and real-life consequences. Like Thucydides's text, *Apologies to Thucydides* too stands to be read and re-read, each time in the context of the current historical, cultural and political moment. With apologies to Sahlins, then, the historical implications of his book are still being written.

SITARA THOBANI

³The first published work of Hobbes was a translation of Thucydides in 1629.