

MAKING AMAZONIA: Shape-shifters, Giants, and Alternative Modernities

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THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF LOVE AND ANGER: THE AESTHETICS OF CONVIVIALITY IN NATIVE AMAZONIA. Edited by Joanna Overing and Alan Passes. (London: Routledge Press, 2001. Pp. 320. \$90.00 cloth, \$31.95 paper.)

BEYOND THE VISIBLE AND THE MATERIAL: THE AMERINDIANIZATION OF SOCIETY IN THE WORK OF PETER RIVIÈRE. Edited by Laura Rival and Neil Whitehead. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Pp. 322. \$74.00 cloth, \$29.00 paper.)

DARK SHAMANS: KANAIMÀ AND THE POETICS OF VIOLENT DEATH. By Neil Whitehead. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002. Pp. 310. \$59.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.)

TREKKING THROUGH HISTORY: THE HUAORANI OF AMAZONIAN ECUADOR. By Laura M. Rival. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. Pp. 246. \$60.00 cloth, \$30.00 paper.)

COMPARATIVE ARAWAKAN HISTORIES: RETHINKING LANGUAGE FAMILY AND CULTURE AREA IN AMAZONIA. Edited by Jonathan Hill and Fernando Santos-Granero. (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2002. Pp. 340. \$49.95 cloth.)

AMAZONIA: TERRITORIAL STRUGGLES ON PERENNIAL FRONTIERS. By Paul E. Little. (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002. Pp. 239. \$45.00 cloth.)

ENTANGLED EDENS: VISIONS OF THE AMAZON. By Candace Slater. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001. Pp. 350. \$27.50 cloth.)

IN AMAZONIA: A NATURAL HISTORY. By Hugh Raffles. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002. Pp. 302. \$55.00 cloth, \$17.95 paper.)

Amazonian research has now transcended the stark division of cultural ecologists and the structuralists and has embarked upon more multi-stranded and dynamic views of cultural processes, culture areas, aesthetics, material forms, and ecological realities. The result is a compelling collection of recent books that moves research forward in

exciting ways. Rather than define Amazonian peoples and cultures by what they lack or how they are constrained, these books show how Amazonian peoples create their worlds not just by what is “given” but what must be made. My main argument in this review is that Amazonia is a place at the fore of “alternative modernities,” or sites of creative adaptation by which people question the present order by way of cultural knowledge (Gaonkar 2001, 1–23).¹ In Amazonia, this questioning and its ensuing struggles are focused upon issues of the sociality of nature. On the one hand, modernity objectifies nature as a domain of extractable resources. On the other, Amazonian perspectives insist that nature is a living and sentient being whose actions and multiple personalities impact the daily lives of human actors in complex ways.

I first examine Native Amazonian social philosophies and knowledge systems. I then move on to discuss a series of related questions: historicity, regionality, race and poetics, and ecology. I end by revisiting the issue of alternative modernities through a discussion of value and interactions with nature.

AMAZONIAN SOCIAL PHILOSOPHIES

I first consider two edited books on Native Amazonian social philosophies that address the central question of how people make their social and material worlds. Their strengths are their abilities to show broad themes and common philosophical principles underlying Native Amazonian cultures, cultures that span different regions and have distinct colonial histories.

The Anthropology of Love and Anger addresses Native Amazonian social philosophy. As Overing and Passes write in their introduction, they seek “to capture the perspectives of Amazonian peoples with regard to the more noticeable tenets of their ‘sociologically wayward’ sociality” (2). The authors make a convincing case for difference by arguing that Western frameworks of society distort the very processes they seek to comprehend. There are many strong essays in this volume and each deserves to be read carefully. From these essays we might begin to conceptualize what “society” and social knowledge means in Amazonian terms.

Part I of the book stresses the creation of convivial relations. Echeverri discusses the cosmic relationships among salt, sexual substance, and the truths of “first love” among the Uitoto of Columbia. Gow examines Piro sociality through a complex synthesis of daily rhythms defined by suffering, helplessness, compassion, consolation, death, and the

1. This terminology was actually used by Whitten, Whitten, and Chango (1997) to describe Amazonian realities well before the book *Alternative Modernities* by Gaonkar hit the scene.

wisdom found in “doing nothing.” Overing speaks of the “efficacy of laughter” as a means of creating community and articulates laughter with myth-telling and the power of magic. Jamieson considers Miskitu oratories of lament and examines how poetics create moments of “sacredness.” Passes addresses what everyday “work” means to the Pa’ikwene (Palikur) as a means of creating value as an ethnotheory of conviviality rather than “economy.” Kidd examines “emotion words” among the Enxet of Paraguay to give insight into how people conceptualize emotions (love and hate) through aesthetic forms of knowledge. Alés reverses popular misconceptions about the Yanomami by providing a detailed account of anger states as subordinated to the socially powerful ethics of conviviality and “love.” Lagrou looks at embodied notions of relatedness and knowledge among the Cashinahua by examining “homesickness,” or in her terms “kinsickness.” Londoño-Sulkin provides insight into the transformation of a tobacco and other predatory agents into “good” among the Muinane.

Part II of the book discusses conquest and the historical failure of conviviality, but there is only one essay in this section. Here, Mason looks at the anticonvivial nature of Columbus’s project to dehumanize Native Americans and subordinate them to Europeans. Part III discusses the “delicacy” of Amazonian sociality. Belaúnde discusses the fragile dialectic between anger and conviviality among the kind Airo-Pai. Rosengren similarly looks at Matsigenka narrative discourses featuring anger. Gonçalves provides an insightful account of jealousy, gender, and sociality among the Paresi of the Mato Grosso. Rivière provides another layer to his work on the Trio of Guiana by examining the emotional states accompanying the complex relations of affinity and village life and the political economy of control. Lastly, Santos-Granero argues that Native Amazonian sociality be considered a cycle of conflict and convivial states, with conviviality the implicit goal, a process referred to as the “Sisyphus Syndrome.”

As a whole, the volume raises complex issues that go beyond Amazonia. A central question is whether or not similar convivial socialities exist outside of Native Amazonia. While Native Amazonians are intensely convivial, I cannot imagine any form of human social organization lacking all conviviality. A reading of *The Anthropology of Love and Anger* conveys a greater general need for critical analyses questioning abstract frameworks that reify and obscure local socialities, intersubjectivity, and sensibilities of relatedness.

Beyond the Visible and the Material provides a different approach to Amazonian sociality by focusing more explicitly on the mundane but deeply complex realm of Native Amazonian kinship. The authors take as their beginning point the groundbreaking research insights of leading British social anthropologist Peter Rivière. Rivière’s metaphor of a

kaleidoscope is used by the editors to describe Amazonian realities (1984, 102). This metaphor not only expresses the ambiguity of the "Amazon" as a cultural category created through the colonial encounter, but also underscores the multiplicity of indigenous responses to the colonial encounter. As the editors write, everyday life's "variety may yet be structured, patterned, and limited despite its expressive and performative complexity" (2). In many ways, this theme is one that accurately describes the various works considered in this review, although such metaphors are too abstract to be practical guides to research, a point Rivière himself acknowledges (1984, 102).

The specific essays delve into complex questions of how Native Amazonian peoples organize their lives through consanguinity, affinity, ritual action, and the dissolution and recreation of boundaries. Lea and Lorrain provide new insights into gender relations in Amazonia and Taylor analyzes marriage among the Jivaro. Rival looks at the meaning of bitter manioc cultivation, while both Chaumeil and Erikson examine the significance of blowpipes. Chernela and Henley look at how ritual actions are linked to the mediation of personhood and group boundaries. Whitehead and Butt-Colson provide analyses of ritual death while Griffiths provides new insights into how Amazonians view "work."

Among these many strong essays is Viveiros de Castro's piece proposing a "grand unified theory of Amazonian sociality" based upon the idea that, from Amazonian cultural perspective, affinity and not consanguinity is the more innate relationship. Affinity and potential affinity are assumed (among human-human, human-nature, and human-spirit beings, that is, beings whose souls are in constant articulation), whereas consanguinity is the result of cultural processes, ritual action, and human structures of meaning. In this sense, Viveiros de Castro gives us the promising proposition that consanguinity is a process that is never fully realized from the Amazonian point of view.

Much of this book focuses on reconfiguring kinship around cultural specific notions of "relatedness" that are not given but created forms of human intentionality and social interaction (Franklin and McKinnon 2001). These realities are crucial to viewing coloniality and historicity from the local perspective. As Århem's essay shows, modern village life and kinship forms cannot be divorced. Kinship remains a central concern in native Amazonian realities.

This book also makes a valuable contribution in raising the question of Amazonian historicity. The editors remind us that Amazonian historicity is complex and not equivalent to Western historiography (10). By discussing kinship, for example, and the intergenerational transitions, several of the essays (Århem, Lea, and Taylor) detail how Amazonians view the passage of time and adapt to changing circumstances. Århem's essay, for example, shows how the Pirá-Paraná form the idea of a

modern “village” out of indigenous notions of sociality—a way of adapting to change by being structurally consistent. While this essay and the others display fresh insights into change from the Amazonian perspective, the book only begins to address some of the issues of historicity that the editors raise in the introduction. For example, the editors make the point that new approaches to history in the Amazonian context may allow us to understand “the historical experience of those who have undergone domination and colonization, or what these historical events mean today, or even temporality from a native perspective” (11). These issues, complex in their own right, require the long-term, fine-grained research projects of the kind I discuss next.²

HISTORICITY

Two books that do a superb job in addressing issues of native historicity and how Amazonians have responded to the forces of modernity and colonialism are Whitehead’s *Dark Shamans* and Rival’s *Trekking through History*. *Dark Shamans* is an exploration into Amazonian traditions of *kanaimà* violence in both the present and the ethnohistorical past. A Guyanese variant of the shaman-jaguar complex, *kanaimà* refers to both the mode of ritual mutilation and killing, and to those persons who practice it. The author himself was pursued as a potential victim of this complex, giving the book an added level of intersubjective complexity. As both a product of and response to colonialism, Whitehead takes the reader into disturbing realities of violence to which there are few clear-cut answers. One can read *kanaimà* as a culturally appropriate practice akin to sacrifice, head-hunting, and other forms of ritual violence directed at social reproduction and fertility. On the other hand, the voices of *kanaimà*’s victims are also heard, voices that portray *kanaimà* in much more ambivalent and disturbingly gruesome terms.

The book puts these practices in an ethnohistorical context. “Modernity, Development, and Kanaimà Violence” reveals local notions of historicity mediating historical events. Associated with “tradition,” *kanaimà* opposes yet paradoxically allows people to conceptualize and adapt to modernity. In a similar way, Whitehead rethinks shamanism as an adaptive historical process. Whitehead makes a convincing case that native people in this region articulate *kanaimà* in relation to *piya* shamanism and emergent forms of Christianity. The dark shaman stands opposed to (but is conceptually reinforced by) the white shaman and the Christian. Whitehead does a superb job at showing the complex relationships among history, coloniality, border-transformation, culture, and local knowledge.

2. See also *Histories and Historicities in Amazonia* (Whitehead 2003).

Trekking Through History is another ethnohistorical monograph on one of Amazonia's most misunderstood and least studied peoples, the Huaorani of Ecuador. The Huaorani are known as a fiercely isolationist people who have regularly used violence against missionaries and other outsiders in defense of their territory. In shunning contact with strangers, Rival argues that they are traditional deep forest trekkers who favor hunting and gathering over agriculture. The core of the book is to show what autonomy and the trekking lifestyle mean in Huaorani social and symbolic terms while framing these structures in a deeper historical context. Rival sums up the theme when she writes, "Trekking in the forest is therefore like walking through a living history book in which natural history and human history merge seamlessly" (1).

Arguing that the Huaorani are best understood in *sui generis* terms, the book challenges those positions that attribute contemporary Amazonian social forms to external environmental adaptation (cultural ecology) or reactions to European conquest (cultural regression). The book, however, goes beyond a standard symbolic analysis to build a new kind of symbolic approach to ecology. Rival's analysis follows Bird-David's (1990) concept of a "giving environment," a model where the forest is seen as a generous parent or ancestor by which people receive nourishment from the past. Rival argues that "Huaorani subsistence strategies are entirely adapted to the historicity of the landscape" and the Huaorani trekking patterns impose a human sociality on the forest (93).

The Huaorani system of trekking is placed in ethnohistorical context through an analysis of other groups occupying the Upper Amazonian region. Rival's analysis is highly valuable since it places the Huaorani in relation to other groups of the region: the once-powerful and dominating Tupian peoples, the Quijos, the Zaparoan, Shuar-Achuar, and Quichua-speaking Amazonians. Rival refutes the argument that the Huaorani are descendants from a previous agricultural society. She argues instead that trekking, hunting, and foraging represent a viable historical "mode of subsistence" that differs from but coexists with the agricultural mode (44). Rival also argues that the various groups above can also be classified by looking at the degree of their political acceptance, or resistance to, outsiders (44). In this sense, the Huaorani can be seen as historically isolationist. The proposition is that the Huaorani are a self-contained society. Current theory, she argues, "is almost blind to the possibility that some cultures may have remained self-contained over long periods" (43).

Rival suggests insightfully that Amazonian groups might be divided into "slave takers" or "kidnappers" (such as the Tupian peoples) and the more isolationist groups like the Huaorani. This theory fits with how the Huaorani view their past, as they see themselves as victims of external aggression. Rival suggest this duality of kidnapper and

kidnapped has a trans-historical social logic that influences contemporary indigenous political dynamics. Today's Huaorani, for example, are viewed as morally inferior *aucas* to the more politically integrated and sedentary Amazonian Quichua populations. While Rival does not mention it, her argument is strengthened by evidence that the pre-Hispanic ancestors of the Napo Quichua, the Quijos, were known for taking slaves (Uzendoski, forthcoming).

The book successfully carves a space for understanding the Huaorani system as a historically deep mode of sociality, human-environment interactions, and system of production. It does, however, leave some questions unanswered, perhaps as a consequence of its thematic emphasis on isolation. The chapter on schools shows change in Huaorani communities regarding the forces of modern development, termed *civilización* by the Huaorani. The cultural analysis in this chapter, however, does convincingly show why the Huaorani want to become "civilized" in their terms. In some ways, this chapter complicates the thesis that the Huaorani "have developed a historical consciousness characterized by a fierce refusal of contact, trade, and exchange, as well as avoidance of interethnic political alliances or insertion in regional networks" (178).

Perhaps an answer lies in the notion that isolation is an ideal. Ideals are not always pragmatic and are always difficult to realize. If the Huaorani were once potential slaves, for example, then there are aspects of Huaorani culture that have become part of the slave-taking cultures. The reverse can also be argued, as trekkers often organize raids to take things back from kidnappers, a mode of action practiced by the Huaorani against the Quichua in times past. Raids and enmity, as well, sometimes result in adoptions of children if not also the "taking" of wives. Future work might elucidate the relationship between trekking, coloniality, and raiding in Huaorani terms.

REGIONAL SYSTEMS

Amazonia is a place defined by interconnected regions and overlapping cultures. Regional analyses have the advantage of looking at spaces *and* cultures as sites of analysis. They also avoid the pitfall of using a particular Amazonian reality as representing *all* Amazonian realities. The diversity of cultures and multiple responses of Amazonian peoples to colonial processes and modernity clearly show the futility of totalizing schemes. A number of the books considered do a particularly good job at accomplishing regionally oriented analyses.

Comparative Arawakan Histories shows us that regions, like people, are historically constituted. This book is a regionally oriented, edited volume with a tightly organized thematic focus on regional relationships

featuring collaboration among cultural anthropologists, ethnohistorians, and archaeologists. To begin their task, the editors remind us that there is no one-to-one correspondence of linguistic affiliation to cultural patterns and that the discipline should remain skeptical of deterministic theories of language-culture interactions (4). This is a simple but often overlooked point, and the essays (by Santos-Granero, Whitehead, and da Silva Facundes) in the first part show the complex ways by which Arawakan languages are tethered to historical processes.

Part II addresses hierarchy, diaspora, and new identities. Heckenberger discusses the “formative” period of Arawak speakers defined by sedentism, social hierarchy, and regional social organization (102). Renard-Casevitz addresses problems of “regressive history” and Native Amazonian sociopolitical forms. Gow considers a plausible “conjectural history” of Urubamba Piro origins in accordance with Native Amazonian notions of sociality. Passes looks at the historical problem of the transformation of a colonial periphery (Pa’ikwene or Palikur) into a political and cosmological center of panregional identity.

Part III is titled “Power, Cultism, and Sacred Landscapes.” Zucchi proposes a new model for Northern Arawakan expansion that addresses possible locations and times for “Proto-Arawak.” Hill addresses the historical dynamic present in forming the northwest Amazon/Upper Rio Negro region as a tension between “indigenous fertility cultism” and “Western colonial and state expansions” (223). Vidal examines multiethnic confederacies based on underlying religious principles that inform contemporary and historical dynamics. Lastly, Wright analyzes prophetic traditions using a broad comparative and historical view to argue religious complexes also inform culture areas.

This book deepens and furthers knowledge of one of Amazonia’s enormously complicated and rich regions, one that has been shaped through border interactions with Carib, Tukano, Pano, and Tupian language families of Lowland South America, the large-scale societies of Mesoamerica, the southeastern United States, and the Andes (12). Indeed, this book moves Amazonia research forward in its emphasis on the regional and political-historical dynamics in a way that reinvigorates notions of culture areas. While only a beginning, this project of comparative histories offers a model for scholars of culture areas inside and outside Amazonia to organize similar projects, and hopefully, invite future comparative collaborations.

Another book that deals with regional systems is *Amazonia*. Using the concept of “territoriality,” Little builds upon the promising Boasian concept of cosmography, “the collective, historically contingent identities, ideologies and environmental knowledge systems developed by a social group to establish and maintain a human territory” (5). The book’s message is preservationist, humanistic, and optimistic in scope. Its main

lesson is that certain areas of Amazonia must remain free of exploitation for the possibility of enjoying “the spiritual and economic benefits of [the environment for] future generations” (232). As Little shows, behind this preservationist movement is a wedding of environmental science and Amazonian social movements. Indigenous peoples, NGOs, rubber-tappers, and many other social actors are shown to be struggling for preservationist forms of development as alternatives to the unsustainable policies of extraction “fueled by a powerful neoliberal ideology” (235).

The book’s strength is its regional perspective on the struggles shared by all social actors in challenging unsustainable development. The book concentrates on two places, the Aguarico region of Ecuador and the Jari region of Brazil, places that one soon finds have very distinct regional dynamics as well as histories. For example, Aguarico has a strong contemporary indigenous presence while Jari does not. Moving back and forth between these regions, the book tells us many different territorially inspired stories, such as local history of the Mercantile Cosmography of Rubber (27), Petroleum Enclaves (93), the Jari Ecological Station (137), and many others. As a scholar of Ecuador, I found the analysis of Ecuador’s Cuyabeno Wildlife Production Reserve (145, 158) to be compelling. In many ways this section also can be viewed as a microcosm of the book’s larger message on preservationist successes (172).

Overall, I think the book shows a successful strategy of telling stories through the framework of regions rather than cultural or ethnic groups. Anthropologists of the specific cultural groups in question might wonder if tackling two distant places in one book can do justice to the complexities of local cultural and social dynamics, but the book’s regional and historical scope makes it a valuable contribution to a more nuanced view of Amazonian regions.

RACE AND THE AMAZONIAN POETICS

There remains something of a division of genre between books about Native Amazonians and works focusing on the non-indigenous. This division is perhaps intensified by the power of racial concepts themselves to act as markers that reify scholarly territoriality. Race, however, an understudied concept in its own right, does not simply determine culture in Amazonia. This lesson is demonstrated clearly by the fascinating book, *Entangled Edens*.

Entangled Edens is book of storytelling written in a literary style. It is about the lives of non-indigenous Amazonians in Brazil defining themselves through Amazonian modes of storytelling, aesthetics, human experience, and cosmology. Slater offers an “Amazonian-centered

poetics" which is a "systematic examination of words and images" that she argues gives us insight into seemingly unpoetic concerns with "deforestation and species preservation" (7–8). Slater's book addresses competing representations of Amazonia, those deriving from what she calls "Giants" (powerful external social actors such as governments, NGO's, and those producing Amazonian movies) as contrasted with the "Shape-Shifters" (the Amazonians). A shape-shifter is a "creature or natural entity . . . able to change its outward form at will and that eschews any fixed identity" (16).

The book focuses on enchanted-being stories to develop the promising perspective of an Amazonian aesthetic system structuring the cultural politics of identity. From the perspective of Native Amazonians these themes are not new, but what is absolutely fascinating is that the non-Natives share in a poetics of the world that derives from the proposition that Nature is a sentient being. Slater shows, for example, that shape-shifting is at the center of *caboclo* or "mixed-blood" culture. She tells the stories of the storytellers, people who create compelling and poetically complex narratives about dolphin-humans and other Amazonian shape-shifting creatures.

The book takes the shape-shifting theme even further to show that even miners, those who destroy the forest, also view nature as a sentient being. In "Gold as a Woman," Slater shows how gold is viewed as an animate being, one that at times favors certain poor people and allows them to become rich. "While Gold is clearly a woman in these stories . . . she remains a projection of the severely constrained miners' own fierce desire for a richer, freer life" (127). By putting a human face on miners, one comes to know them both as victims and villains in the processes of rainforest devastation. In Slater's terms, they are both Giants and Shape-Shifters, inseparable from the colonial processes of Amazonian history. Slater's analyses of shape-shifting stories and identities shows us that Native Amazonian cosmologies travel across ethnic and "racial" lines. Indeed, *Entangled Edens* is a sophisticated book that is elegantly crafted and a pleasure to read. For these reasons, it makes an especially good book for classroom use.

ECOLOGY

The final book on my list addresses ecology and is a "must" read for any student interested in contemporary Amazonia. *In Amazonia* is a book one has to study as well as read. In this book, Hugh-Raffles tells us a story of the "natural history" of the Amazonian region. Drawing upon Walter Benjamin's thoughts in *One-Way-Street* about how landscapes command power over the imagination, Raffles sets out to show that much of what we view as "natural" in the rainforest is the result of

human intervention. It is a powerfully narrated book and intelligently crafted.

Raffles gives a compelling story of how Amazonian people continue to alter the landscape by making channels: "people told the same story: when we arrived, there was just a little stream . . . Then we cut the channels. Now look at it!" (5). Aerial photographs comparing the Amazon River in 1976 and 1991 offer an astoundingly elegant view of Raffle's main point. These photos show how the river has been widened, and that numerous channels have been cut "like capillaries . . . at once engulfing and absorbing the terra anfibia of which it is a part" (61). Nature is not what we imagine it to be and what passes for nature has a "consuming materiality" created through human intervention and practice (61).

Raffles focuses on a place called Igarapé Guariba, an interior settlement that emerged decades ago from a sawmill and the timber industry. Its inhabitants, like the people in Slater's book, are labeled by the pejorative term *caboclo* (55). Raffles argues that the people here consider themselves indigenous but see their indigenosity as a "contaminant" that opposes their more cultural existence as being dependent upon the forces of the "transnational political economy" (45). Igarapé Guariba is a place created by and founded upon "work, the work of place-making and, inseparably, the work of nature-making" (52). Raffles argues that much of the work of place-making is discursive, found in the stories people tell that connect them to the local. Raffles suggests that the motive for canal digging is the exhaustion of river resources close to the settlement (58). Cutting channels into the rainforest is clearly a specific mode of value, however, largely driven by timber exploitation. In this sense, although the people in Igarapé may be engaging in "place-making" and "nature-making," (74), one wonders whether or not this system should be more emphatically historicized as a specific mode that is unsustainable and socially unviable. The reader is left wanting to know more about the cultural systems, and poetics, surrounding the meanings and uses of the channels. Perhaps this is a topic for future research.

Other chapters deal with historical vignettes based on textual analysis, such as a chapter discussing Sir Walter Raleigh's travels and writings on Guiana (1587–1631) and Bates's studies of Amazonian butterflies (1848–1859). Two other chapters address affective attachments to ecological forms: "The Dreamlife of Ecology" is a critique of scientists creating natures by giving places and things like trees a "situated identity and sociality" (179); "Fluvial Intimacies" returns us to Igarapé Guariba and analyzes political dynamics of debt, "cultural capital," and modernization. As Raffles reminds us, "It is all about the rivers again" (193).

The book's principal contribution is a vision of an Amazonian cultural-ecology that is new and exciting. By moving away from

determinism, it allows for an approach that views the coproduction of people and the landscape (38). In this sense, this book's larger message is completely in harmony with what Rival accomplishes in *Trekking Through History*. Raffles, however, is more trained upon the materiality of the biophysical, what he calls "non-human agency" (38), and he acknowledges his own intersubjective relationship to the ecological world as an "affectivity" (11) of memory. He writes, "The chaos of the memories from which I draw this book is one of identifications and seductions. It is not only natures that hold me. I like the people here too much as well" (10).

In a section titled, "Materialities of the Obvious," Raffles makes a somewhat curious call to dismiss culture: "Anthropologists, floundering in the attempt to communicate broadly a nuanced notion of culture, have been disabled by the sheer obviousness of the notions we seek to displace" (153). While his point is that culture theory has not necessarily translated into political activism is well taken, one might argue that Raffles sets up an artificial dispute between the cultural anthropologists and the natural scientists. I am not sure I agree with Raffles on this point. There are long traditions of activist cultural anthropology in Amazonia, especially among the Latin American traditions, of which Brazil, Colombia, and Ecuador especially come to mind.

The category of obviousness appears more as a trope reflecting Raffles's sensibilities of the region than a local category. For example, Raffles writes that south Pará is a place "branded with the emphatic materiality of the obvious" (153) for which he cites an informant claiming that this region "used to be part of Amazonia" (153). It is hard to figure out what is meant by this acultural logical progression, since the claim is not tied logically to the statements of the informants. There is nothing wrong with this, but I don't think that obviousness is as inevitable as proposed. As anthropologists have known for some time, perception is tied to cultural reason and consequently obviousness is inherently problematic if divorced from cultural categories. In sum, this is a marvelously challenging and well-written book that represents a major piece of path-breaking research.

VALUES

To offer some closure to this series of compelling books, I would like to raise the issue of value, a concept that I define as the social principles of wealth and reproduction by which one organizes relationships between things and human beings (see Gregory 1997, 12). Many authors in this review posit that people in Amazonia create material realities by transforming nature through human intervention, but only a few

papers develop the larger question of the endpoint of human work relations in systematic fashion. Two exceptions are Passes's essay in *The Anthropology of Love and Anger*, and Griffith's essay in *Beyond the Visible and the Material*. Both argue that value in Amazonia is based on a convivial sociality rather than a strict economic logic; things are subordinated to the needs and relationships of kinship and community rather than the powers of market forces. This social dynamic perhaps also informs important aspects of social life among many non-native communities throughout Amazonia as well, a hypothesis that would be worth investigating through more in-depth research projects.

All of the books reviewed here demonstrate that there are very few Amazonians getting rich or content with the extractive purposes of capital. One way of conceptualizing this inherent tension with modernity's most powerful material category is through the concept of alternative modernities. Contrary to the productive logics of capitalism, Amazonians continue to insist that nature is a complex, sentient being with whom one must relate socially. While nature can be "giving," she can also be vindictive and predatory just as people can be—a quintessentially Amazonian way of conceptualizing the world. Modernity, if it is to work at all, has no choice but to adapt to the complexities of this persistent Amazonian reality. Consider once again the miners in *Entangled Edens*, who report that Gold "always gives birth to more gold. It's true that it can appear as a big, black snake too . . . it is more apt to appear to us as a pretty woman—tall, white, blond, and blue-eyed" (112).

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