**Book Reviews**

*Mexican New York: Transnational Lives of New Immigrants*

Reviewed by Konstantinos Ardavanis

Robert Courtney Smith’s *Mexican New York: Transnational Lives of New Immigrants* is a brilliant account of the Ticuani migrant experience in New York City. Smith perfectly captures the unique space that immigrants occupy within the urban context as well as their social, economic and political mobility both within that space and outside of it. The reader is faced with the Ticuanense struggle between choosing a path of upward mobility and becoming part of the ‘doomed resistance’ (p. 25). Characterized by the struggles of economic and social mobility, involvement in politics, gender identity, religion, honour, generation, education and class, Smith provides a view of the Ticuani that is beautifully unique, yet, in many ways, also recognizably a part of a more universal migrant experience. Smith starts by explaining that the book is about when ‘the local becomes global’ (p. 3), and upon finishing the book, one is left with a detailed map of exactly what the process of transnationalism means in these people’s everyday lives. His attention to the fine details of the migrant experience makes the particulars of the Ticuani relationship to home and the U.S. very apparent. Smith clearly illustrates exactly which aspects of transnational life remain local and which become global, in the process covering a wide range of topics and concerns. Even in times of dense statistics and text, Smith magnificently succeeds in providing a holistic view of the Ticuanense experience.

Smith begins his text by delicately manoeuvring around the complexities of transnational life. He details the intricacies of transnationalism through the experiences Mexican migrants face both in New York and in Ticuani. Smith develops this by first outlining the sites and the context in which he performs his research. This provides a clear platform for the reader. From there, Smith moves on to discuss the transnational life of the Ticuanense. He deals with issues of how migration has affected the migrants’ place both at home and in the context of New York City. These effects are defined by gender roles both in terms of women in the workforce and the contemporary idea of the ‘ni macho ni madilón’ (neither macho nor apron-wearing) men of the Ticuani community. Economics also determines the lives the Ticuanense live while in New York, and how they are received back at home. The conflict in social hierarchy begins to form because migrants are no longer considered ‘hijos ausentes’ (absent sons or daughters) but are considered arrogant outsiders who flaunt their material wealth. Perhaps one of the most interesting points is the effect of remittances to Ticuani and the effect it has of creating an economic gap between the local labourers working for pesos in a ‘dollarized’ community and those sending remittances. Smith then delves into the world of Ticuani politics and shows us how national politics can affect local communities living abroad.

Through various examples, Smith spends his first few chapters navigating the experience...
of an ‘in-between’ status. This is what I found most interesting and influential about this text. The way Smith describes this ‘in-between status’ makes sense of the ambivalence towards the local and transnational that the individual migrant may often find difficult to reconcile. Smith explores different contexts through the lens of this ‘in-between status’. Whether it is in the context of the first generation, the second generation or, as Smith puts, the ‘1.5’ generation, the experience is often quite similar on some very basic levels. Smith perfectly draws a visual map of everywhere transnationalism goes. He moves back and forth between generations, past, present, future, New York and Ticuani in a seemingly effortless way, and through detailing all of the trials and tribulations, the good and the bad, the ups and the downs of the community, Smith leaves you with a sense of understanding of this migrant community, which makes up such a large constituent of the contemporary population of the United States.

Through years of fieldwork in both Ticuani and New York City, Smith has been able to provide an exceptional ethnography that presents an unprecedented view of the migrant and the transnational experience. Ethnographies of transnational life as detailed and accomplished as this are almost impossible to come by. Smith has provided an outstanding rubric for future migration studies within large urban contexts, not just in his successful recording of ethnographic material and comparative data, but also in the way he goes about his fieldwork. Performing ethnography in such large urban areas has never been this clear, and in return provides a glimmer of hope for those of us trying to tackle the large, concrete jungle that is New York City, or any urban context for that matter. Though the text itself can be dense and slow moving at times, presenting heavy statistical research and political details, Smith has provided an outstandingly informative and enjoyable read for anyone who is interested in the transnational lives and experiences of migrant communities in the United States.

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When Greeks Think about Turks: The View from Anthropology

Reviewed by Lisa Dikomitis

This volume, edited by anthropologist Dimitrios Theodossopoulos, presents a unique collection on Greek-Turkish relations. The book makes a significant contribution to the anthropological study of ‘perceptions of the Other’, in this case Greek perceptions of Turks. *When Greeks Think about Turks* consists of an introduction by Theodossopoulos and eleven chapters by anthropologists and one political scientist.

In the introduction the editor puts forward a framework with the concept of ‘hollow categories’ at its core, a concept first used by Ardener and Chapman. In the context of this volume, Theodossopoulos adjusts the concept as follows: ‘[i]t does not refer to the identity of the Turks, but to several possible identities for the Turks made up by Others, a conceptualization of Turkishness broad enough to accommodate the imagination of those who see the Turk as their significant Other’ (p. 3). The introduction is followed by Argyrou’s chapter in which the author argues that Greek perceptions of Turks are eventually conditioned by the powers of
Western hegemony. As Argyrou argues, these hegemonic structures of power steered by Western concepts remain unchallenged even in those discourses which may appear as anti-Western, for example that of the neo-orthodox Greek thinkers.

From this follow two chapters which offer a more historical discussion of perceptions of the ethnic Other (Millas and Hirschon) and one chapter (Ors) which is based on recently conducted fieldwork. Political scientist Iraklis Millas discusses how the Turks are conceptualized in Greek literature and history, especially how Asia Minor authors portrayed different images of Turks. Renee Hirschon worked with Asia Minor refugees in the Kokkinia suburb of Athens in the 1970s, while Ily Argyrou recently studied the Rum Polites, the Christian Orthodox minority in Istanbul and Athens. Hirschon’s chapter offers a reflexive account of her fieldwork in Kokkinia when the refugees who came from Asia Minor were still alive. Ors’s chapter offers some new insights on the contemporary Greeks from Istanbul who now live in Athens.

Three authors (Spyros Spyrou, Paul Sant Cassia and Peter Loizos) examine how Greek Cypriots think about Turks and Turkish Cypriots. Spyrou conducted fieldwork among Greek Cypriot school children. An important point he makes is how these pupils reinterpret Turkish Cypriot identity compared to the ‘pure’ national Turkish identity: ‘the paradox of Turkish Cypriot identity was resolved by combining the two elements of Turkish Cypriot identity – Turkish and Cypriot (the latter being seen as equivalent to Greek Cypriot) – through a marriage union’ (pp. 105–106). Sant Cassia examines how Greek and Turkish Cypriots memorialize the missing persons of the 1974 war on Cyprus. This chapter is largely a philosophical reflection on the theme and includes little ethnographic material. Peter Loizos analyses in a particularly strong piece how bi-communal initiatives on Cyprus contributed to the relations between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Each of these three chapters call for a follow-up analysis on how the perceptions of the ‘Other’ on Cyprus have altered since the opening of the border, now eight years ago.

The volume also includes four chapters by Greek anthropologists (Tsibiridou, Yiakoumaki, Kirtsoglou and Theodossopoulos) who conducted fieldwork in three different locations in Greece. Fotini Tsibiridou analysed the discourse of the journal Antiphonitis, which has been published since 1998 in Komotini, a Greek town in Thrace with a large Turkish-speaking minority. The discourse of the Antiphonitis’s journalists remains generally nationalistic. Vassiliki Yiakoumaki also worked in Komotini where she studied a laiko dromeno, a state-sponsored cultural event promoting the culinary cultures of the region. In her analysis she shows that such event may de-historicize the Other in an attempt of making the Other visible. Dimitrios Theodossopoulos examined the ambivalence in the reactions of the middle-class urbanites of Patras on the 1999 earthquakes in Istanbul and Athens. Elisabeth Kirtsoglou focused on a similar ambivalence in the discourse about Turks and Turkey among junior Greek army officers. Kirtsoglou concludes eloquently that ‘the Greeks – like other national subjects – will continue seeing the Turks, as friends, foes, friends and foes, sometimes friends and sometimes foes, but sadly, always as nothing more than a faceless collectivity that happens to inhabit the other end of the Aegean’ (p. 174).

The strength of this carefully constructed volume lies in the analysis of different sets of informants – the educated middle-class (Argyrou), army officers (Kirtsoglou), journalists (Tsibiridou), children (Spyrou) and refugees (Hirschon) to name only a few of the various social groups examined in this volume. Another strength of the book is that all the chapters include extensive bibliographies.

This groundbreaking book would appeal to academics from a range of disciplines. I have used this volume in teaching and received
very positive feedback. *When Greeks Think about Turks* is a fascinating collection and it is already an essential document for anybody who is in some way involved with Greece, Turkey and Cyprus. I recommend it highly.

Dr Lisa Dikomitis works as a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Comparative Sciences of Cultures (Ghent University, Belgium). Her monograph, *Cyprus and Its Places of Desire: Cultures of Displacement among Greek and Turkish Cypriot Refugees* (IB Tauris, November 2011) is based on long-term fieldwork on both sides of the border on Cyprus. The book explores questions of justice, suffering, ethnic conflict and notions of place and home. She has also published several book chapters and journal articles and edited (with Rik Pinxten) *When God Comes to Town* (2009, Berghahn Books, Oxford). Lisa is currently working on a new comparative project on Cyprus and Belgium.

**Fracture: Adventures of A Broken Body**  

**Exploring the Dirty Side of Women’s Health**  

Reviewed by Christine McCourt

Oakley describes her recent book as a personal narrative, although it could perhaps also be described as an exercise in auto-ethnography. As one might expect from an author of many readable and scholarly texts, it combines good storytelling with an impressive scholarly scope and tone. Through a narrative style, it releases itself from the weight of endless scholarly citations, but draws on knowledge from a wide range of disciplines, neatly referenced at the end of the book.

Oakley starts by setting the scene of the accident, but this is prefaced first by a succinct account of the kinds of questions she wanted to address in the book – the questions that reflect on the accident and its aftermath generated for her, as a social scientist. In this sense, the personal is woven very fruitfully with the academic – or rather, these threads are not artificially pulled apart.

In the following chapter, she examines attitudes towards the body, and the academic tendency to abstract notions about the body, and to privilege the cerebral over the corporeal. Despite this analysis, I felt that she personally wrestled with this cultural and professional disposition throughout the text, continually echoing her intriguing early statement (with a wry reference to the seminal feminist text) that ‘our bodies aren’t ourselves’. I found it difficult to unpick how far this sense of the body – as reflected in statements such as ‘the body I live in’ (25) was a manifestation of deeply embedded social norms, or how far thrown into sharp relief by the ‘unhanding’ effects of her accident and subsequent treatment. Oakley argues that in an everyday sense the body, while it is functioning normally, is not ‘experienced’, whereas the disruption of her accident forced her to experience it in a far more conscious way. This is a point that is worthy of more debate and attention within anthropology and sociology.

The subsequent chapters range across a number of issues prompted by her experience, with the discussion drawing on her own earlier work, and an impressive breadth of sociology and philosophy. Chapter 3 examines the ‘fractured’ nature of the health services, and the way they produced strange disconnections, in parallel to the disconnections she experienced as a result of nerve damage. Reflecting on my own experience of Scottish healthcare following a similarly traumatic injury, I was also encouraged to think about the character of US health services and their social context, in com-
parison to those of the UK, a thread which was also picked up in a later chapter on her experience of litigation. Despite much criticism of disjointed health care in the UK, my own experience felt altogether more integrated than the one Oakley described. In my view this reflects the very different macro-organisation of the two systems and their correspondingly different social organization. Perhaps privatized health care is more compartmentalized than a system which has continued to adhere strongly to the principles of integrated public service, however difficult integration is to achieve in practice in the UK.

Chapter 4 presents an essay on ‘handedness’ and the symbolic importance of the hand in different cultures, while chapter 5, ‘the daily drama of the body’ discusses the role of the body in late capitalism, including its gendered forms and putting forward the proposition that devotion to bodily maintenance is taking over from dependence on doctors. In chapter 6, ‘living corpses’ Oakley discusses the historical shifts in medicine which were derived from the development of dissection on a large scale, suggesting that the corpse became both a ‘methodological tool’ and a ‘regulative ideal’ in modern medicine (72). She also suggests that this focus encouraged medicine to divorce the body from human identity and experience, a tendency that was further encouraged by developments in natural philosophy and their cultural resonance with their time. The chapter also explores work in neurology to illuminate the mind/body questions, and reflects on her working relationship with a physiotherapist who attempted to listen and learn from her experience to support the rehabilitation and ‘cortical re-education’ of her hand. Chapter 7 then takes a side step into the issue of ageing bones, and re-introduces a clearly gendered perspective, focusing on the ‘reduction of women to their bodies’ (96), bodies which likewise cannot be trusted, and taking a brief foray into the role of the pharmaceutical industry in promoting screening, which she argues ‘isn’t to prevent disease, but to change identities – to produce patients’ (101). Chapter 8 examines the theme of dualism via concepts of bodily wholes and individualism, while the final chapter returns to the core theme (as I saw it) of the paradoxes of embodiment. I felt the statement ‘I, the person hiding in the body’ was curiously reminiscent of the concept of *deus ex machina*. Oakley’s answer to my observation might be that everyday bodily functions do remain largely unconscious until something happens to change or challenge this and to render the mind curiously detached from its biological nature – such as a fracture.

Oakley’s theme in chapter 8, where she argues that the ambiguity of pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding challenge the notions of a bounded bodily identity is explored in depth and breadth in Mavis Kirkham’s contemporary edited collection of essays exploring the ‘Dirty Side’ of women’s health. The book includes nineteen chapters in four main sections, all unified by this theme. Section one focuses on mothers, midwives and dirt, section two on breastfeeding and concepts of pollution, with a series of chapters that draw out the ambiguity and dissonance for women created by views of breastmilk as inherently pure, natural and signifying the good mother, while it is also treated as polluting or even disgusting if exposed. Section three focuses on the role and status of *dais* who deal with the pollution of childbirth, and the final section on concepts of leakage and labelling, covering subjects as diverse as incontinence and concepts of genetic purity or pollution.

Kirkham and colleagues argue eloquently that management of women’s health care and reproduction are marked by attempts to contain the social and physical ‘disorder’ that ‘leaky’ bodies with ambiguous boundaries present. The majority of the authors make detailed use of Mary Douglas’ seminal work ‘Purity and Danger’, applying the concepts of purity and pollution to new ethnographic
material, and also refer to Foucault's theories of power and sexuality. Although the authors are primarily not academic anthropologists, I felt their close analytical discussion of the treatment and symbolism of women's bodies brings its own contribution to anthropological thinking, rather than simply being a case of applying anthropological theory to other areas of practice. The subject of reproductive health has historically been neglected and overlooked in anthropological work, with few studies of the management of birth compared to those focused on death. This book makes an important contribution to addressing that gap.

In a brief review it is not possible to do justice to all the chapters in this book: suffice to say, it is worth reading them for yourself. Instead I will just draw attention to just two of them to give a feel for the remainder. Pamela Wood and Maralyn Foureur's analysis of early case notes from the St. Helen's hospital in Wellington, New Zealand, analyses how concepts of pollution and order informed the design of the hospital and care for women within it. Their title, 'A Clean Front Passage: Dirt Douches and Disinfectants' hints at the analogy they drew between the attitude towards the woman's vagina and towards the body of the hospital itself as having potential for contamination and danger in either direction (leaving or entering). This and several other chapters discuss the widespread view of lochia and other bodily products of childbirth as polluting, although they question Douglas' structuralist argument that this is always the case, showing that 'healthy' lochia and bodily secretions were not regarded as inherently polluting in a context where assiduous attention to 'safe' management of flow through passages was of instrumental as well as symbolic importance. Rachel Newell's 'work in progress' study, 'The Thanksgiving of Women After Childbirth: a Blessing in Disguise' analyzing the multiplicity of meanings of the Anglican rite of 'churching' also looks at the connections between notions of impurity and those of danger, linking the social desire to control women's bodies with the fear of death associated with bleeding. While the churching ritual rendered women's bodies as symbolically clean, she argues that the modern six-week postnatal check emerged in the UK health service as a secularized form, which remains heavily symbolically loaded.

In the concluding chapter, Kirkham reflects on the potentially transformative properties of dirt as well as the power relations involved in what is categorized as dirty or pure. In drawing together the threads of the different chapters, the status of women and 'dirty' workers she argues 'the pollution of those who work with women in transitional states appears to be linked with their relationship with the contradictions and creativity of the liminal state' (294). She suggests that fluidity can, in a safe space, be utilized for its potential to create new meanings, roles and relationships, 'dirt' a medium for new growth.

Both of these texts deal with complex issues in a thoughtful and accessible way and should be read by anthropologists as well as health workers and other readers.

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