

practiced widely across the Himalayan region (and beyond). In Bhutan, *sowa rigpa* is promoted and translated as “the Buddhist art and science of healing” (47). Taeë lays out in detail how it is becoming the chief form of traditional medicine that in practice is linked to the notion of a “new citizenship,” in other words, the way patients feel about their bodies and link disease to national identity and traditional medicine. Here, Taeë’s historical explorations remain simplistic and would have been of more value if contextualized and compared to the politicized contexts of *sowa rigpa* in neighboring India, China, and Nepal. This would have allowed for broader conclusions and comparisons to existing anthropological research on *sowa rigpa* and national identity, for example, by Sienna Craig in Nepal and Stephan Kloos in the Tibetan exile situation in India.

Chapter 3 looks at how patients make health care choices in circumstances of life-threatening and chronic diseases, situations in which biomedicine is not the only choice of action. Taeë’s ability to show us the different perspectives of both the patients and the health care providers regarding these choices is valuable in that it allows the reader to see how decision-making is turned into an ethical discourse. What comprises “ethical,” “effective,” and “appropriate” care in this tangle of treatment choices? What are the consequences when wrong choices are made?

In chapter 4 the focus is on a type of disease with various physical manifestations and correlations called *ja né*. It forms the basis for an ethnographic analysis of different treatment options available in both the fieldsites and their surrounding rural areas. It becomes clear that so-called “alternative” practices are still used by patients but are marginalized by state-sponsored health care, for instance, in the case of the controversial treatment of *ja né* through “genital discharge sucking practices.” The chapter explores how and why such treatment practices still exist, are frequently combined with biomedical antibiotic courses, and are often deemed effective, despite obvious safety concerns.

Chapter 5 then takes the discourse into the wider field of pharmaceuticals, the politics and economics, ethics and practices of (non)availability of drugs, and the dependencies and effects they create for people. The pharmaceutical industry has clearly changed the expectations patients have today, and Taeë concludes with clear suggestions on what could be done on a national level to improve health care education and reduce suffering in a very practical sense. Relying on Annemarie Mol’s “The Logic of Care” (2008), Taeë tries to unlock practical advice from his ethnographic examples that could lead to possible implementation by all kinds of health care providers.

While Taeë’s well-researched ethnographic examples in many cases rightly call for more inclusive approaches of multiplicity in health care, it would be naïve to assume that it will have an impact on public health in Bhutan. It falls into the existing divide Taeë himself describes (19): non-biomedical healing practices are covered by anthropologists and appear in academic literature but not in publications by the Ministry of Health who, while approving Taeë’s research project, might not pay much attention to

its published results (also considering the book’s price and possibly difficult distribution in Bhutan).

To conclude, the book is clearly structured and includes several photographs that visually underline the ethnographic accounts. At times the writing is a bit repetitive, but overall the book offers a welcome contribution to the medical anthropological literature on “patient-hood” and the multiplicity this involves on the ground. With its accessibility and detailed ethnographic examples it makes a good read for undergraduate courses in medical anthropology and anybody working in or concerned with public health in Asia.

Barbara Gerke

Trawick, Margaret: *Death, Beauty, Struggle. Untouchable Women Create the World*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017. 284 pp. ISBN 978-0-8122-4905-7. Price: £ 60.00

Trawick is today professor emerita of Social Anthropology at Massey University, New Zealand. This lengthy volume gathers together data – largely folk songs – that Trawick had collected in Tamil Nadu over the last 40 years or so. She tries to present this data as a coherent book. Does this work? No, because no convincing overarching argument emerges from this material to bind it together. But was it worthwhile publishing all this material? Yes, especially for those interested in folk songs and in the close textual analysis of such songs.

The book opens with a long foreword by Ann Grodzins Gold, which details Trawick’s academic career. Trawick’s first chapter discusses a woman called Sarasvati who “lived with a spirit with whom she struggled” (29). Trawick emphasises that this woman and the spirit she worshipped – the goddess Mariyamman (Māriamman) – had both endured “similar life experiences, in particular, problems with men” (31). In the second chapter she discusses the “crying songs” – which she terms “laments” – of Christian Paraiyar women. She does not specify what denomination of Christianity these women belong to, but the presence of a Tamil Catholic nun suggests that they were Roman Catholic. These women – like virtually all the “untouchable”/Dalit women in Trawick’s book – are illiterate. Trawick argues that these women sang not just funeral laments for those who had recently died, which was their ostensible purpose, but “the crying songs were heavily veiled ... the singer sang ... of her own plight” (73). Many of these women singers were older, widowed women and many of their songs were “about the sufferings of widowhood” (107). In the book’s third chapter, Trawick argues that their singing is a form of social critique for “untouchable”/Dalit women, especially when the songs are not laments/crying songs, but instead songs of hopeful affirmation. In this chapter, which is concerned with songs about “work and love” young Dalit women vigorously turn down the attempts of their upper-caste male employers to woo them into sexual relations by offering them gifts of money. In these songs the women taunt the higher caste men. This is the book’s most successful chapter because here, at least, the reader can surmise the social relations that form the context of these songs. The lack

of a detailed discussion of the socioeconomic contexts in which these women live is a weakness of the book.

The remaining three chapters of the book again provide Trawick's close textual analysis of more songs. What is striking about her textual analyses is that the book's focus is on Trawick's own understanding of these songs. She has remarkably little interaction with the women singers and there is, therefore, very little discussion between Trawick and the women singers about why they sing these songs or about what these songs mean to them. Thus, what is missing from this book is the point of view of the Tamil women singers themselves. Trawick's discussions concerning Bakhtin and Peirce are interesting, but they are no substitute for understanding these songs from the point of view of these women themselves.

Anthropology is surely about trying to understand the point of view of others through intensive discussion with them. But from Trawick's book we learn very little about how these women think about and understand their own lives and how they understand their own creative endeavors.

Karin Kapadia

Tsing, Anna, Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan, and Nils Bubandt (eds.): *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet. Ghosts of the Anthropocene. Monsters of the Anthropocene*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017. G174, M174 pp. ISBN 978-1-5179-0237-7. Price: \$ 27.95

"Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet" es un libro bicéfalo, cuyas dos partes se encuentran compuestas de muy breves capítulos. Si algo puede encomiarse desde el inicio es su alta coherencia interna: todos sus capítulos tocan temas similares y elaboran argumentos análogos. Los editores dividen los capítulos en dos grupos: los que hablan de "espectros" y los que tratan de "monstruos". Ambos conceptos son explicados en las introducciones a las dos partes del libro (y a cada una de sus secciones internas), pero no son explícitamente usados en la mayoría de los capítulos. De hecho, las introducciones constituyen una suerte de manifiesto apocalíptico. En cuanto a los capítulos del libro, estos abarcan espacios diversos, que van desde la frontera entre EEUU y México (Stern) hasta Java (Bubandt), pasando por Chernobyl (Brown). Muchos de ellos, además, optan por un estilo literario (que Pratt considera "experimentos"), que van desde la colección de poemas de la recientemente fallecida escritora Le Guin hasta alusiones, como las de Stern, a un cierto optimismo por el tomate que crece en el asfalto ("tomato optimism") (G27).

En aquella dedicada a los fantasmas – que usa, de manera algo caprichosa, dos tipos diferentes de grafía –, el concepto de espectro es definido como englobando tanto los vestigios como los signos de aquellas formas de vida pretéritas que persisten en el presente (1). Los editores sugieren que este concepto nos enseñaría a detectar las disposiciones (*arrangements*) encubiertas de espacios vitales compuestos por humanos y no humanos (G1).

La importancia de esta tarea radicaría en una concepción del llamado "Anthropocene" como una era de des-

trucción (G2) en la que los entrelazamientos que promueven la vida en el planeta desaparecen incesantemente: "life-enhancing entanglements disappear from our landscapes" (G4). La pérdida de las redes ambientales de interdependencias entre especies – "safety net of multispecies interdependencies" (G7) – afectaría la capacidad de vivir de todos – "multispecies livability" (G5). Una perspectiva tal, sin embargo, podría volver extraña para algunos lectores la presencia de capítulos dedicados a la vida póstuma de los desechos, los desmontes o las ruinas (cf. G. Gordillo, Rubble. *The Afterlife of Destruction*. Durham 2014).

Alguno de los capítulos (Bird Rose) aluden directamente al apocalipsis sugerido por los editores: las relaciones se desarman, las mutualidades tambalean, las dependencias se vuelven un riesgo más que una fortuna, mundos enteros de conocimiento desaparecen (G52) y sufrimos las consecuencias del armamentismo y sus propagandas imperialistas (Brown).

Otros autores expresan, sin embargo, una visión algo menos tajante. Así, por ejemplo, reflexionando sobre la relación entre capitalismo, formación del estado y colonización de plantas (G146), Mathews alude a las formas en las que diferentes formas de política humana emergen de encuentros concretos entre humanos y no humanos y sugiere la existencia de "múltiples antropocenos" (G154). Por su parte, notando el abandono de un millón de hectáreas de tierra agrícola cada año y el incremento poblacional de la mayoría de los mamíferos de gran tamaño en Europa (G77), Svenning retrata las posibilidades de un "Antropoceno salvaje" ("Wilder Anthropocene"). El capítulo de Bubandt – quizá el más extenso – trata sobre los miedos, desatados por un volcán de lodo en Java, a la impericia industrial, a la corrupción política y al castigo cosmológico. Las estrechas relaciones entre geología, política, industria, adivinación, pleitos legales, venganza espiritual y corrupción (G124) sugieren al autor la necesidad de un nuevo tipo de colaboración entre ciencia y política (G137), de una "necropolítica del Antropoceno", cuya indeterminabilidad sería, al mismo tiempo, su maldición y su promesa (G123). Finalmente, Pratt sugiere que lo importante aquí no es tanto en qué consiste el Antropoceno, sino cómo éste puede ser vivido (G170); mientras que Sagan (en la "coda" de la otra sección del libro, propone la denominación "Cyanocene" (M170) aduciendo que todo comenzó con las algas azules verdosas (cyanobacterias). Aunque sutiles, algunos de estos intentos no dejan de parecerse a una mera recolección de noticias sobre los acontecimientos actuales.

Más allá del Antropoceno, algunos capítulos contrastan entre sí de manera más o menos notoria. Daremos algunos ejemplos. Por un lado, Pringle y Barad parecen dejar notables cabos sueltos en sus textos. Así, en el caso de la última, encontramos conceptos aparentemente crípticos pero sobre todo no definidos, como "ecologías de la nada" y "topologías del *spacetime mattering*" (G103) – o "(space)time(mattering)". Además, en su estudio de los líquenes de un cementerio en Nueva Inglaterra, Pringle no aclara del todo qué constituye la unidad de los líquenes y cómo se entiende su envejecimiento antes de afirmar que