Reviews

Materializing Difference proposes a fascinating exploration of an informal prestige economy practised by Romanian Roma and revolving around beakers and tankards made of antique silver. Drawing on methodological fetishism, and building on a multi-sited ethnography that follows 'things-in-motion' along trans-local, transnational and trans-ethnic patterns, this book describes how prestige items 'make people' and 'mediate social relationships', thereby shaping social identity and difference. Beakers and tankards are thus treated as a lens through which to read the relations between things and subjects, but also the relations that things put into being, in this specific case study, within and between Gabor and Cărhar Roma communities, and between them and non-Roma society.

The book is composed of three parts. The first explores the role that beakers and tankards play in negotiating and materialising difference and belonging among Gabor. The main argument is that prestige items combine with other 'symbolic arenas' – accumulation of capital, patrilineal descent, marital alliances and ethics of sociability – in the creation and expression of the rivalries, competition and 'soft hierarchies' that constitute Gabor politics. Berta describes how beakers and tankards, initially purchased from non-Roma owners and antiques dealers (also outside Romania), are transformed into Gabor objects through their reinscription into ethnicised aesthetics, history and value regime. The value of these objects, whose price among Gabor exceeds by far that associated to them in the transnational antiques market, is related to both a 'material patina' (related to the quality of the silver, antiquity and aesthetic properties) and a 'symbolic patina', that is the item's history of ownerships and transactions within the Gabor community.

Ideally inalienable, prestige items indeed circulate among Gabors through bazaar-style transactions conducted by powerful brokers; and they acquire value precisely by passing through the hands of important Gabor owners. Berta thus elaborates on the poietic power of discourse, which leads to the transformation of an object into a publicly recognised political 'trophy'. Beakers and tankards, usually

kept out of sight, acquire visibility in everyday conversations among Gabors, and especially in social gatherings, where their value (and political implications) is collectively represented, negotiated and recreated. Beakers and tankards are thus conceptualised as 'discursive conspicuous possessions' (136), which precisely by expressing and producing difference among Gabor work as an 'invisible link', eventually re-establishing and confirming a Gabor morality, identity and community of practice.

The second part of the book expands the analysis to the Cărhar Roma, who also trade in beakers and tankards, sometimes buying them from the Gabor. Through a detailed discussion of similarities and differences between Cărhar and Gabor prestige economies, this section provides an insightful depiction of the intricate relations between Gabor and Cărhar Roma, showing the intertwining of exchanges, collaboration, competition, mistrust and fraud. Under attention are also the discursive practices that frame and shape the flow of prestige objects from Gabors to Cărhars, and that create 'rival interpretations of consumer moral superiority' (239) in the context of the post-socialist consumer revolution. Berta thus contrasts the 'conscious consumer traditionalism and conservativism' (252), with which Cărhars express their critical stance towards Westernisation and their attachment to an 'authentic' Roma identity, with the Gabor's open reception of post-socialist commodities (houses, cars and costly entertainment products) as modern and alternative forms of conspicuous consumption.

The final part of the book intertwines the detailed biographies of two prestige items with reflections on Romania's recent transformations and the decline of the prestige economy revolving around beakers and tankards. Berta elaborates on practical aspects behind this decline. As informal, easily concealable and mobile assets, beakers and tankards served protecting from inflation and circumventing the communist state's restrictions and control of private property. In contemporary neoliberal Romania, these functions became exhausted. A central role is also given to the emergence of a post-socialist consumer sensitivity and the consequent reinterpretation of standards of good/normal/ideal life. Berta indeed theorises a friction between old Gabor generations, who still uphold the importance of beakers and tankards, and younger generations who find in costly post-socialist commodities and services an alternative 'symbolic repertoire of wealth accumulation and representation' (306-7).

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data, a sound use of theories and a perspicuous writing style result in a fresh and

captivating analysis. The book elaborates on the intersection between 'global tendencies and local worlds' (262), reflects on the impacts of post-socialism in Eastern Europe, investigates the processual and performative character of identity, and contributes to an 'anthropology of the good' (Ortner 2016) by evidencing the integration of Gabor and Cărhar Roma in Romanian society. The criticism I have concerns the fact that the book elegantly combines a large body of studies and theoretical suggestions, but avoids engaging with other ethnographic accounts of Romanian Gabor (e.g. Olivera 2012) and with studies on the role of prestige items in marital alliances among other Romanian Roma (e.g. Tesar 2013). I also found that some chapters could have dialogued more systematically with each other, and that the conclusions are a bit dispersive, as they open new questions rather than wrapping together the main arguments presented in the book. I remain nonetheless convinced that this work is a compelling contribution to Romani and material culture studies, and testifies to the role of long-term ethnographic fieldwork in delivering analytical thickness and capturing the complexity of economic, political and socio-cultural processes.

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Niko Besnier, Susan Brownell and Thomas F. Carter (eds) (2018), *The Anthropology of Sport: Bodies, Borders, Biopolitics* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 336 pp., $29.95/£25.00, ISBN 9780520289017.

When I first started to do ethnographic fieldwork on Basque soccer fandom in the north-west of Spain about ten years ago, a young academic I met was scandalised by my project: 'And there is a university that gives you money for *this*?!' she asked incredulously as she looked at the boisterous soccer crowd. She found my research decidedly

'frivolous'. Work on sport has been often haunted by this f-word. If sport provided, with Durkheim's phrase, 'a window on "the serious life"' (1), the former is implicitly positioned outside of the latter; in 1978, Bourdieu considered that the legitimacy of sport as a 'distinct scientific object' was 'not at all self-evident' (Bourdieu 1978: 822).

This book situates the anthropology of sport in the broader discipline of anthropology, confirming that sport has gained 'considerable legacy as a serious topic in the discipline' (9), while admitting that it still occupies an 'ambiguous position in the history of anthropology' (7). Despite their growing traction, social scientific studies of sport often remain on the margins of their disciplines. That this should be so is intriguing, for seminal anthropological work has been produced through the lenses of sport (7): Geertz's *Notes on the Balinese Cockfight* (1972), the ethnographic documentary *Trobriand Cricket* (1973) and C. L. R. James's colonial critique *Beyond a Boundary* (1963).

The greatest merit of Besnier, Brownell and Carter's *The Anthropology of Sport* is that it breathes new energies into the frustrated ranks of a promising sub-discipline that never quite got the attention it deserved despite important work, as the authors suggest through the 'weak reception' of Alan Klein's ethnographies in the 1990s (37). It is our responsibility to engage with the broader questions of anthropology, and it is precisely here that *The Anthropology of Sport* is most useful. It reminds us of the need to scale up our micro-focus on sport to the macro-dimensions of culture, and provides an arsenal of theoretical perspectives through which to do so.

The book consists of an Introduction, eight chapters thematically dedicated to main approaches to culture through sport, and an Epilogue. Chapter 1 situates sport historically, with special feature of its Greek Olympian roots and sport's problematic share in anthropology's colonial baggage. Chapter 2 follows up on that theme by exploring the role of sport as a colonial tool to conquer and dominate. Chapter 3 laments the scarce attention that medicine and medical anthropology have paid to exercise in their focus on sickness and the body as a material object. Chapter 4 explores sport and class, and the problematics of ethnic and racial essentialisms through sport, as body practice is particularly prone to fixing 'natural' equivalences where there is indeed an ideological one.

Chapter 5 captures sport's unique position to contribute to debates on gender and sexuality. As a frame of competition whose basic requirement is fairness, gender segregation and sex verification controversies in sport have revealed the difficulty of forcing our bodies

into a strict sex binary. A lacuna of these two chapters is that they do not draw on theories of intersectionality with regards to class, gender, race and ethnicity.

Chapter 6 summarises the theoretical contributions major anthropologists like Victor and Terence Turner, Erving Goffman, Max Gluckman, Sally Falk Moore or Gregory Bateson made to sport as a cultural performance. Chapter 7 discusses sport and nationalism through the popular perspectives of 'imagined communities', 'invented traditions' and 'banal nationalism'. Chapter 8 situates sport in an international and globalised context, with special attention to the sport, development and peace sector, and to the dangers of repeating the mistakes of colonial anthropology.

A great strength of the book is that it deconstructs many Western assumptions that we have through sport. Few cultural arenas are as globalised, and as deeply rooted in Eurocentrism as sport due to its Greek and British influence. The authors suggest that we look beyond some established 'truths' such as the mind-body, sickness-health binaries of Western biomedicine, contrasting them with holistic non-Western views that consider the body in its relation to the cosmos and ecology. Another interesting example is the question of unfair advantage, which Western biomedicine and popular consciousness locate in performance enhancement drugs, while soccer players in Cameroon and wrestlers in Senegal see Western-style pharmaceuticals 'considerably less worrisome than . . . amulets, potions, prayers and other substances and practices' (93).

While the book argues for a critical view of sport and its Western, colonial heritage, I missed reading more about how to read sport with an ethnographer's eye. This is primarily a methodological question. Ethnography's unique insights result from the emic perspective of the outsider, and us who write on Western contexts need to distance ourselves to have a vision that is uncontaminated by too much familiarity. But how to achieve this freshness of the outsider's view? We do get glimpses of how to do this in Chapter 6 (188–194), for example, when the authors analyse the Olympic Games through such foundational anthropological concepts as the Kula ring, gift economy, and reciprocity. However, a whole chapter on methodology would have been a great asset, particularly in light of the net ethnographic experience of the authors.

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Martin Demant Fredriksen (2018), *An Anthropology of Nothing in Particular* (Winchester: Zero Books), 118 pp., £10.99, ISBN 9781785356995.

This book attends to those troubling moments that 'go missing when we look for meaning'. The narrative stages a series of encounters with such imponderable, meaningless 'nothings', leading to a deeply philosophical tarrying with mute, meaningless materiality. These varied encounters begin in the author's apartment, where an epistemic encounter with a splatter on the wall of what looks a good deal like blood, but turns out to be splashed soup, becomes a gripping and deeply evocative ethnographic moment. Both from within and from without, nihilism informs an ethnographic approach that, if it doesn't attempt to sublimate nothings into a meaningful something, nevertheless shows us that nothing and meaninglessness is something to be attended to ethnographically, nothing is part of something. Moreover, like the author's other works, an ethnographic perspective and object that would seem to offer only morose and dimly lit reflections instead seems gripping, interested and interesting.

What strikes me the most about this book is that it is a completely novel way of framing an ethnography. This book seeks to find a way of saying something about nothing, that is, 'nihilism, meaninglessness and nothingness', both as theoretical objects and as troubling and persistent ethnographic objects, part and parcel of everyday life. Ethnographically, the narration is like a kind of hopscotch through a random series of scenes, what speculative fiction writer J. G. Ballard (1967) called a 'non-linear narrative'. This digressive narrative moves between theory and ethnography, fact and fable, something and nothing.

The author presents a problem, that nothing escapes the web of meaning. Ethnography, after all, has often attended to the boring banalities of daily life, what ethnomethodologist Harold Garfinkel called the 'seen but unnoticed', expected, background features of everyday scenes. In a sense, the ethnographic encounters with meaningless nothingness found in this ethnography superficially resemble what Malinowski famously called the '*imponderabilia* of actual life' (1922: 19), those frequently banal ethnographic trivialities filling ethnographic diaries which might seem to be examples of meaningless

nothingness. But for Malinowski, such apparent nothings are always really something, they never fall outside webs of significance, they are the flesh on the bones of the social.

The setting is deliberately not named, it is written as if it was about nowhere-in-particular: there is an anonymous city, there are characters whose names are mostly contrived to be obvious pseud-onyms and from which no ethnonyms can be deduced (Oz, Whiskey, Hakuna, Dato, Mushu, Queenie, Conchita). The time, however, is contemporary. These nobodies who live nowhere populate and theo-rise the meaningless imponderabilia of their actual lives with a series of characters with real names; some are fictional characters, some pop cultural celebrities, some are theorists: Athos, Morrissey, Sartre, Kierkegaard, Tarkovsky, Seinfeld. Sometimes these characters speak off screen as disembodied voices of theory, sometimes they are just part and parcel of the meaningless nothingness.

Situating an ethnography of nothing in particular as being, eth-nographically speaking, nowhere-in-particular turns the local ethno-graphic problems of boredom and nothingness that haunt the author's other situated ethnographic works into a more general philosophical and ethnographic *tour de force*. This is a novel deployment of the eth-nographer's magic, of turning real particular nobodies into nobody in particular, as Shunsuke Nozawa puts it:

> 'Everyday life implicitly represents culture because it is a normativity inhabited by anybody-because-nobody-in-particular' (Nozawa 2011: 5).

But if these nobodies nowhere can be anybodies, anywhere, they are also real particular nobodies, who, as Nozawa points out, become the heroes of a social scientific underdog story where, like the way the banal imponderables of daily life become the real substance under-lying the social fabric, these nobodies turn out to be somebody and something *meaningful*: 'an implicit soteriology, salvaging nobodies from oblivion and driving them forward and upward in a topology of value' (Nozawa 2011: 6).

I dwell on this intellectual genealogy of nobodies to show what Martin Demant Fredriksen is trying to avoid doing with Oz and his circle: he seeks to let the nobodies remain nobodies. Standing at the centre of this ethnography is the organic intellectual of nothingness, Oz, a concrete nobody who defies description, he is not fat, not thin, not handsome, not ugly, neither old nor young. He is in this sense a nobody who could be anybody. The author admits when asked, at the end, that at the end of his search for nothing: 'Oz, I found Oz'.

Oz and his circle of nihilists are part of an ethnography of a real particular nowhere: one can recognise elements here and there that are unmistakably the city of Tbilisi in the country of Georgia. I want to list them, but I will not. The author wants this to be about nothing and nowhere, and I will not pick at the carapace of nothing and nowhere to find fleshy titbits of something and somewhere. I will say that the city of Tbilisi is a pretty good – no, ideal – choice as a field site for an ethnography of nihilism. I have never met so many earnestly practising nihilists as I have met there; one could say it is infectious. The feeling is particularly infectious right now, as I re-read this ethnography in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic when we are all confined to our scattered apartments and we are all confronted by the banal imponderabilia of everyday life as meaninglessness, of being all in this – watching the paint peel – together.

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Caroline Hornstein-Tomić, Robert Pichler and Sarah Scholl-Schneider (eds) (2018), *Remigration to Post-Socialist Europe: Hopes and Realities of Return* (Münster: LIT Verlag), 467 pp., £39.90, ISBN 3643910258.

This volume addresses return migration to the former socialist countries of Europe, as well as the impact of return migration on the transformation process. The book includes a range of different accounts of return migration to several Eastern and South-Eastern European countries. It is composed of four substantive chapters with the first addressing returnees' understanding of transformation projects and the role of return migration in the processes of post-communist transformation in Lithuania, Bulgaria and Croatia. The authors portray returnees' disappointment about reservation and resentment on

the part of local elites and the negative reaction of those who stayed behind.

The second part of the book focuses on returnees' notions of belonging. The first case study shows the mismatch between the imagined and experienced homecoming to former German Democratic Republic (GDR). The second and third case studies explore remigration to Kazakhstan and the Czech Republic and show how feelings of belonging upon return are challenged in relation to generations, where younger generations of migrants find the idea of return particularly difficult. The third part of the volume addresses the impact of state dissolution on decisions to return to Serbia, Macedonia, Kosovo and Slovakia. Finally, the fourth part concerns decision-making processes surrounding the return to Romania, Bosnia and Poland.

Remigration to Post-Socialist Europe is a unique volume as it examines specific places and spaces of return on which returnees had an impact. The book investigates returnees as active members of local societies and shows the post-socialist transformation through their eyes, which is seldom seen in books of this kind. The volume is an important addition to studies on migration and return migration, and its roundedness and multiplicity of perspectives constitute an added value to this text.

To date there has been little recognition of the role of returnees in post-socialist transformation. The book fills this gap by bringing unprecedented theoretical and empirical attention to return migration that, as the authors argue, rarely concludes a migratory project but is rather deeply embedded in processes of transnationalism. Although there are obstacles to theoretical advancement in migration studies, such as difficulties of working across disciplines and the fragmentation of migration research into sub-fields, this book overcomes these by presenting a unique blend of theoretical perspectives from history, cultural anthropology and sociology. Empirically, and within this theoretical framework, the book presents an intimate understanding of individual pathways of migration and remigration that is set up within specific country contacts. The approach used in this book successfully overcomes concerns about methodological nationalism by offering a transnational lens for the exploration of returnees and processes of return migration.

Finally, the volume constitutes a useful resource for students, practitioners and academics. It represents an excellent starting point for conducting studies on return migration.

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Peter Mulholland (2019), *Love's Betrayal: The Decline of Catholicism and Rise of New Religions in Ireland* (Oxford: Peter Lang), 362 pp., £73.62, ISBN 9781787071278.

For a small country on the furthest western edge of Europe, Ireland has long punched above its weight, in cultural terms if not in economic power or military capacity. Since the Second World War, this 'soft power' has centred on a surprising diplomatic and cultural reach consequent upon a series of factors. These include: the English language; a subaltern status vis-à-vis a declining former superpower; the moral kudos of a former colony in a decolonising world; strong connections with the ascendant Pax Americana; and a world-conquering Celtic cultural brand in areas of literature and traditional music. But as the public broadcasting channel RTE and numerous popular authors never tire of pointing out, the world's debt is much older, the Irish having 'saved civilisation' in the aftermath of the fall of Rome (Cahill 1995). Between the scholasticism of John Scottus Eriugena, the Irish mission system of Columba, the Anglo-Irish conservatism of Edmund Burke, President Mary Robinson's distinctive Celtic articulation of peace and reconciliation, and the celebrity piety of Bono and Bob Geldof – the Emerald Isle has frequently had claim to moral leadership.

But with its distinctive weave of nationalism and religion, Ireland has also functioned as the most visible litmus for the wider problems of the Catholic Church and the decline of Christianity in the West. Over the course of the twentieth century, the country experienced a process of modernisation that was liberating and destabilising in equal measure. Although the pace of industrialisation and urbanisation was modest, at least by comparison with the 'shock cities' such as Manchester, Chicago or Shanghai (to use Asa Briggs' phrase(1993 [1963])), continuing well into the twentieth century, the experience of mass emigration engendered a process of spatial and social mobility, international connection, global diaspora and cultural change that was seismic and disorienting.

Mulholland's book tracks this process of unravelling in relation to perhaps its most significant thread – the declining cultural weight and political influence of the Catholic Church, as an institution, a set of shared ritual practices, ideas and beliefs, and a taken for granted

structure of mutual identification. Focusing on the post-war decline of Catholicism and the corollary rise of new religions, over eight chapters, the narrative ranges from questions of theology, through socio-economic crisis and transformation and the depth-psychology of attachment.

The overarching goal of the work is to link (i) ideational changes not only to (ii) secular transformations in relation to economy, society and education; but also to (iii) particular moments of moral-institutional crisis associated with issues such as corporal punishment and physical abuse, in both schools and religious contexts; and subsequently to sexual abuse of children by priests in a position of *loco parentis*; and finally to (iv) a rich psychological understanding of both the older National- Catholic regime of teaching, religious practice and parenting and the more permissive, individualistic and less-conforming patterns associated with secularism, consumerism and the therapeutic culture of New Age spiritualty.

Through an extensive trawl of media archives and secondary literature, Chapter 1 reviews the history of the New Religious Movements (NRMs) and 'New Age' culture in Ireland. Chapter 2 summarises the tectonic shifts in economy and culture that created the opportunity for Catholicism to lose its footing and NRMs to blossom. In particular, Mulholland analyses in great detail the particular and distinctively Irish mode of codification and communication of core Catholic teachings – a catechism imbued to a greater extent than in other areas of Catholic Europe, with an authoritarian Augustinian understanding of grace and salvation. At the same time, extending the conventional sociological understanding of this milieu (and especially the interpretation of Tom Inglis in his ground-breaking book *Moral Monopoly* [1998]), Mulholland explores in much greater detail the class differences in exposition, inculcation and reception of this codification of the Catholic faith. The analysis here is heavily dependent on a deep dive through newspaper and other media archives.

In Chapter 3, the focus shifts to physical and sexual abuse of children in the context of both educational and religious institutions. Supplementing the media archival data in the previous chapter, Mulholland here makes extensive use of parliamentary debates as well as interviews with key witnesses who participated in the campaigns against child abuse. In Chapter 4, the historical focus is expanded, with the narrative changing track to identify the peculiarly authoritarian nature of Irish Catholicism – an ideational and psychological configuration or 'habitus' (to use the Bourdieusian/Eliasian term)

that, according to Mulholland, can be traced back directly to the fifth-century theological stand-off between Augustine of Hippo and the Romano-British Pelagius ('Morgan') and the 'Pelagian Heresy'. The nub of the disagreement pertained to the necessity (Augustine) or not (Pelagius) of divine grace and whether men and women were able to reach for divinity through their own volition and commitment. Mulholland makes the case that Irish Catholicism internalised a more extreme version of the Augustinian theodicy – which engendered, over many centuries, a more authoritarian and pernicious understanding of redemption and which, unconsciously in part, rationalised a more punitive pedagogical regime which was in turn open to physical and sexual abuse. In Chapter 5, Mulholland considers the impact on the Church's reputation and moral authority of the diversifying culture of print, radio and TV media. The erosion of deference and the increasing presentation of different ethical/moral takes on questions of the day eroded what Inglis had called the 'moral monopoly' of the Church.

In Chapter 6 the focus switches back to a broad-brush account of post-war development. The combination of economic hardship and a continuing diaspora with greater access to education, individualisation and exposure to the booming pop culture of the UK and America through new media such as TV combined to undermine the salience and traction of the traditional Church institutions. Although for decades this weakening of Church authority was obscured by the persistent culture of deference in institutions such as RTE (the national broadcaster Raidió Teilifís Éireann), it was, Mulholland suggests, evident in the small but vigorous counterculture associated with the NRMs. New Ageism, he suggests, flourished in the context of both rapid change but also high levels of existential anxiety associated, in particular, with the Cold War.

In the penultimate Chapter 7, Mulholland proposes a synthesis of sociological and psychological theories to explain the decline of Catholicism and the simultaneous rise of New Ageism. In particular, he combines an Eliasian understanding of the process of civilisation as an internalisation of constraints associated with particular kinds of societal habitus on the one hand, and Bowlby's developmental theory of attachment, on the other. Finally, in the concluding Chapter 8, the focus broadens once again, as Mulholland develops a synthetic assessment of the formative role of Christianity in Ireland's development as a nation, and its recent failure. Reflecting on the drivers and

theological predispositions that allowed early cultic Christianity to develop an unprecedented rationale for the moral sanctity of the individual, Mulholland's driving focus is the pattern of internal theological and institutional failure that led the Church to betray the Catholic doctrine of love and made this historical bastion of Catholic faith and learning so receptive to New Age philosophies of therapeutic self-help – ideas that, he argues, should be understood as a post-modern restatement of Pelagianism.

This is a detailed and minutely pixilated piece of research – as one might expect for a book that results from a doctoral project, gestated over many years. In all of the detail, the wealth of anecdotes and press/media citations, the book provides a veritable treasure trove that will be relevant to anyone with an interest in the modern history and sociology of Ireland, the recent travails of the Catholic Church, the sociology of religion and particularly the rise of New Age religions. This same strength is perhaps the book's main weakness. Although the central narrative is well developed throughout, Mulholland sometimes pulls his punches and allows the confetti of data points to overwhelm a much-needed restatement of the main theme. For the reader, there is a not infrequent sensation of drowning in details. Nevertheless, the utility of the text in collating and structuring this material can't be overstated. If nothing else, Mulholland has done a real service to Irish historiography.

The book seems also deeply personal. The author is clearly engaging with his own childhood, schooling and early engagement with the Catholic Church. In the closing chapters of *Dominion,* Tom Holland (2019) makes the case that even now, the 'deracinated', secularised and individualised consumer societies of the West are deeply (post-)Christian – not least because the very notion of 'secular' was a category which only became thinkable in the wake of the machinations and permutations of Christian theology. In mid to late twentieth-century Ireland, perhaps more than anywhere else, it was impossible for thinking people to escape from some kind of inner dialogue with the Church – and perhaps even a specific childhood priest or even, in Flann O'Brien's case (in *The Dalkey Archive, 1965*), with St Augustine himself. Mulholland's own reflection is particularly effective in weaving together the historical sociology of Norbert Elias, and the notion of very specific and identifiable patterns of societal habitus, with John Bowlby's developmental 'attachment theory'. For me, this was the most effective contribution.

Channelling Max Weber, Mulholland makes the case that humans are first and foremost meaning-making agents:

> Behind the great curtain of Catholic Orthodoxy and despite the appearance of stability (or stagnation) in the Church, there was always some religious flux and the enthusiasm for magical-devotional forms of religiosity ebbed and flowed with the levels of personal and collective distress. (239)

Although, from the 1960s, NRMs had a great deal of exposure, generated controversy and sometimes sensational press coverage (as with the 'moving statues'), in the end 'relatively few Irish people ever took a serious interest'. The reason, he argues, is that the underlay of unofficial magical-devotional practices and thinking that have always formed part of the wattle of Irish Catholicism, in the end proved effective in 'capitalizing on the operation of the [psychological] attachment system to create . . . the "creative space" in which the "Church structure" could resonate with intimate memories of formative relationships and produce transformative experiences and revelatory insights' (248).

Given that our hard-wired religiosity and primary psychological need for attachment are unlikely to change, it seems a little early to write the obituary for Irish Catholicism. In a world of pandemics, geopolitical fragmentation, acute economic stress and problems of mutual identification associated with social diversity, the deep-seated structures of Catholic thought, institutional architectures and habits of organisation may be somewhat tattered, but they are still in place. For Christians, greens, neo-pagans, secular humanists and others with an interest in the question of 'how we should live', the merit of Mulholland's study is that he identifies the psychological and social mechanisms that have always been in play, in the ebb and flow of Catholic social practice. Any group seeking to develop a coherent answer to that question, but which fails to address the developmental psycho-drama of attachment or the durability of societal habitus, is likely to be sorely disappointed.

As Mulholland has shown, the inculcation of a habitus is never a matter of 'right-thinking' and the exposure, through education, of rational individuals to appropriate truths. Rather, there is a complex interplay between social institutions, individual psychology, the external environment of risk and uncertainty. Pelagianism speaks to the world of mobile untethered individuals who can nevertheless access educational and material resources in an optimistic endeavour of boot-strapping self-improvement. In this sense, as an articulation of

Pelagianism, New Ageism and NRMs share an elective affinity with consumer society. In a more crisis-ridden, place-bound, ecologically constrained and insecure social environment, it seems at least likely that Ireland may expect an Augustinian moment.

One final thought that comes to mind relates to the resonance between Mulholland's use of Norbert Elias and John Bowlby, and the psychological Jungian anthropology of Ernest Becker, as elaborated in *The Denial of Death* (2011 [1973]). For Becker, the primary function of culture is to insulate human beings from the unsettling awareness of mortality. It achieves this firstly by making life meaningful through socially sanctioned 'hero projects' and secondly by offering a literal or symbolic 'life after death' (immortality projects). From this perspective, orthodox Catholicism, Marian devotionalism (Fulton-Brown 2019), New Religious Movements, Irish nationalism, progressive 'woke' politics and the eco-modernism of the Green Party can all be understood as competing 'hero-immortality' projects. Their success or failure depends on the extent to which they provide a framework that makes individual lives meaningful and prestigious (in the light of extant societal ontological commitments) and a vehicle for either (or both) *symbolic* immortality (by psychological identification with a larger 'we' entity) or *literal* immortality (a belief in some kind of afterlife). Since such psychological needs will not go away, it seems inevitable that *Love's Betrayal* will only be Part I of an ongoing epic.

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Michał Murawski (2019), *The Palace Complex: A Stalinist Skyscraper, Capitalist Warsaw, and a City Transfixed* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 338 pp., $40.00, ISBN 9780253039996.

Despite never visiting Warsaw, even I knew there was something special about its Palace of Culture and Science. In the 2009 Polish film *Revers,* set in the early 1950s, the heroine buries the remains of her beau (he turned out to be secret police and, therefore, had to be disposed of) in the Palace's construction site. The film goes on to show that, over the next decades, she kept returning to the site to commemorate the day of his death.

Michał Murawski's book tells a story of a similar obsessive relationship of Warsaw with its Palace of Culture and Science, a 1950s gift from the USSR to the Polish capital. This gift could never be reciprocated due to its immense scale and its complex effect on the fabric of Warsaw. The unclosed gestalt of this 'brotherly gift' from one nation to another created what Murawski psychoanalytically calls the 'Palace complex': the inability to accept or get rid of the skyscraper that 'transfixed' the city.

Murawski explores the 'Palace complex' with a creative mix of methods: conversations (with architects, politicians, activists), an online survey and, most importantly, 'public anthropology': discussions and events organised by the anthropologist himself. The result is a dense narrative about the Palace, a kaleidoscope of arguments, themes, characters, which makes the reader appreciate the Palace's extraordinariness and the author's empirical savviness but obscures the book's theoretical framing.

In the first three chapters, we learn about the intricate architectural and planning work that created the Palace's 'enduring triumph' (21). The power of the socialist architecture, urban planning and the edifice's embedded 'public spirit' helped maintain its centrality after the collapse of socialism. As Murawski puts it, 'the Stalinist Palace continues to pervade and dominate the capitalist city, functioning in just the way the designers and ideologues of the 1950s intended it to function' (7). Designed as the 'center of the very center', a 'dominanta' and a locus of multiple public functions (the subject of Chapter 4, 'Site-Specific'), the Palace could not be defeated, demolished or covered, despite numerous post-1989 efforts by the city administrators, architects and other players.

Chapter 5, 'Varsovianization', tells the story of the spectacular failure of the post-1989 redevelopment project for the Parade Square and

the Palace surroundings. It is intriguing that while grand construction and redevelopment projects failed, the only intervention that seems to have at least somewhat subverted the Palace was the seemingly small-scale and less intrusive Millennium Clock. The clock was installed on the Palace's tower in 2000 and 'town-halled it' (152), making it more 'Varsovian'. The clock-related discussion of the political temporality and Warsaw's 'civic intimacy' is, arguably, the most interesting theoretical essay in the book. Building on the work on Stalinist temporality by Katerina Clark and Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov, Murawski interprets the installation of the clock as 'a successful exercise in the taming and monumentalization of time (a reduction of temporal complexity) in the name of a new, stabilized, civic-capitalist political-economic system' (154).

While the book has several (not always well-connected) theoretical interventions and themes (the gift dynamic, Althusser's work on ideology, debates on urban centres and periphery, to name a few), it is first and foremost a detailed narrative about the Palace and its extraordinariness. The author keeps introducing new exciting stories, details, characters and developments in the Palace's life (even in the Conclusion) and then some more come in the Epilogue, which focuses on the most recent relations of the Palace and the emphatically anti-post-communist political regime of the 'Law and Justice' party.

A trade-off of this empirical diversity and richness is that at least one of the key themes is lost: property relations (the Palace remained public property in capitalist Warsaw) are briefly discussed in the Introduction, and then mostly abandoned until the Conclusion, where they are explicitly identified as one of the factors of the Palace's resilience. It is in line with how the participants of 'Archiblahblah', a discussion about the failures to redevelop the Palace's surroundings (one of Murawski's public anthropological efforts described in Chapter 6), 'ignored the property question' (255). But, perhaps, this is a situation when it was not necessary to follow the vision of the study participants so literally: a more comprehensive discussion of property relations would make a stronger case for the resilient 'public spirit' and 'non-capitalist' profile of the Palace.

While using an urban object as a starting point to disentangle social relations and the processes it embodies sounds like a classic move in the social sciences, it is not easy to say what the Palace and 'palaceology' are comparable to. Are extraordinary buildings or other 'urban things' a class of urban objects, different from other spatial and architectural phenomena?

This book raises a few intriguing questions and will be of interest to scholars studying architecture, memory and Eastern European cities, as well as for practitioners having to work with contested architectural legacy.

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Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov (2017), *Two Lenins: A Brief Anthropology of Time* (Chicago: Hau Books), 150 pp., $22.05, ISBN 0997367539.

As the subtitle suggests, this book is about time. Time is like the glue that holds together varied topics. But on closer reading, this book is about two people (two Lenins) and three different research topics – the Bolshevik leader Vladimir Ulianov Lenin from the 1920s, the author's fieldwork in Siberia in the 1990s about the Evenki hunter nicknamed Lenin, and the author's analysis of the fieldwork documentation and different interpretations of the Maussian gift theory.

It is a nicely written, structured book that reads well. This is probably the first thing that the reader notices – Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov's writing style is closer to a philosophical novel than to dry academia. The author's ambition is to conceptualise time through combining different interpretations from Hobbes to Baudrillard. Theoretically, two concepts are the centrepiece of the book – temporality and chronotope. The latter stems from Bakhtin, whereas the former is a general concept about a rupture and continuity in the flow of events or time periods. The definition for the chronotope is as follows: 'These are hierarchies of things that are true and those that are not at all, or less so' (9). Temporality and chronotope are a framework to analyse exchange and change.

The three research topics are seen through exchange and change. There are several exchanges, related to a change, in this book. The first case is a gift from American businessman Armand Hammer to Vladimir Lenin, the industrial concessions he obtained in Soviet Russia and the general atmosphere of change in 1917 post-revolutionary Russia. Another story is the case of an Evenki hunter – the second Lenin – and the fate of reindeer fodder that was given to reindeer herders to feed their animals, but sold to villagers in order to obtain alcohol. This act of exchange is related to a broader context of changes brought to Siberia by the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution in Russia. The third act of exchange is ethnographic fieldwork by the

author in a context where informants – Evenki reindeer herders – have an obligation to supply the researcher as a 'state representative' with relevant information about their livelihood, and about the changes between life in the 'old times' and 'new times'. In all these processes participate several real and symbolic gifts – Hammer presents Lenin with a bronze statue, the Bolsheviks present indigenous reindeer herders with 'civilisation' and a 'bright future' in the form of infrastructure, schools, education, medicine and so forth.

Time is embedded in all these processes on an ambivalent scale of backwardness and modernity. For example, the reindeer herder with the nickname Lenin is simultaneously a modern man, who introduces a new form of boat, and a backward savage, who escapes modernity to live in a polar forest. There are several interesting examples of the fluidity of the notion of modernity – when a boat is novel in form, it is inspired by a boat the reindeer herder Lenin saw in the 1950s. In order to build the boat, the builders have to get nails from an old abandoned geological watch tower, once a symbol of progress, now representing the decline of the Soviet state.

Ssorin-Chaikov writes extensively on the Soviet understanding of Marxism, but also about how Marxism is reflected in Soviet culture, especially in the early decades. This book is aimed at a broad readership, and readers from different fields can benefit from its focus. The analysis of the Bolsheviks' reading of Marxism could be an introduction to the ideologically driven politics and revolutionary enthusiasm that framed the changes in all aspects of life during the Lenin and Stalin era, for readers who have little knowledge of Soviet cultural and political history. Non-specialists may be surprised at the importance of how avant-garde poet Mayakovskii, Evenki reindeer herders, and what Vladimir Lenin thought about Western technical progress are related.

The discussion on Marxist-Leninist temporality in the second half of the book is noteworthy. Ssorin-Chaikov argues that the Bolshevik gift to the new times is more similar to the Hobbesian confrontation than the Maussian gift theory, where a gift obliges the receiver to a reciprocal step at some point in the foreseeable future. The author shows convincingly that 'what Lenin so often called the "iron logic" of history . . . is a Hobbesian violent sovereignty of natural law' (119).

For people who have studied Russia and other post-Soviet countries, such reasoning sounds logical, but it can contain surprising moments for students of other fields. I enjoyed the author's analysis of fieldwork in a Siberian reindeer camp. I agree with the notion of

an ethnographer who embodies the institutional power and is entitled to study 'backwardness', but also the passages where Ssorin-Chaikov describes how he created his free space when opening his field notes journal and started to write. The description of complicated social relations of long-term fieldwork in a remote indigenous camp, where different paradigms of time collide – chronotope – is familiar to many researchers and gives food for thought. All in all, this book deviates from a familiar anthropological study of time and space. Different linear temporalities that surround us can exist simultaneously without any contradiction. Ssorin-Chaikov's book gives a theoretical frame-work to conceptualise this.

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