Those familiar with the comparative politics of post-communist transformation in Central and Eastern Europe can expect to be taken to ‘unexpected places which arrest the imagination’ (p. 26) if they read Katherine Verdery’s *Political lives of dead bodies*. While opinion polls and surveys might seem like the more appropriate methods to research the apparently technical processes of introducing new forms of democracy and government organisation, Verdery transcends the limits of ‘dry’ approaches such as these, using anthropological methods to scrutinise the ‘fundamentally cultural process’ of political change. As she says ‘meanings, feelings, the sacred, ideas of morality, the nonrational (are) all ingredients of “legitimacy” or “regime consolidation”’ (p. 25).

The political lives of dead bodies therefore has processes of legitimation as a core focus. At the same time, however, it contributes much to the broader, interdisciplinary field of death studies by highlighting the powerful implications of the apparently narrow field of burial practices. While the real-world focus of much social science research often privileges embodied face-to-face interaction, this orientation can misleadingly marginalise the presence of the dead, as materialised at the site of the statues, skeletons, corpses or body parts that stand for them.

Verdery’s anthropological focus therefore opens up an arena within which the dead contribute powerfully to the identities and indeed the fortunes of the living. Eschewing universal explanations of the mobilising of the dead, and with an anthropologist’s appreciation of ‘life’s abiding murkiness’ (p. 21), Verdery situates herself firmly within the historical and cultural specificities of post-communist transformation and asks how the movement of bodies can be made sense of within this time and place. Thus, as she notes, bodies can constitute a symbolic resource that in bearing a history is inevitably subject to revision.

Recognising the sensory aspects of the body’s materialities and its attendant objects such as urns or statues, she shows how it can be mobilised in such a way as to allow time to be manipulated and the past to be materialised in the present. Conceptions of agency that limit their scope to embodied human intentionality are demonstrably inadequate for theorising the power and influence of the dead – as is made evident in Verdery’s descriptions of the retrieval of bodies of the famous dead for re-burial ‘at home’; the toppling of statues of the famous dead and subsequent pilgrimage to the emptied plinths that remain; the recovery of the nameless dead from mass graves in wars and at labour camps.

Having outlined her orientation towards the cultural, sacral and charismatic aspects of post-communist transformation, Verdery demonstrates the scope of her approach in two case-study chapters, the first of which focuses on the ‘restless’ bones of Bishop Micu, who died in 1768 and remained in a sarcophagus in the Madonna del Pascolo Church in Rome until 1997. In keeping with a request made by Bishop Micu himself to be buried in his home soil, evidenced in a text lodged within the library of the theological school he founded in Blaj, Transylvania, his bones were finally brought back to Romania in August 1997.

In an extended historical account, Verdery describes the religious tensions in play across the centuries within the Eastern Orthodox realm, showing how each of the Orthodox churches sought to align itself with nationalist forces which oppose western market penetration. In setting up her arguments, Verdery defends her choice of dead bodies as a core symbolic focus, highlighting their ‘protean’ qualities. These make the corpse apparently unambiguous in its meaning, yet in its essential organic nature, it becomes amenable to multiple readings. In the case of Bishop Micu, for example, the mobility of his bones can be understood in terms of his role as an ancestor for
both Greek Catholics and the Romanian Orthodox Church. This case study therefore amply illuminates the re-ordering of post-socialist Romania, whether in terms of church–state relations, property rights, moralities or national identities.

This is followed by a second study which addresses the former Yugoslavia. Here, rather than a tight focus on the relationship between national and religious identity, it is issues of territory and history which are in question. These, as Verdery points out, are matters of space and time and their configuring and re-configuring. In the ‘intense burial regime’ of post-Yugoslavia, relationships between the living and the dead persist at the site of the grave. In political terms, it is the bodies of the nameless dead of the Second World War and more recent fighting which are particularly important. Their’s is a context where the corpse and the soil in which it is interred become synonymous; as markers of personal and national identity, the two become indistinguishable. This concept takes material form as the body gradually disintegrates into the earth. Against this backdrop, then, the mass burials of different groups of Serbs and Croats who died in multiple massacres were viewed as highly improper. Once Tito’s regime began to weaken in the late 1980s, the population began to recover these bodies in highly public reburials, emotive television footage revealing entire communities handling the recovered remains. These practices fuelled a nationalist frenzy, and the culturally ordained revenge for killings finally becoming feasible. ‘Communists’, ‘Serbs’ and ‘Ustasa’ were all identified as focuses for aggression here, a process that led to a rewriting of ethnic and territorial histories. Individual dead and the grief of their families became subsumed within the formation of new Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian nation-states.

What Verdery describes therefore is a movement of bones that served to re-draw territorial boundaries as ‘our’ dead were re-interred on ‘our’ land. It has been a self-sustaining movement that reproduced itself in further conflict, more killings and subsequent reburials. Ethnicity is key here, attempts to draw up nation-state boundaries on this principle being highly problematic for Serbs, a third of whom were scattered outside the new Serbia. In Bosnia, where they made up three-quarters of the farming population, land, earth and dead bodies were particularly loaded as both the material basis for issues of livelihood, as well as for state-making and international diplomacy.

For those jaded by a view of nationalism as ‘a matter of territorial borders, state-making, “constructionism”, or resource competition’, Verdery’s work offers welcome refreshment. In its place she offers a view of nationalism as part of ‘kinship, spirits, ancestor worship, and the circulation of cultural treasures’ (p. 26). Her account is of the symbolic power of material culture, whether bronze, bone or flesh, and the inclusion of photographs in this book is very welcome. With an eye firmly on large-scale political processes, Verdery nonetheless demonstrates how ideologies come to be animated and indeed personalised through the manipulation of the individual dead by particular groups and individuals. Indeed she situates her work within her personal autobiography of loss; tragically, her 46-year-old brother who died at the time of writing; and, comically, her father who finally ‘got into Harvard’ when his cadaver was made available for student dissection. As she points out, hers is an approach that treats the micro and the macro as existing not as separate instance, but as meshed: ‘By assuming that the macro is in the micro (and vice versa), I have found that a modest set of bones can open up the world’ (p. 93).

JENNY HOCKEY
University of Hull

Social and cultural anthropology. The key concepts.

Rapport and Overing’s book of key concepts in social and cultural anthropology offers some sixty essays ranging in length from approximately 500 to 5,000 words, a very detailed index and an extensive bibliography of sources. The authors begin by characterising academic endeavour as ‘intrinsically perspectival, contingent, subjective and situational’ (p. ix). They have remained true to their own words in the construction of this book.

The authors’ own works are referred to no less than on 59 occasions, and subjectivity would appear to have been the central criterion in conceptual selection. The book bares the hallmark of Rapport’s academic career in particular. Those familiar with his extensive body of work will be aware that it falls within the ambit of ‘post-modernism’ (Essay 41). He has written major
works on issues as diverse as ‘conversation’ (12), ‘violence’ (54), the English ‘rural idyll’ (44) and ‘literariness’ (32), through a study of anthropological writing and the social novel, ‘consciousness’ (with Anthony Cohen) (10), and more recently ‘home and homelessness’ (with Andrew Dawson) (22). His work has a decidedly political edge of relevance, both within and without the discipline; he has argued persuasively for greater ‘humanism’ (24) within anthropology itself and written more generally about ‘human rights’ (23). All of these empirical and political projects are informed by a central theoretical agenda that is concerned with the ‘agent and agency’ (1), and recognition of the central role that ‘individuality’ (26) plays in the formation of socio-cultural milieux.

The overlaps between the authors’ interests and the concepts selected for treatment does not end here. For some, and particularly those such as myself who have been inspired by Rapport’s challenge to an anthropological orthodoxy of the over-determined individual, such subjectivity will not present a problem. For others, it may be a little too much to take. Indeed, some of the inclusions and omissions may be regarded as curious to say the least. For example, we read much about ‘individualism’ (25) and the agent, but are offered little, except in the most diffuse of manners, about key concepts such as hegemony and ideology, and about social categories such as caste and class that have helped anthropologists to understand the workings of power and, in turn, how individuality is constrained.

Having said this, to be critical of the book on the basis of its selection criterion would be largely unreasonable. It is necessarily constrained by its ambitions. It is a book of often weighty essays rather than an introduction, dictionary or encyclopaedia. As such, the authors never claim to offer a panoptican survey of the discipline. Moreover, the book has several considerable merits. Principal amongst these is the sheer quality of the essays. Almost uniformly, they balance overview with polemic and are, without exception, written with flair. Also, the authors claim that the book, designed as both a pedagogic and research tool, reflects ‘what is taught in university courses around the world’ (p. vii). First, it sets out to reflect both the ‘cultural anthropological’ tradition originating in North America and the ‘social anthropological tradition’ of Europe. Secondly, claiming anti-disciplinarity as an ‘inherently anthropological notion’ (p. ix), the authors set out to relate anthropology’s ‘conceptual tools to wider philosophical and folk discourses’ (p. viii). The book certainly achieves these goals, but, speaking as a lecturer, one cannot help but think that perhaps the authors’ optimism about the state of our discipline in British universities at least is a little misplaced. All too often one feels a pressure from those who assess our teaching and research that what counts as serious work is that which falls within the social anthropological tradition and that which is sealed from the ‘contagion’ of other disciplines such sociology and, above all, cultural studies. Rapport and Overing’s excellent book is certainly a step in the right direction out of this depressing impasse, and should be regarded as key reading for undergraduate, postgraduate and professional anthropologists alike.

STUART McLEAN
University of West England


Based on research conducted over a period of several years in the capital cities of three African countries (Mali, Egypt and Guinea), this book is a detailed study of the N’ko cultural movement and, at the same time, an important contribution to more general debates about globalisation, afrocentrism, writing, African philosophy and genocide. The central argument which Jean-Loup Amselle advances is that the notion of ‘connection (branchement)’, as this is used in electronics or computing to refer to a link or ‘plug-in’ to a wider network or circuit, is a more appropriate metaphor for processes of cultural globalisation than that of métissage which was prominent in his previous work. He suggests, in particular, that it provides a way of emphasising the relations between cultural elements which not only avoids the biological connotations of métissage but also does not assume or imply the prior existence of ‘cultures’ as discrete, pure entities. Over the course of the book, this position is developed in a clear and systematic fashion, with reference to an impressive range of supporting examples.

In the first chapter, Amselle casts a critical eye over recent debates about the cultural aspects of globalisation. He begins by expressing a number of reservations about the concept of creolisation proposed by theorists such as Edouard Glissant and and Ulf Hannerz, claiming notably that it rests
on the idea of an ‘originary purity (pureté originaire)’ and boundedness of the cultural phenomena involved (p. 22). This is followed by a questioning of the historical novelty of the processes commonly associated with contemporary globalisation. Amselle argues that the importance of earlier, ‘partial’ forms of globalisation, such as the islamisation of West Africa beginning in the tenth century (the focus of Chapter 2), has tended to be obscured in current debates. What is ‘new’, he continues, is not globalisation, but rather the way in which over the past decade social anthropologists have moved away from a Malinowskian approach to the societies they study as closed, ‘compartmentalised (compartimenté, cloisonné)’ universes. It is only after replacing such societies in their wider environment and recognising the ‘lateral relations’ which have always connected them with others, he concludes, that an adequate assessment of the impact of contemporary globalisation processes can be undertaken (p. 35).

Building on these arguments, Amselle devotes the third chapter to a discussion of afrocentrism. He contends that one of the defining features of contemporary afrocentrism is its ‘disconnecting/unplugging (débranchement)’ of African societies from the Arab world in order to construct an essentialised ‘African’ identity (p. 100). This is a point which he develops further over the next three chapters through an examination of the N’ko movement. As Amselle explains, the N’ko alphabet was invented by a Guinean-born prophet, Souleymane Kanté, in 1949 and has since given rise to a broader cultural and religious movement which is currently found not only in West Africa but also in countries such as Egypt. After describing his own contacts with members of the movement in Bamako, Cairo and Conakry in the late 1990s, Amselle engages in a detailed textual analysis of S. Kanté’s œuvre with a view to identifying the nature of the cultural project associated with N’ko. Describing the movement as a form of ‘scriptural prophetism (prophétisme scripturaire)’ (p. 112), he suggests that N’ko represents, among other things, an attempt to ‘disconnect (débrancher)’ the Muslim religion from Arabic language and civilisation as part of a more general concern to assert the equality, and even superiority, of an ‘authentic’ mandingo culture with respect to both Western and Arabic–Islamic traditions.

This book is an incisive and thought-provoking contribution to ongoing debates within social anthropology and other disciplines about globalisation and the nature of cultural processes. The branchement metaphor is skilfully used throughout by Amselle to illuminate a fascinating range of historical and ethnographic examples, only a few of which it has been possible to mention here. His analysis of the texts of Kanté and the significance of the N’ko movement is particularly interesting and informative. Less convincing, however, are Amselle’s criticisms of the concept of creolisation, which fail to take account of several of the essays contained in Hannerz’s Transnational connections (Routledge, 1996) which anticipate such objections and in fact pursue a similar line of argument to that developed in Branchements. A further issue is the apparent tension which exists between, on the one hand, the ‘eulogy of the field (éloge du terrain)’ presented on page 112 and, on the other, the fact that Amselle’s interpretation of the N’ko is based almost exclusively on an analysis of Kanté’s texts. This is consistent with an earlier comment that social anthropology should move closer to disciplines such as literary criticism and semiology (p. 47). Such objections notwithstanding, this is an extremely interesting book which raises issues of widespread importance.

ROBERT GIBB
University of Edinburgh


Christopher Gowans has produced an unusual collection of eighteen texts pertaining to the titular subject of moral disagreements. All of them have been published previously, and he has considerably abbreviated almost all the texts. He has also written a substantial and thoughtfully structured introduction, that includes informative commentaries on each of the ‘readings’. The book is intended as a teaching text.

The second of the five parts presents some voices from anthropology: namely, Napoleon Chagnon, Richard Shweder, message of cultural difference, of moral scepticism and of tolerance of cultural and moral differences.

The first part includes texts by Sextus Empiricus (a Pyrrhonic sceptic of the Roman period), Aquinas, Montaigne, Hume, and Nietzsche. Although this part is entitled ‘the
historical debate’, all of these, with the exception of Aquinas, may be considered sceptics about whether there is, as Gowans puts it, any objective basis for or validity to ‘moral propositions’. The third part offers three challenges to moral objectivity, from J. L. Mackie, Bernard Williams and David Wong.

It is significant that no readings have yet been offered defending a clearly ‘objectivist’ account of morality. Inclusion of an argument from Plato or, better still, Kant could have made a case that there is something apart from what is known through the senses of human subjects which may be called an objective justification of morality. Without such an argument being made, it might well be considered unclear what it is that is being challenged. For Gowans, though, ‘it is possible to distill from [Aquinas’] writings an objectivist position’ (p. 10). This judgement is evidently (p. 41, n. 27) taken from the work of John Finnis, rather than that of Aquinas himself. That none of the other texts engage Aquinas as a Finnisian objectivist might well be thought commendable, but that none engage this supposed doyen of objectivism at all is regrettable for both the intellectual coherence and the pedagogic utility of Gowans’ book.

After the challenges come three ‘defences of moral objectivity’ by David O. Brink, Martha Nussbaum and Alan Gewirth. None of these defend a Thomistic position, although Gewirth does share something of Kant’s rationalism. Most significant is the edited version of Nussbaum’s famous essay ‘Non-relative virtues: an Aristotelian approach’, which argues against relativist interpretations of Aristotle’s ethics and for what is obvious[,] that he was … the defender of a single objective account of the human good. Thus understood, Aristotle joins Kant in ‘the project of rationally justifying a single norm’, and in opposing ‘norms that are local both in origin and in application’ (p. 168).

This is what the book is about. What Gowans has produced is another in the series of successors to Bryan Wilson’s famous Rationality (see p. 40, n. 18), which collected a number of essays citing facts of cultural difference as warrants to challenge the Enlightenment’s positivistic account of an objective rationality. On the one side stand objectivists, on the opposing side relativists.

Promisingly, the last four texts are said to point in new directions. They are by Isaiah Berlin, John Rawls, Uma Narayan and Alasdair MacIntyre, two of whose essays were included in Wilson’s 1970 collection. Narayan resembles Nussbaum insofar as she opposes anthropologically informed relativism because she perceives it as an obstacle to the liberation of Third World women. She differs from Nussbaum in that she perceives this obstacle from an anti-essentialist perspective. Cultural relativism has helped deconstruct gender essentialism, but must now itself be deconstructed if it is not to become a cultural essentialism.

However, as Narayan pronounces herself ‘agnostic … on the question of whether there is one neat and complete universal set of values that ought to command everyone’s assent’ (p. 239), it is hard to maintain that she points in any new direction.

The same might be said of Isaiah Berlin and John Rawls, the greatest philosophers of a pluralist liberalism. It was Berlin who famously posed the question does political theory still exist? It was Rawls who, a few years later, answered affirmatively with his A Theory of Justice. Berlin juxtaposed a plurality of allegedly incommensurable values; Rawls seemed to revive a Kantian project of demonstrating the rational compatibility of different values. And yet Rawls is no Kant. His project rested on no ‘objectivist’ epistemology, and he soon acknowledged that his political liberalism was simply a way of coping with the fact of pluralism. Given that fact, the most politics should hope to achieve is an ‘overlapping consensus’. Many liberals hope, still, that this is a new direction politically. With regard to Gowans’ basic opposition, however, the only thing that might be regarded as new, for liberals, is, again, agnosticism.

This leaves MacIntyre. At the time he wrote the papers in the Wilson volume he was one of the most influential proponents of the rising relativism in Anglo-American philosophy and social science, although by this time a critic of the extreme form of anthropologically informed relativism of Peter Winch. (An objectivist critic joked that the fierce debate between [the two] on the significance of the cattle-rearing practices of the Azande … continued with unperturbed momentum even when it was pointed out that the Azande had never possessed cattle’). After that he, too, went through a period of agnosticism. He emerged from it as one of the most influential proponents of a Thomistic Aristotelianism. It is from this latter perspective that he speaks in Gowans’ collection. What is new about this? As Nussbaum observes, ‘any contemporary defence of the Aristotelian position must … [respond] to the data that the relativist historian or anthropologist brings forward’ (p. 175), and this MacIntyre certainly has.
At this point it is appropriate to note a peculiarity of Gowans’ collection: that he goes out of his way to erase from it almost any hint of debate between the contending positions he includes. For example, in opposing her veritably Aristotelian advocacy of an objective morality to the pseudo-Aristotelianism of relativist contemporary virtue theory, Nussbaum cited in the opposing camp both MacIntyre and Williams. This Gowans omits.

As we have seen, Gowans concurs with Nussbaum in categorizing Williams as a relativist but differs regarding MacIntyre. He is right regarding MacIntyre, who responds to the relativist challenge not by capitulating, nor by claiming objective knowledge of any justification of morality, but by analyzing the rationality of traditions. This is a new approach in that it accepts that no reasoning by human subjects is objective but also insists that all such reasoning is committed to some elemental conception of truth, and that this commitment allows the members of one tradition of rationality to demonstrate its superiority to those of another if that other undergoes some epistemological crisis.

Accordingly, the extracts from MacIntyre’s *Whose justice? Which rationality?* discuss radical disagreements between rival traditions. However, Gowans has carefully expunged any reference not only to the Aristotelianism that MacIntyre shares with Nussbaum, but also to the revision of Aristotelianism that MacIntyre takes from Gowans’ only alleged representative of objectivism as a historical tradition: Aquinas.

What, then, of Gowans’ own position? His opposition to relativism of an undifferentiated objectivism is crude, and yet does capture something of the project of Enlightenment and, more precisely, of the Enlightenment’s failure to solve its epistemological problem of how to get from subjective sense or reason to objective knowledge. So entrenched is the conceptual opposition of objectivity and relativity that any genuinely new theoretical departure from it now attracts near universal academic hostility (which is not to say, however, that there is no acknowledgement of epistemological crisis). And if this is true of the Anglo-American academy, with which Gowans is almost exclusively concerned, it is scarcely less so, in another way, of Continental debates. In both contexts, Gowans’ ‘disagreement thesis’ – that the persistence of deep moral disagreements indicates that such disagreement cannot be rationally superseded – would be widely accepted.

What, finally, of this collection as a teaching text? If Gowans’ is right in his appraisal of the ‘observer perspective’ of anthropology, the book is likely to be welcomed as a treatment of moral theory suitable for anthropology undergraduates. The simple observation and agglomeration of moral disagreements – and still more of meta-ethical disagreements, which is what Moral Disagreements is really about – is likely to promote subjectivist or perspectivist dismissals of ethics as so much self-righteous guff. If anthropologists really are so demoralized by observation of different cultural conceptions of moral truth that they believe that all cultures (except our own self-righteously sceptical one) are wrong in believing in moral truth at all, then this book might indeed be thought an efficient tool in conveying that message. Conversely, if they wish to convey the message that sustained scrutiny of debates between rival traditions of reasoning might get us closer to something worthy of being regarded as truth within our own academic culture, then perhaps they will consider this book wilfully insufficient.

KELVIN KNIGHT
University of North London


This is a monograph in the best sense. Centring on the meanings of the AIDS epidemic in Northern Tanzania, it manages to weave together demography, history and political economy so that the meanings make sense in a broader social framework. In its scope A plague of paradoxes resembles Paul Farmer’s milestone book, *AIDS and accusation. Haiti and the geography of blame* (Berkeley, 1992). But Farmer was writing about an earlier point in the epidemic and focused on the political economic concerns of his informants. As Setel remarks, Farmer produced ‘… an interpretive cultural account of a syndrome involving a sexually transmitted pathogen with practically no reference to sexuality at all’ (p. 237). In contrast, Setel shows how sexuality, reproduction and the shifting life courses of modernity in the Kilimanjaro region are the very substance and meaning of the epidemic.
Philip Setel did fieldwork in the town of Moshi over 18 months between 1991 and 1993. Inevitably rumours circulated about a young, single, white man interested in sexuality and AIDS, and Setel has interesting reflections about how he himself was being fitted into narrative formulas about sexuality (pp. 22–4). Aside from this he does not tell us much about how he actually conducted the fieldwork. As ethnography this is a view through individual case stories more than a description of the fieldworker's own experience of social situations in which he was involved. But the book is not simply a fieldwork account. It is also thoroughly grounded in the considerable historic and ethnographic literature on the Chagga people as well as the public health and epidemiological literature on HIV/AIDS in Tanzania.

The title refers to the many paradoxes, ironies and complexities that characterise the practices of reproductive life and the experience of the epidemic. Setel emphasises that people's accounts of their lives and projects must be seen in relation to their practices and to the historical processes of which they may be only partly aware. The ironies of which he writes are identified by him and not necessarily articulated by his informants. At the heart of the matter is a contradiction within modernity itself: escape routes from farming on the mountain—the Christianity, schooling and employment that promised a better life—are, in fact life threatening. Vulnerability is attributed to bad moral character, although it is as much a product of demography and economic necessity. Reproductive ambitions entail sexual risk.

Setel unfolds the complexities of AIDS through a set of well-structured chapters. Following the introduction, the second chapter treats historical instabilities in social reproduction. Here Setel describes the kihamba regime: the centring of reproduction (biological, social and economic) on a kihamba, a piece of fertile mountain land planted with bananas. Although the nineteenth century was remembered as a time of order and stability, population density was already high on the mountain and only first and last sons could inherit kihamba land. So the dynamic of sons seeking farming or other opportunities elsewhere was well established even in the golden age.

In the twentieth century, coffee production became part of the kihamba regime and consequently family land on the mountain became even scarcer. In his third chapter, Setel examines the Chagga moral demographies that offer interpretations of dislocation, mobility, wealth differentials and the desire (tamaa) of individuals for people and things. He shows how women experienced the absence of their spouses, and how their economic and social vulnerability linked to their sense that they were at risk of AIDS through their husbands.

This leads on to an excellent analysis of personhood and the practice of male–female relationships in Chapter 4. Notions of desire and of moral character (tabia) were central to how people talked about these relationships. But Setel tries to go beyond an analysis of cultural logic to emphasise the embodied practice of sexuality and personhood. Like other analysts of gender relationships in Africa, he presents a typology of sexual relationships. He uses this to argue against the notion that sexual relations today are chaotic, while showing the moral complexities of sexual culture.

The following chapter on the ‘Acquired Income Deficiency Syndrome’ places sexuality and AIDS within the context of economic collapse. The epidemic emerged as Tanzania was being hit by an economic crisis caused by failures of national policy and factors in the global economy. In the Kilimanjaro region a lively informal sector offered hope of survival, but was also associated in people’s minds with disorder, depravity and the new disease. A cultural aetiology of AIDS linked bad moral character and excessive desire with the seductions of urban lifestyle and the pursuit of business. This folk model was taken over by AIDS prevention campaigns, providing an oversimplified view that the spread of AIDS could be blamed on the behaviour of urban young people. In another way too, AIDS was linked to business. AIDS campaigns supported by foreign donors became an income opportunity for healthworkers and other members of the local elite.

The last substantive chapter examines another level of paradox: the contrast between the clear language about AIDS in epidemiology and clinical practice and the ambiguities surrounding it in lived experience. Here Setel describes the biomedical understanding of, and response to the epidemic in the Kilimanjaro region. Against this he holds up three cases of people with AIDS, emphasising their uncertainties and silences. One of these was a neighbour of the family with whom he lived. The others were contacted through AIDS counsellors. Given the book’s agenda, one might have expected richer and more socially embedded descriptions of the experience of living with AIDS.

Setel reflects that his book, like the epidemic
itself, is open-ended and plural. There is no single paradigm or story line other than the tracing of complexities at different levels. At the same time, however, Setel makes good use of current theoretical concepts about embodiment, ‘empersonation’ (mimesis), signs and representations. His systematic efforts to place these concerns in relation to political economy, history, and demography are what characterises the book as an analytical enterprise. Thoughtful, knowledgeable and skilfully executed, this is the best monograph we have to date on AIDS in Africa.

SUSAN REYNOLDS WHYTE
University of Copenhagen


Ireland represents ‘a richly diverse and heterogeneous economic and political landscape, a multiplicity of spaces and places in which the proliferation of cultural differences is the order of the day’; it is a far cry from the ‘small and homogeneous culture area’ of earlier generations of anthropological commentators (p. 7). In his new book on Inveresk/Clontarf, Adrian Peace would justify this conclusion by depicting a prosecution of identities of difference as constitutive of the building blocks of local community.

Inveresk is composed of some 450 people, most of whom do not travel far from the locale in which they have been raised, and find themselves surrounded by those they have known from birth. Notwithstanding, Inveresk also compasses a complex economy divided into farming, fishing and small business. These economic divisions are concentrated in distinct landscape niches, ‘country, pier and village’, and give rise in turn to different cultural codes of interpersonal relations and personal morality: reserve and restraint in the country, sociability and competition in the village, camaraderie and conflict among pier people. Those who are involved in the same livelihood come to share a ‘discourse’, a never changing stock of knowledge that expresses itself as a coherent, collective conversation of habitual speech acts and topics.

The social boundaries between domains are permeable, however, and individuals’ movements give rise to economic, narrational and associational cross-cutting ties; a petit bourgeois ethos of self help and self reliance comes to characterise all three. Moreover, the continuous tension between relations that express the heterogeneity of the community’s parts and those which celebrate the ethos of the whole is precisely what makes Inveresk what it is. Inveresk is distinctive, not because of its special ways of cutting turf or drinking or marrying or burying the dead, but because of the ways its individual inhabitants continue to maintain a striking co-existence between conflict and consensus. ‘Members’ manage the genesis and form of a tension that undergirds a community they come to feel is theirs and a triumph over the odds.

Adrian Peace’s stated aim is to present his informants as experiencing subjects. Their senses of solidarity and emplacement are not to be understood as mechanical (Durkheimian) so much as achieved. Individuals in this complex, social–symbolic landscape are not carried along by a hegemony of culture: they are self-conscious, self-critical and reflective agents constantly constituting their own cultural experiences. Anthropologists, indeed, must be reconceptualise ‘culture’: not a hegemonic influence which determines social experience but a ‘heterogeneity of social practices which emerge as people struggle to bring meaning to the places and situations in which they find themselves’ (p.137).

Peace writes compellingly and with grace, not least in passing from Inveresk to broader implications. The anthropological project inevitably entails the symbolic violence of intrusion, he proposes, the anthropologist’s local emplacement being another version of the politics of identity. But this does not mean anthropology need have truck with the macro theorization and classification of sociology and statehood. Setting empirical findings against a global bureaucratic negation of the local, anthropology can continue to assert the primacy of place and placement in social life. For here is an authentic local community (Inveresk) that has nothing to do with catchwords of categorial imposition (‘culture’, ‘ethnicity’, ‘rurality’) and everything to do with integrity as an issue of everyday practices.

This is an exemplary community study.

NIGEL RAPPORT
University of St. Andrews
Professor Heath’s book ‘Drinking occasions. Comparative perspectives on alcohol and culture’ aims to integrate the anthropological perspective within the interdisciplinary field of alcohol studies. In the concluding section he maps out the various ways in which anthropology can shed light on drinking practices. However, as the title implies, the aim that stands out is to deploy cross-cultural comparison with a view to undermining the assumption in many other approaches to the study of alcohol consumption that ‘a few neighbouring communities represent normal human nature’ (p. 192).

Between the introduction and conclusion the book is divided into six chapters asking who drinks and what? And where, when, how and why do they drink? Within this accessible framework a wide range of issues is considered: the relationships between drinking behaviours and age, gender, education, occupation, class, ethnicity, religion and other groupings; the relationships between drinking and life; calendrical and other temporal cycles; historical transformations of drinking patterns; etiquette, paraphernalia and other activities that accompany drinking; and the medical, religious, aesthetic, moral and other reasons for drinking. The book is illustrated with a wide array of ethnographic and historical material, and each chapter is built upon a different and relatively in-depth case study. These consider drinking practices in Spain, France, the Caroline Islands, and among the Navajo, the Kofyar of Nigeria, and the Camba of Amazonian Bolivia, among whom Professor Heath has conducted research over several decades.

Unfortunately, the impressiveness of the book’s substantive and ethnographic range, nothing less than a Cook’s drinking tour, is not matched by the use to which it is put. It yields little of fresh anthropological insight and too much space is given over, particularly in the introduction and Chapter 6, to running through old arguments that champion the merits of qualitative research in the face of potential scientific objections. However, if this is the price that the author must pay in order to engage fully in the worthwhile task of undermining the ethnocentrism of other approaches in alcohol studies, then it is excusable. Other aspects of the book are not. In particular, some of the illustrative material is unsubstantiated and generalising to the point of offering little more than crude stereotypes. For example, in one embarrassing passage we are told that ‘the Swiss are cautious drinkers for fear that they might somehow lose control and do something that would make them feel guilty’ (p. 170).

‘Drinking occasions. Comparative perspectives on alcohol and culture’ was commissioned by the Center for Alcohol Policies, a not-for-profit organisation supported by eleven major international beverage-alcohol companies. In this context, the academic rationales offered by the author for focussing, as the book does, on the positive aspects of drinking behaviour might be viewed with at least a little suspicion. This is not allayed by the conclusions, one of which, on the way in which new drinks are culturally received, cannot be construed as much more than marketing advice. The rationales cited by the author are, first, concerns to redress the overwhelming emphasis in contemporary literature on problem drinking and, second, to make sense of patterns of belief and behaviour that reflect majority choices, in this case to drink alcohol, ‘that are generally unproblematic for most people most of the time’ (p. 7). The sense in which this book might be construed as an apologia for the alcoholic beverage industry lies not in the fact that it does not address problem drinking, but that it manages to celebrate the variety of normal drinking while offering little new to its understanding.

ANDREW DAWSON
University of Hull


The central aim of Inge-Britt Krause’s monograph Therapy Across cultures is to bring anthropological insights to bear on psychotherapeutic practice. She uses data from her own therapy practice and from her fieldwork data from Nepal in order to highlight the ethnocentrism implicit in many psychotherapeutic practices. After a substantial introduction she tackles a range of issues. There are strong chapters on kinship theory, ritual, taboo and, above all, on emotion where she uses anthropological knowledge to develop an effective critique of commonplace assumptions within psychotherapeutic traditions about the universal constitution of human emotions. Krause’s book appears to be designed for practitioners of
psychotherapy. Nevertheless, she turns the spotlight of ethnocentrism on to social anthropology itself, no more effectively so than in the chapter on kinship where she presents a critique of a tendency in British anthropology to devalue the importance of collateral and affine relations. For this reason the book deserves a larger readership than that for which it was probably intended.

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Zlatko Skrbis tells us that ‘diaspora settings ‘allow and encourage the radical reinterpretation of history’ (p. 26) and that, ‘because of globalisation ‘long-distance nationalism is set to gain even greater prominence in the future’ (p. 183). From the vantage point of former-Yugoslavia it would appear hard to disagree with either statement. The violent nationalisms that re-emerged here in the 1990s count among their ‘freedom fighters’ and political activists people from as far afield as Boston, Chicago, Melbourne and Toronto. Croatia was once able to boast a former pizzeria-owner from Canada as its ultra-nationalist vice-president. However, herein is the paradox in Skrbis’ book, for its strength is in demonstrating how the sustenance of diasporic nationalisms, largely through the transmission of nationalist sentiment between migrant and second generations, and the militancy of those nationalisms, is in fact highly contingent.

Focusing on Croatians and Slovenians in Australia, Skrbis illustrates this contingency through detailed ethnography on the play of nationalism in settings ranging from diaspora organisations through to the intimacy of personal relationships. Australian–Croats are, he shows, more influenced by nationalist discourses about the homeland than are their Australian–Slovenian counterparts. This is evidenced in a number of factors including the greater propensity among Croats to engage in a renewed politicisation of history, to maintain links with and lend practical and emotional support to the homeland and to consider return. The difference, he also shows, can be explained by a wide range of factors. Some originate in the homelands, such as the different degrees to which diasporas are enfranchised in the political processes of the homeland and differences in the length of time the respective nations were engaged in war. Some, such as different resettlement patterns, relate more to their lives in Australia.

As with so much of the recent literature on transnationalism, Skrbis engages only marginally with the issue of his subjects as citizens of a new country, a factor that surely has a crucial bearing on the nature of their perceptions of the homeland. His gaze is firmly fixed on their lives as members of diasporas and their engagement (or absence of it) with the homeland. These are, however issues of considerable importance, and Skrbis treats them with thoroughness and clarity.

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Emotions and the social bond. A reply from Tom Scheff

This letter is to protest the review of my book, Emotions, the social bond and human reality. Part/whole analysis in Social Anthropology 8, pp. 79–80. Most of the review is taken up with the names of illustrious authors who Stoller thinks have already done the type of analysis I advocate, and illustrate with my own work. The first example he offers is Radcliffe-Brown, whose parts, Stoller says, were social structures. But my book starts with Spinoza’s proposal for part/whole analysis, that to understand human beings one must relate the least parts to the greatest wholes. In my analysis I take the least parts to be words and gestures in actual dialogue (p. 38). I then relate these to larger wholes, ending with social institutions. Neither Radcliffe-Brown, nor any other of the authors Stoller mentions, went from dialogue to social structures and back again, as I do.

Typically, linguists who analyse words and gestures do not seek to relate them to larger structures in a systematic way. My scheme would integrate not only levels of data, but also disciplines. I consider myself an interdisciplinary social scientist; I always refer to anthropology and the other social science disciplines when they are relevant. On pp. 48–9 I criticise Levi-Strauss for not starting with least parts (dialogue). Stoller’s list of previous authors suggests that he has missed the point of my book.

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