



ROSA, FEDERICO DELGADO, AND HAN F. VERMEULEN, eds. 2022. *Ethnographers before Malinowski: Pioneers of Anthropological Fieldwork, 1870-1922*. EASA Series 44. New York: Berghahn Books.

In terms of form, *Ethnographers before Malinowski: Pioneers of Anthropological Fieldwork, 1870-1922* stands in contrast to similar edited volumes such as the University of Nebraska Press's ongoing Histories of Anthropology Annual—headed by Regna Darnell and Frederic Gleach and the University of Wisconsin Press's now defunct History of Anthropology Series—formerly under the editorial eye of George Stocking and, later, Richard Handler. Whereas Darnell and Gleach are deliberately loose in their thematic organization, *Ethnographers before Malinowski* is topically streamlined. Whereas Stocking and Handler often narrowed their content to a handful of detailed essays, the current volume includes 12 chapters—not counting a forward from Thomas Hylland Eriksen and jointly authored introduction and conclusion from the editors Federico Delgado Rosa and Han Vermeulen.

Perhaps more notable is the rather pointed nature of Rosa and Vermeulen's editorial intent. As they articulate in their rather dense introduction, which is in many respects a stand-alone essay in its own right, they seek to challenge received wisdom by “recovering” the “forgotten or neglected monographies produced by ethnographers whose work, surpassed and overshadowed by that of later anthropologists, may both enlighten and question the dichotomy between canonic models of *writing culture* and ‘pre-Malinowskian’ ones” (2). Through this pursuit, the editors suggest the notion that Malinowski's much mythologized and protracted excursion to the Trobriand Islands constituted a methodological revolution in the discipline is in need of serious qualification if not outright rejection. Though his name graces the cover and virtually every chapter, Malinowski, despite his Polish origins, functions more as a synecdoche of a kind of a

dogged “Anglocentrism” that continues to haunt the historiography (if not the history) of anthropology (3). The editors suggest that entangled in this privileging of Western European ethnographers working in Malinowski’s wake are various dichotomies that begin to crumble upon deeper historical analysis including armchair anthropology vs off the veranda, academic vs. amateur, evolutionist vs. humanist, and colonial vs. anti-colonial.

In an effort to put these assumed breaks and dichotomies to the test, the editors have conveniently organized the volume into four thematic sections with each part building on the former. Part I brings the reader’s attention to the *raison d’être* of the ethnographic project as articulated in most introductory textbooks: to glimpse the world from “the native’s point of view.” Contrary to the long dominant narrative that positions Malinowski as the origin point, the three chapters in this section show how such disparate figures as Franz Boas, Katie Langloh Parker, and Edward Westermarck were already conjuring their own form of ethnographic magic before Malinowski stepped foot off the veranda. This proverbial magic is reimaged in Part II as the often-referenced colonial gaze of early ethnography is subverted—but not entirely rejected. The reader comes to see how the ethnographic accounts of individuals such as Henry Callaway, Elsdon Best, and Alice Fletcher were made possible by their enduring relationships with Indigenous ethnographers including Mpengula Mbande (in Callaway’s case), Tutakangahau (in Best’s case), and Francis La Flesche (in Fletcher’s case). Immersed in and made possible by what George Stocking once termed “colonial situations” (1992), these collaborations constructed windows (some more translucent than others) into the lives of Indigenous peoples disrupted by the conditions of conquest and settlement. Part III puts the colonial conditions in more stark relief with cases from turn-of-the century Arizona and Africa where military/colonial ethnologists and Roman Catholic priests slide along a spectrum of invasion and empathy troubling the notion of a discrete divide between colonial and anti-colonial ethnography. Part IV picks up on the empathetic thread by turning the volume’s attention to the expeditionary variants of pre-Malinowskian ethnography suggesting that mythologized sojourns could be sites of both understanding and methodological innovation.

The virtues of the volume are numerous, none-the-less of which being the geographic scope of the case studies. For this reader, it is the volume’s ability to push against a caricatured view of

salvage ethnography—one that strips the subjects of ethnographic research of their agency—that is most stimulating. Without casting an artificially rose-colored tint that would have us believe that salvage pursuits were devoid of colonial entanglements (they were called into being by the effects of conquest!), the varied case studies spotlight the motivations and creative calculations of Indigenous ethnographers and interlocutors who saw in these itinerant outsiders a certain degree of use value. Hardly the kind of stories upon which one would want to mount a public relations campaign for the discipline but a useful qualifier for some of the more kneejerk and empirically thin assessments of late 19th and early 20th century fieldwork. Such histories have humbling qualities for practicing anthropologists who may have largely absorbed the discipline's past through corridor talk and anecdotal asides.

And yet, I cannot help but detect a slight irony at play in the framing of the project. As detailed in their introduction, Rosa and Vermeulen are troubled by a kind of “postcolonial anxiety” in prior works that have purported “to demonstrate the ethnographic nature of the colonial machine” (18-19). The irony, however, is their circumscribed engagement with these postcolonial anxieties. Peter Pels and Oscar Salemink's 1994 article, “Five Theses on Ethnography as Colonial Practice” stands in for a body of literature that, from this reviewer's perspective, is quite varied. Moreover, there are recent additions to the conversation that do not figure into the framing. Perhaps a more direct engagement with the works of Aaron Glass, Isaiah Wilner, or Margaret Bruchac (the latter does appear in the endnotes) would make the stakes of this “counter-critique” more tangible. Without it, statements such as “[w]hile we acknowledge the import of this trend, we are also inclined to embrace diversity among historians of anthropological ethnological sciences” appear a bit evasive (22). To be fair, the editors do argue that the contemporary “radical postcolonial critique” has reached “hegemonic” proportions (31). This would suggest that the evasive nature of the framing and the pivot to “diversity” is deliberate. In his own work, Rosa has offered a direct and thorough evaluation of Johannes Fabian's canonical musings on ethnographic writing (2019). And I suspect Rosa would count Fabian amongst the promoters of postcolonial apprehension alongside Pels and Salemink. So perhaps that just means the onus is on another set of editors/authors to bring the full range of “radical postcolonial critique” into the mix. And whoever that author (or authors) might be, they would do well to count Rosa and Vermeulen's humbling volume amongst their reading list.

References

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