BOOK REVIEWS

S. Elizabeth Bird (ed.), *The anthropology of news and journalism: global perspectives*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 2010, ix, 328 pp.

In introducing her ambitious and timely edited volume, Elizabeth Bird sets out the problem that the book is to address: although anthropologists have begun to take seriously the study of mass media, there remain a dearth of critical studies of journalism production and dissemination. In assembling the impressive *Anthropology of News and Journalism*, Bird seeks to remedy this by offering a broad exploration of the different ways in which news media have the 'power to shape the reality experienced by readers and viewers' (7). News media, according to Bird, are unique in that, in purporting to describe reality, they also obscure their own role in not only presenting but also re-imagining the world. The diverse slate of articles exploring news production and dissemination throughout the volume give the lie to the implicit neutrality of the news, for, as Bird herself suggests, 'the texts themselves hold important, symbolic meaning and constitute significant cultural narratives' (10).

Bird takes a purposefully broad view of what constitutes 'the news,' including work on obituary announcements, on-line journalism, tabloids, news agency photographers and politicized pop music in the volume. While the book places these disparate studies in fruitful juxtaposition, some further exploration of what demarcates the news genre would be welcome. Bird offers some explanation of what she means by 'the news' by underlining that the genre is personally and culturally inflected and that it is fundamentally about 'process.' She makes the point that although individual viewers cannot often recall specific news stories, the *process* of viewing contributes to individuals feeling 'a part of the news world' (12). Bird makes the decision to keep definitions vague in order to account for the different ways in which 'news' is produced and circulated in different cultural contexts. This strategy is successful in leaving room for a rich body of case studies to emerge, but it relies on the same sort of tacit 'news values' that Bird criticizes in journalists—something is 'news' because it seems it *should* be.

Following the introduction, the book is organized into three sections. While in the Introduction Bird argues for preserving the complexity between studies of production and dissemination, for simplicity's sake the two substantive sections are broken down along those lines. The first section presents a grouping of ethnographic work on the production of news. In her exploration of vernacular newspapers in India, for example, Ursula Rao challenges the idea that news production is linear in moving from producers to audiences. According to Rao, vernacular newspapers provide a vital space for people to glean local information and to disseminate their concerns through a 'news discourse.' However, she is at pains to point out that the 'cacophony of voices' (ibid.) represented by vernacular newspapers is far from organized, but that it nonetheless 'provoke[s] the political' (103). In contrast to the locally created and consumed context of Rao's work, Amahl Bishara's chapter on the photographic

representation of a Palestinian protest against the construction of the separation barrier wall shows how the creation of news moves from intensely local spaces to dissemination in international spheres. Bishara describes how journalism provides an essential avenue through which protestors can 'voice their views to outsiders' (64).

Hasty's article in this section is perhaps the most provocative. In it, she explores the premise that anthropologists have been slow to study journalism because journalistic practice is uncomfortably close to our own. Based on her own work as an anthropologist and journalist in Ghana, Hasty contrasts the different 'regimes of knowledge production' inherent in the two forms of engagement, writing, 'there is something profoundly uncomfortable about the practices of news media, something vaguely reflective of our own discursive practices, more purely politicized but also more politically compromised than anthropology' (133). Hasty's contribution forces the reader to consider how the 'codes' of journalistic practice are disseminated, and whether these working practices mirror or challenge those of anthropologists. The overall contribution of this more lengthy section of the book is to expand the geographical scope of news production-studies, which have historically been centred on the production of news in Euro-America (Georgina Born's work on the BBC has been widely influential in this regard).

The second section of the book centres on 'news practices in everyday life' and moves from the production of news to its reception and occasional contestation. Kerry McCallum's chapter on representation of 'indigenous violence' in Australia contrasts news production with how news stories are re-articulated through the process of 'local talk.' In foregrounding the practice of face-to-face local communication, McCallum's article demonstrates that the press both reflect and create 'public opinion', but she also notes the importance of social relationships in 'negotiat[ing] and disput[ing] the meanings of issues of violence and deviance' (152). Debra Spitulnik also examines the role of news in creating and maintaining social networks through her research on 'personal announcements' within Zambian news broadcasts. Spitulnik's ethnography demonstrates how news processes are embedded within wider political economies—for instance, how news outlets' decisions to charge for personal announcements challenged the wider rhetoric of Zambian humanism as the pre-eminent national political philosophy.

The third section of the book is the briefest, and the most limited in geographical scope. In the final section, three authors consider the ways in which journalistic practices change in response to the 'new media.' Of particular note is Boyer's work on German journalists, which provides a series of illuminating anecdotes on the increasing incorporation of 'new media' into journalistic practice. Boyer's research leads him to suggest that, rather than increasing news awareness, digital media have rather *hollowed* engagement with the news—sacrificing depth for breadth. The examples in this final section are limited to Europe and America, and for the most part to relatively well-known news outlets. The scope of the book is already quite wide, but it might have been worthwhile to include a chapter on blogging as news media beyond

Europe or America, to provide a counterpoint. However, these complaints are minor, and overall Bird's volume is an important contribution to the study of journalistic practice which is likely to be a source of key readings in media anthropology and media and communications studies in years to come.

ALICIA BLUM-ROSS

Zuzana Búriková and **Daniel Miller,** *Au Pair*, Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press 2010, viii, 209 pp.

This timely book is the result of two related ethnographic projects undertaken by Zuzana Búriková and Daniel Miller. It is the first book to be based on the ethnographic study of au pairs. The authors' shared interest in material culture is evident throughout. Búriková's ethnography began in 2004 and involved one year of participant observation with fifty Slovak au pairs around London. Miller conducted similar research over a shorter period of time with a smaller, unspecified number of host families. It is relevant to note that Miller has personally hosted au pairs in the past. The authors provide significant insights regarding the experiences and contexts of au pairs in London.

The central themes of the book are relationships and material culture. The world of the au pair is structured by social relationships with host families, kin, children, boyfriends and other au pairs. Motivations for becoming an au pair are diverse and may be more grounded in the dynamics of personal relationships and personal desires than acknowledged by models which prioritize economic factors. Slovak au pairs in London are more than simply economic migrants traversing between the core and periphery of Europe. The authors describe how au pairs' relationships are mediated through material things – including white melamine IKEA furniture, teddy bears, cleaning products, articles of London fashion and coffee.

References to material culture, for which the listing above provides examples, are ubiquitous throughout the book. In the second chapter, where the mediation of things is most apparent, the authors suggest that the white melamine IKEA furniture used to furnish many au pair rooms represents the cold relationships that are frequently formed between host families and au pairs. This example supports the authors' methodological argument that '...close attention to the material world gives us access to actual practices that complement research focused more on language and on interviews' (p. 196). The impersonal coldness revealed through the furniture directs attention to the vacuity in the normative ideal of the au pair's temporary integration within the host family.

The discourse of a 'pseudo-family' relationship between au pairs and host families is central to the ideology of the au pair institution and may be deployed to exploit the au pair through feelings of obligation. Au pairs and host families frequently experience an

'embarrassment of co-presence' with respect to one another (p. 46). Au pairs may respond by attempting to minimize their presence in the host family home, as in the example of Iveta. However, au pairs may strive for visibility in London outside the home. Au pairs go to London to shop, party, socialize, form relationships and escape the home. In the anomic environment of London, au pairs may experiment with behavioural transgression in domains such as dress and relationships.

Au pairing is a potentially transgressive 'rite of passage'. It is a liminal period in which there are temporal tensions between the present and the future and between the stages of childhood and adulthood. The au pairs' status is vague and is based on a dated notion of cultural exchange. The authors argue that UK law helps to create this 'ambiguity and disorder' (p. 171). Legal ideology characterizes au pairs in terms of transient residence, informal relations with host families and foreign origins. The au pair travels far from home and kin to provide domestic labour on a temporary basis, while being legally defined as a non-worker, in the context of an equivocal position within an unknown host family.

Acknowledgement is made in the preface that the textual layout of this book differs from academic norms by avoiding citation in most chapters. The authors vary between academic and literary writing styles to elucidate both humanistic subjectivity and structural context. They have achieved both of these goals. However, the book could have benefited from quotations drawn from the au pairs' own descriptions. At times, the literary sections of the text lend a fictional generic quality to the depicted experiences, which are otherwise quite poignant. The chapters gradually transition from ethnographic understandings to structural and institutional contexts. This transition is most apparent in comparing the different writing styles of the literary first chapter and the contextual appendix.

The appendix concisely relates the book to the bodies of academic literature on domestic labour and migration studies. It makes several contributions to these literatures. Scholars interested in these fields may be most interested in this book. The authors note the paucity of publications explicitly concerning au pairs. They confront a partial lacuna in the literature by acknowledging personal relationships as the key motivations for au pairs. The authors direct attention to familial and lateral relationships, such as friendships between female au pairs and romantic ties, in addition to vertical relationships with host families. They eschew the reduction of individual au pairs to the labour they provide. Other contributions include the authors' emphasis on material culture and their understanding of au pairing as a liminal period in the life cycle of some young people in Slovakia. They suggest that the institution may be transitioning to greater inequality as au pairs are increasingly drawn from Eastern Europe. The accession of Slovakia to the EU and the recent changes made to au pair regulations in the UK make this book quite timely and significant.

JAMES WHITAKER

Paul Connerton, *How modernity forgets*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2009.

On my first long-term visit to China, a friend apologised because the apartment I had been given was in such an old building. The building, in the south-western city of Chongqing (allegedly the fastest-growing urban centre on the planet), was five years old. Speed and obsolescence – of buildings, objects of consumption, and media production – in modern, urban societies are at the heart of Paul Connerton's latest analysis of memory and space: *How modernity forgets*. The book comes twenty years after the publication in 1989 of Connerton's *How societies remember*.

In the latter, the author complained of the 'relatively scant attention' given by academics to social memory, which he saw instead as 'pervasive [...] in the conduct of everyday life' (Connerton 1989: 21). Over the past twenty years, this supposed imbalance between the significance of memory in contemporary societies and its academic treatment has certainly been redressed: conferences, university courses, and specialized publications on the collective, social experience of memory have been sprouting up, turning memory into a veritable buzzword. Connerton's main argument in *How modernity forgets* is that, ironically, this obsession with memory – both in academia and in popular culture – is related to an increasing predisposition in contemporary societies towards cultural forgetting. Taking an openly Marxist standpoint, the author also claims that forgetting is a necessary product of modernity and the capitalist mode of production.

Connerton maintains, for instance, that in the nineteenth century a process of separation between social life and locality started to occur. After this breaking point, the labour process, consumption, and media production have all been speeding up, while career structures have since become more and more unstable. This increased speed has led modern societies towards growing alienation from place and locality, which, Connerton claims, are crucial in the production of social memory: 'Place [...] is less and less a determining factor of our lives', claims the author; 'locatedness has been superseded' (2009: 89).

In a chapter entitled 'Topographies of forgetting', Connerton describes this process by looking at the evolution of European cities since the fourteenth century. He focuses in particular on how changes in urban living might have contributed to social forgetting. Early modern European cities, for instance, consisted of rather small-scale settlements with a clearly demarcated perimeter: in 1400, Milan or Paris had a population of only around 100,000 (2009: 101). These cities were also normally oriented towards a single building: the cathedrals of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Florence and Milan or those of many French towns like Chartres. These buildings provided a nucleus around which urban life revolved and were thus conducive to socialization and the formation of significant collective memories.

One could say much the same of the structure of many Asian urban centres, but unfortunately Connerton does not. For instance, for many Tibetans, social and religious life in

Tibet's capital of Lhasa still revolves around a single sacred building dating back to the seventh century: the Tsuglagkhang temple. The confines of Lhasa's old Tibetan quarter are also still marked by the ritual circumambulation routes that concentrically encircle the Tsuglagkhang. Similarly, Tambiah famously described traditional kingdoms in Southeast Asia as 'galactic polities' (1976: 102), whose capital cities were representations of a *mandala*. In the case of the capital of the Thai kingdom of Sukhodaya, for example, the inner core was represented by the king's palace and by the major temple and monastery, which were in turn surrounded by three concentric circles of defensive walls (1976: 86). It is really rather regrettable that Connerton hardly ever discusses the evolution of urban forms in non-Western contexts, with the notable exception of the southern China metropolis discussed later.

Continuing in his argument, Connerton claims that, in the nineteenth century, European and North American 'bounded' cities with an identifiable perimeter gave way to more formless urban environments, or conurbations: the latter were not just bigger than their fourteenth-century counterparts, they were also characterised by a separation between place of residence and place of work (2009: 104). The process that led to the formation of nineteenth-century conurbations was, however, a slow one: in the British factory towns of the late nineteenth century, for example, dwelling and workplace were still a short distance from each other (ibid.: 105). Connerton's main point is that this mixing of functions (i.e. work, leisure and residence) in factory towns contributed to a heightened sense of community and to the consequent formation of durable memories.

This argument is hardly novel and echoes Jane Jacobs's famous claim that, in order for cities to flourish, urban districts should 'have a sufficiently dense concentration of people' and that urban dwellings should be complemented by other uses, such as work and leisure (1992[1961]: 200-1). In a similar fashion, Aidan Southall also maintained that the most defining characteristic of cities is 'the idea of concentration' (1998: 8), cities being places where people and social relationships are more highly concentrated.

By contrast, Connerton observes that in the twentieth century the multi-function city underwent a slow process of 'deconcentration' (2009: 107), leading to the formation of vast cities that are in fact more about dispersal than concentration. In a book that focuses mostly on the urban cultural history of Europe and North America and is otherwise devoid of in-depth cross-cultural comparisons, Connerton mentions as an example of this process the southern China metropolis consisting of the special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macau and the cities of Shenzhen and Guangzhou in the south-eastern province of Guangdong (ibid.).

These cities of deconcentration are said to bring about a new mode of perception, closely linked to the means of transportation they make necessary. One does not look at these vast urban spaces directly, but through types of 'mechanical apparatus' (Connerton 2009: 109): cars, buses, train carriages. The city and its perceiver, then, no longer belong to the same space. In his 1989 historical ethnography of Brasilia, James Holston had already written of the death of the street in the modernist capital of Brazil and of how this runs counter to local notions of

urbanism (1989: 101). In a similar fashion, Connerton also sees in the creation of 'single-function' urban space the 'death' of the street as a gathering place: streets are no longer experienced at a pedestrian pace, but at the speeded-up pace of machines, which gives space a quality of 'evanescence' (2009: 117).

Alongside the increased pace of urban mobility, modernity is also said to be characterised by an increase in the speed of commodity consumption and media production: cars, television, and the internet all call for an 'accelerated metabolism of objects', images and spaces, which will inevitably lead to an 'attenuation of memory' (Connerton, 2009: 122). Connerton's views on the digital media seem to echo a recent debate around whether the use of the internet and of online search engines might lead to a loss of concentration and memory. This debate was most notably sparked by a 2008 article in *The Atlantic* magazine entitled 'Is Google making us stupid?' (Carr 2008). Easy access to virtually endless amounts of information, the argument goes, could lead to a gradual loss of the ability to focus and to increased forgetfulness.

Connerton also claims that the proliferation of computer memories and electronic images is leading to cultural forgetting by being 'non-things' in that they cannot be 'got hold of by the hands'; one literally cannot 'grasp' them (2009: 124). Here, Connerton's argument is at its most apocalyptic and fails to acknowledge possible links between technology, portability and solidity. Modern technology, for example, is moving increasingly towards handheld devices, such as so-called 'smart phones' and 'tablet computers', which encourage users to touch and modify images, sounds and text. What is more, increased portability allows people to share and distribute content more easily. This supposedly 'intangible' content can then be turned into more 'thing-like' objects, as Connerton would have it. During my fieldwork in Lhasa, for example, I saw savvy Han businessmen easily obtain digital copies of old, black-and-white photographs of pre-1951 Tibet, print them and sell them to Tibetan residents in the city. Tibetans would then have these pictures framed and put them up in their living rooms or in restaurants and teahouses as mementos of their city's past.

Although vitiated by a Eurocentric perspective and an overstated fear of technological alienation, Connerton's latest book still raises important questions about the pace of modern living, how cities have been developing and whether all this might lead to weaker communities that remember very little of their past. While Connerton's social historical approach represents an excellent starting point, these questions can only be tackled through a thorough cross-cultural comparison of historical and ethnographic data on the impact of contemporary dwelling, consumption and media practices on communities and their cultural memories.

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IVAN COSTANTINO

Anna Grimshaw and **Amanda Ravetz**, *Observations on observational cinema: anthropology, film, and the exploration of social life*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2009, 224 pp., 25 Illustrations.

Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz's collaborations routinely embody the respective backgrounds of the two authors. Weaving anthropological theory through a rooted respect for the arts, this academic team has proved once again the value of a true understanding of practice. Across visual anthropology's literary canon, high-minded theorists too often critique, comment on and criticise a form of art of which they have little or no practical understanding. *Observational Cinema: Anthropology, Film and the Exploration of Social Life* aggressively flirts with the notion that practice is the basis for all theory and that despite academia's protests, an informed experience-based examination of the abstractions at work within the mode of observational cinema produces an engagement with the filmic realm that eludes most of the discipline's armchair theorists.

Aimed at situating shifts in ethnographic film-making in a broader historical landscape, Grimshaw and Ravetz provide a detailed exploration of the origins of the genre of observational film through debates on the ethics of observation, film-making technologies and techniques. Recognizing the gaping hole in the ethnographic and documentary film debate, this work has obviously been produced with a healthy appreciation of the aesthetics of non-narrative film-making and thus artfully chronicles the underlying anthropological significance inherent in such developments. Embracing the existing lines of inquiry employed in film studies, *Observational Cinema* sets out to rediscover how observation-as-practice is manifested through the culturally informed experience of film-making itself. Focused on the process over the final product, Grimshaw and Ravetz reorient the conversation to include a more thorough debate on how film-makers cater to and portray socio-cultural actors, instead of simply

referencing which actors and why. The authors point to an array of recent phenomenological trends in anthropology and emphasize how the limited resurgence in both the material and the emotional, as experienced through the sensory as well as the body, has played a key formative role in the shaping of observational film-making as a platform for the lived experience.

Building on Sandall and Young's early essays and Bazinian origins, Grimshaw and Ravetz openly acknowledge their somewhat limited selection of films and film-makers throughout *Observational Cinema,* arguing that such examples embody the core transformations of the movement. Whereas I am sure that many critics will dissect the authors' collection of case studies with an eye towards their own personal ethnographic film libraries and preferences, I believe this retelling of observational history provides a much-needed framework and precedent for additional writings on the subject. Many will surely gripe at a handful of such seemingly obvious and overly used examples as *Primary* and *To Live With Herds*, but the absence of such classic portraits of the observational experience would undoubtedly raise more than a few questions. The genius throughout the work is the craftsmanship employed when pairing such films and the authors' ability to allow filmic juxtaposition to create a new space for critical comparison.

Observational Cinema tactfully avoids the somewhat expected marginalization of ethnographic film as a genre that operates outside the scope of all other film-making approaches by comparatively blurring the line between the documentary and the ethnographic. Whereas ethnographic film is often situated as some alien attempt at visual inquiry from some far-off secluded Pacific island, only to be embraced by the academic lecture hall, Grimshaw and Ravetz showcase the observational overlap between the two spheres through foundational debates on the processes involved in filming the Australian bush and the American countryside alike. However, a dangerous chapter-long tangent praising the life and work of David MacDougall seems to suffer directly from the authors' expectations of an anthropological academic audience. Of course MacDougall's films are of central importance to the development of observational film-making, but the devotion of over a fifth of the book's pages to such an icon of visual anthropology seems to imply an awareness of, and occasional pandering to, preconceived ideas of what anthropology thinks observational film-making should be.

But despite this brief encounter with such a slippery slope, I believe Grimshaw and Ravetz regain their footing through their informed and dynamic selection of MacDougall's films. Instead of simply chronologically listing the films that make up MacDougall's portfolio, the authors rightly situate the marathon of *The Doon School Series* as a web from which all his other works are suspended. Ultimately, by anchoring *Observational Cinema* in the range of works of Di Gioia, Hancock and MacDougall, the authors derive a cohesive narrative on the successes and frictions of observation-as-experimental film-making. While a bit predictable in its discussion of certain films, *Observational Cinema* brings together a wide range of debates on visual and social anthropology within a single text and re-imagines observational film as a

critical link between anthropology and film studies – surely a foundational starting point on which future cross-disciplinary works will be based.

COREY J. BOLING

Gopal Guru (ed.), *Humiliation: claims and contexts*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Edited by Professor Gopal Guru, a leading scholar on caste in modern India, the eleven articles presented in this noteworthy volume seek to draw our attention to a phenomenon which pervades social life, yet is often absent in our academic analysis: humiliation. The book claims three objectives. First, it seeks to expose 'humiliation' as a complex social phenomenon occurring in different forms, contexts and discourses. In doing so, it highlights our current lack of understanding and convinces us of the need to make 'humiliation' an object of academic inquiry. Secondly, it argues how humiliation rests at the heart of the major problems of modern Indian life: the tension between the private and the public; the national and the local; a state based on western ideas of self and society, and a culture based on inherent inequality. This makes understanding 'humiliation' not only interesting, but imperative. Thirdly, the volume claims to provide us with a new 'conceptual language' for identifying and understanding humiliation.

The first goal is immediately accomplished by Bhikhu Parekh. He gives us eleven scenarios of humiliation occurring at different levels of social life, featuring different actors, and having various outcomes. Parekh then systematically analyses these cases, generalising across their diversity and complexity to give us a definition of humiliation as a distinct concept. While his distinctions between humiliation, degradation and humbleness might not be final or exhaustive, Parekh succeeds in inviting critical thought on the notion of humiliation and provides us with an example of how to grapple meaningfully with the complex ways in which it manifests itself. In doing so, it constitutes an excellent introductory chapter. Nandy sees humiliation as a relationship which is realised only when both humiliator and humiliated understand and accept their relative positions (Chapter 2). She examines the ethics involved in the interference of a third party pointing out humiliation in a relationship where humiliation is not understood or accepted. Given that this 'third party' might well be the researcher, this text can be read as a text on reflexivity, ethics and epistemology. Similarly, Baxi cautions us against the use of existing academic discourses on humiliation. As these discourses are based on Western conceptions of the self and of society, carelessly imposing them on other cultures would then constitute an act of 'etymological violence' (Chapter 3). While the other chapters see humiliation as a 'concept' or a 'relationship', Sanjay Palshikar considers it to be a 'claim' that has an internal structure (Chapter 4). When humiliation is claimed, one is also essentially

1) creating or mobilising a victimised group, 2) throwing into relief a sharp or unjust hierarchy of power, 3) mustering a narrative of a lost past, and 4) outlining a way to respond to an oppressor. Rather than being a sign of defeat, the claim to humiliation imposes upon the world a moral way of looking at it. The strengths of this chapter are also its weak points. Because humiliation is a claim, the text is not bogged down by whether the claimants are 'truly' humiliated, or whether other parties recognise this claim. It also assumes that the humiliated can launch a claim in the first place.

Section 2 is more ethnographic in content. Geetha's contribution is interesting, for it examines Dalit humiliation from the point of view of the hegemonic Brahmanic discourse. In this discursive regime of myths, cosmologies and rituals, the Dalit are total subjects, helplessly part of someone else's world view. Here knowledge is indeed power. This chapter also implicitly asks an urgent question: why do the humiliators humiliate?' Chapter 4 provides an answer: humiliation is a claim that throws existing power structures into relief. This claim can be used not only by the subaltern, but also by the powerful.

Rodriguez argues how the refusal of the masses to clean public spaces is seen by the frustrated bourgeois leaders of India as the refusal of the archaic masses to accept their enlightened guidance and patronage (Chapter 6). Rather, Rodriguez argues, this 'refusal' comes from the bourgeois inability to understand fully the connection between filth and untouchability. The warning here is clear: it shows the ease with which one could fall into narratives which inadequately account for social life. This inadequacy leads first to frustration, then eventually to social disillusionment and distrust. Ronald deSouza gives us an interesting case of how the refusal by caste Hindus to allow Dalits to be cremated in a shared crematorium developed into a national drama. The author uses 'humiliation' as a window through which the complex relationship between the 'local' and the 'national' is analysed. In Chapter 8, Chandhoke asks some provoking questions about notions of equality and concludes that caste is a 'state of mind', not just a set of boundaries to be dismantled.

Section 3 shifts the action away from the symbolic to economics and politics. Chapter 9 is another highlight of the volume. Suhar Palshikar here describes a strike by mill workers in 1982. The strike failed so spectacularly that it left the previously strong, proud and organised industrial labour in disarray. The humiliation at the hands of the employers and the state that followed was so great that the workers then refused to speak of, or even remember, their ignominious past, neutralising the labour group entirely. As Maurice Halbwachs once suggested, a group with no memory is no group at all. Thomas Pantham (Chapter 10) compares Gandhi's and Ambedkar's discourses of untouchability. In doing so, he presents caste as a constantly negotiated reality. Professor Guru concludes the volume by encouraging us to reject rejection. He argues that this can only be achieved through self-respect and a strong moral courage to stand up to an oppressor. It could have been an outstanding follow up to Chapter 9, but this potential is left untapped.

While the book certainly succeeds in presenting humiliation as a complex phenomenon that needs to be urgently studied, I also think that it suffers from two problems. First, the volume seems to lack a definite conclusion. While it gives us many interesting perspectives and approaches to humiliation, they are explicitly linked together only through Professor Gupal's introduction. Superficially, I pointed out how some of the articles could have been connected. A concluding chapter highlighting these connections could have taken this already impressive study to a new level. Furthermore, as the articles are loosely informed by each other, one finds several occasions where different authors subtly contradict each other. For example, Parekh's effort to separate humiliation from other, similar concepts is ignored later on. More pressing is the slippage from humiliation to caste. The two, admittedly, are inextricably connected. However, in my view, they should remain conceptually separate, and this slippage hinders rather than contributes to a theory of 'humiliation'.

Despite these criticisms, the volume has many strong points. Its very existence is already a plus, and Professor Guru succeeds in showing us the dangers of taking humiliation for granted. Moreover, many authors are not satisfied by just giving us a description of the problems they are concerned with. Informed by their theoretical and ethnographic knowledge, they also offer solutions to the issues they describe. Finally, the individual articles are coherent and broad in their interests, making it relevant not only for scholars of India, but for anyone interested in power, discourse, human rights and statehood.

BRIAN CAMPBELL

Marianne Lemaire, *Les sillons de la souffrance: représentations du travail en pays sénoufo (Côte d'Ivoire)*, Paris: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 253 pp.

This book is the result of the author's doctoral research on cultural representations of work among the Senufo of West Africa. Her findings are based on fieldwork conducted between 1992 and 1997 in three villages near Korhogo in northern Côte d'Ivoire (Nambognonkaha, Dihi and Zémongokaha), which are occupied by the Senufo sub-group known as the Tyebara.

Lemaire focuses on the Tyebara category of *faliwi*, which primarily designates agricultural work. Her principal argument is that, whereas Western cultures perceive and evaluate work from a functionalist perspective, as an instrumental activity leading to certain goals (e.g., the production of economic goods), the Tyebara, by contrast, value agricultural work intrinsically, as a paradigmatic activity to which one should devote all one's strength, both physical and moral. For the Tyebara, the cultural ramifications of two basic characteristics of agricultural work—suffering without permanent relief and rivalry without ultimate victory— elevate it to the status of a model human activity. According to Lemaire, the Tyebara have never felt any great esteem for war primarily because armed conflict usually ends with the total

elimination or submission of one of the warring parties; such events interrupt an otherwise normal state of cyclical and harmless rivalry which characterizes agricultural work. She argues that this absence of martial enthusiasm led French colonialists to conclude erroneously that the Senufo cultivators were pacifists (Chapter 1).

The characterization of endless rivalry as a basic component of agricultural work is further developed in Chapters 2 and 5, where Lemaire discusses the historical practice among the Tyebara of organizing highly institutionalized competitions between groups of cultivators, normally from different villages, which ended with the proclamation of agricultural champions known as *tegbanbele* (singular *tegbanwi*: 'the one who is good with the hoe'). However, the benefits of *tegbanwi* status were limited to pure prestige, and these champions did not enjoy any particular economic or political advantages over others. Moreover, it was not desirable that the same person remain *tegbanwi* for too long. In such cases, diviners normally proclaimed that a (female) spirit had fallen in love with the champion and demanded that he stop cultivating, thereby effectively placing a ritual prohibition on further agricultural work. Lemaire argues, however, that these two examples should not be interpreted as evidence of a cultural propensity for egalitarianism (a term she uses in the sense of 'not deviating from the mean' rather than of 'equal rights and opportunities for all'). Rather, the main purpose of agricultural rivalry was to mobilize all the physical and moral forces of the cultivators and thereby realize the agricultural work in all its dimensions.

Lemaire offers further support for her argument concerning the intrinsic value of agricultural work among the Senufo by demonstrating its paradigmatic status for all other activities, offering examples drawn from music, rituals and funeral ceremonies. The xylophone performances which accompanied agricultural competitions and the songs which accompanied the tamping down of the earthen floors of houses, for example, were intended to exalt such work, rather than to divert workers' attention from their activity or to alleviate their physical and moral suffering (Chapter 3). Moreover, the ritual initiation of young men into age-graded societies known as *poro* involves the cultivation by novices of a field in a secret forest which belongs to the 'old woman of the village' (*Katyelε ε wi*), as well as of the fields of the elder initiators (Chapter 6). The theme of agricultural work reappears, furthermore, in funeral ceremonies, where the 'digging and cultivating' of the grave by males evokes the physical dimension of suffering, while female mourning invokes above all the moral suffering of agricultural work, and of work in general (Chapter 3).

Lemaire's book is a very interesting study of Senufo representations of work, and she persuasively demonstrates how work (and agricultural work in particular) is highly valued among people of this ethnic group. The book is also a valuable source of information on other aspects of Senufo (Tyebara) society, as illuminated through the lens of *faliwi*—from music and rituals, to funeral and matrimonial practices, to the more general characteristics of social structure. What appears to be missing, however, is material that would add a more developed historical dimension to what is otherwise a rich ethnographic description. For example,

Lemaire admits that the term 'work' has not always been limited in Western discourse to its purely functionalist dimension (p. 238). More importantly, she states that, in general, the Tyebara no longer practise the highly institutionalized agricultural competitions mentioned above, and that it was in fact the colonial administration that allowed Senufo canton chiefs to demand that their villagers cultivate their fields and thus to organize the most prestigious competitions (pp. 49, 51). This implies that *faliwi* is as fluid and historically contingent as Western conceptualizations of work, and suggests that there is scope for a more elaborate exploration of the historical transformations of Senufo representations of work, as provoked by political and economic changes. I would be especially interested to see more about how such representations have been affected by the current Ivorian socio-political crisis, as well as by the fact that the northern part of Côte d'Ivoire (including the Senufo region) has been effectively under rebel control since a failed military coup in 2002. Such suggestions are meant simply to identify possible avenues for anchoring Lemaire's ethnographic research in the context of more recent history, however, and do nothing to discredit an otherwise commendable book.

MAJA BOVCON

Antonius C.G.M. Robben (ed.), *Iraq at a distance: what anthropology can teach us about the war*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2010, 186 pp.

Iraq at a distance: what anthropology can teach us about the war is an edited volume critically examining various themes in the Iraq war. The editor, Antonius C.G.M. Robben, is joined by five other distinguished anthropologists, each of whom has considerable experience in the field of violent conflict. While the commentaries are not based on direct ethnographic field research in Iraq, the book serves to analyze the ongoing conflict by means of comparative analysis with other conflicts on which the contributing authors have conducted research, including Cambodia, Palestine, Northern Ireland, and Argentina. The volume offers a somewhat harsh criticism of US military policy and Coalition strategy, while highlighting issues that have been left out of the mainstream media discussion.

Written with the conviction that an anthropological perspective can inform current political debates, even in instances in which field sites are inaccessible, the book takes issue with key military policies in Iraq and Afghanistan, including the use of anthropologists in its Human Terrain System (HTS) program (which employs anthropologists within military units). As Robben points out in his introduction, historically, there has been an 'ethically questionable' (p. 1) relationship between anthropologists and the military. A dialogue highlighting this friction has now become crucial to the integrity of the field, as these types of affiliations endanger not only individual anthropologists working in the field, but also the discipline itself.

The chapters themselves are intellectually interesting and well informed. Alexander Laban Hinton's chapter, '"Night fell on a different world": dangerous visions and the War on Terror –, a lesson from Cambodia', takes a philosophical approach to the subject, analyzing the mental and emotional framework that the US government and military have cultivated in their attempts to justify a 'war on terror' by any means. His analysis takes aim at the ways in which an 'us vs. them' mentality has served to distance soldiers, as well as ordinary Americans, from the reality of the death and destruction taking place on the ground. Hinton picks apart the inflammatory language used in both political speeches and the media to draw attention to the danger of polarizing rhetoric.

Nadje Al-Ali provides an alternative discussion to the debate about Iraqi women in her chapter, 'The War on Terror and women's rights in Iraq'. While examining violent events that are often passed over in the media, Al-Ali voices outrage at the many different forms of violence against women that have emerged as a result of the US invasion of Iraq. In a portrayal that opposes official reports regarding the positive effects of the US invasion of Iraq on women, the chapter documents the many forms of brutality and immobilization experienced by Iraqi women following the start of the war. In fact, Al-Ali points out that US military action actually reversed many of the positive legal gains previously made by Iraqi women.

In Julie Peteet's chapter, 'The War on Terror, dismantling, and the construction of place: an ethnographic perspective from Palestine', the author criticizes the deficiency of knowledge about Iraqi history, society and culture on the part of the US military prior to the invasion. She then makes a connection between historical and current events as seen through the eyes of the societies under assault, describing the ongoing conflict as the most recent in a long line of external occupations and western imperialisms in the region. Peteet draws insightful comparisons with Israel/Palestine and the ways in which both societies have been 'reterritorialized' at the hands of a foreign military. In her analysis, Peteet considers the similarities between the Israeli separation wall, constructed in a way that divides the population along religio-sectarian lines, with that of the Green Zone and the spatial enclavization of various sectarian groups in Baghdad.

For Jeffrey A. Sluka, in his chapter, 'Losing hearts and minds in the "War on Terrorism"', the Iraq war led to an increase in the risk of terrorism, rather than being a step towards its demise. In his chapter, the author argues that the blatant disregard for the lives and properties of Iraqi and Afghan civilians instigated greater levels of hatred among those affected. He argues that the US lost the popular support of civilian populations through its indiscriminate killing, use of torture, and considerable violations of human rights. Sluka makes use of historical research to argue that wars are won through diplomacy and popular support, rather than by brute force. The activities of the US and Coalition forces, rather than winning the hearts and minds of populations at home and abroad, have only served to alienate the public and harm their chances at 'success'.

In the final chapter, 'Mimesis in a war among the people: what Argentina's dirty war reveals about counterinsurgency in Iraq', Robben uses his own experiences in Argentina to examine the dubious ideology behind the war on terror, as well as to investigate the use of 'dirty' tactics on the part of the counterinsurgency. Describing the use of 'swarming' strategies and the price paid for these tactics by the civilian population, Robben follows with an analysis of the torture inflicted at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib to make the point that current war strategies are not only largely ineffectual, but also morally condemnable.

Certain themes run throughout the book reinforcing key points, including the dichotomization of the world into a good vs. evil (us vs. them) framework, the indiscriminate use of violence by Coalition forces, and the debate over the role of anthropologists as advocates for marginalized groups. The book brings important new considerations and useful comparisons to the table and is a worthwhile read, in particular for those involved in the Iraq debate. At a time when anthropology departments are being downsized, Robben and the contributing authors offer a potent case as to the continued importance of anthropologists in today's globalized world and as crucial contributors to political discussions. And while the book provides little in terms of advice or solutions, it does serve as an important addition to the debates on both the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and the role of anthropology itself.

LISA WELZE