

und illustrieren den Reichtum an Votivgaben, unzählige Fotoportraits, vergoldete Nadeln für den (beendeten) Drogenkonsum, verkleinerte Nachbildungen von Gefängnistüren und Handschellen.

Das große Verdienst dieses Buches besteht darin, die neapolitanische Unterwelt mit ihrer Oberwelt in zahlreichen Facetten, Ambivalenzen und Verstrickungen nach innen und nach außen zur Darstellung gebracht zu haben, inklusive dem darin eingeschlossenen, sich immer wieder in Frage stellenden Ethnografen. Neapels Unterwelt ist ein gelungenes Beispiel für eine symmetrische und transkulturelle Ethnografie, der es nicht um einen ethnografischen Monolog, sondern um wechselseitige Relationen, Austauschprozesse und Spiegelungen geht.

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Mageo, Jeannette, and Elfriede Hermann (eds.): *Mimesis and Pacific Transcultural Encounters. Making Likenesses in Time, Trade, and Ritual Reconfigurations*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2017. 278 pp. ISBN 978-1-78533-624-9. (ASAO Studies in Pacific Anthropology, 8) Price: \$ 130.00

The concept of mimesis has long gained currency in anthropological literature. In her “Introduction,” Mageo teases out the volume’s overarching theme of mimesis as a communicative and heuristic devise through which processes of othering and self-fashioning are performed, proposing a suggestive tripartite typology that accounts for shifting power relations between colonizers and colonized. The essays in the volume, presenting a wide-ranging exploration of mimetic behaviors in Oceania, partially corroborate such a classificatory attempt, at the same time pointing at its fuzzy boundaries.

Merlan’s close reading of encounters between Australian Aborigines and early explorers (chap. 1) provides a compelling example of the communicative dimension of mimetic behavior, at once universal and “culturally available and highly developed framework for sociability” (45). Contrasting the mimetic behavior of the early encounters with more recent forms of mimesis-as-mockery of Europeans, Merlan reminds us of the necessity to historically contextualize these performances.

Several chapters address the issue of mimetic practices in the global market. Hammond (chap. 4) shows how the tourist market of “Tahitian Weddings” rests upon an array of colonial images that feed on one hand the tourists’ imagination of the exotic while on the other fuel a local cultural Renaissance. The complex mirroring of images of the Self produced by Others is also explored by Pearson (chap. 3), who shows how some Māori communities took the occasion of the encounter with Native Americans (who were touring New Zealand to promote the Paramount movie “The Vanishing Race”) to articulate a common grammar of White/Indigenous relations in settler societies. While well aware “they were represented by commercial and cultural forces far away and beyond their control,” both in-

digenous groups “chose to simultaneously acknowledge the power of these forces and defy them by expressing their indigenous affinity and themselves as modern agents in the global cultural economy” (102). Lohmann’s analysis of trade-stores in Asabano villages (Papua New Guinea) shows the structural limits of the mimetic appropriation of capitalism in this area. Despite their mimesis of capitalist forms, Asabano entrepreneurs are bound to fail because the local egalitarian ethos and gift economy prevent storeowners to make profit from their own kin. The remoteness of the area exacerbates this situation by making impossible to reach out for non-intimate consumers, thus turning their business to profits. Ultimately “in order [for these trade stores] to work, unacceptable and possibly unfeasible cultural and social changes to relational schemas would have to be made” (178).

Jarillo de la Torre (chap. 5) turns his gaze on mimesis by engaging with the production of tourist art in the Trobriand. The chapter shows how local carvers incorporate foreign images (expressing a locally valued innovation) into such art while maintaining a distinctive “traditional” character that appeals to the foreign buyer. Drawing on the rich literature on the object/person relation in Melanesia, Jarillo de la Torre argues that such innovations aim at establishing potential relations with an external and powerful Other, thus making “the mimetic image [into] … a tool of intercultural and intracultural comprehension” (158).

Objects are often catalysts for the appreciation of how mimesis manifests. Mageo (chap. 2) draws on a rich archive of 19th-20th-centuries photographs of colonial Samoa, which provide a tableau of mimetic practices involving combs, hairstyles, and cloths. These images are used to track the history of changing cultural schemas over time in colonial Samoa, showing how acts of mimesis on both side of the colonial world created “collaborative mental spaces …” (52) in which novel cultural and social forms could be explored. Hermann (chap. 7) too looks at objects to show how mimesis works in the context of Banabans’ birthday celebrations. In her rich description of one of such celebrations, she shows how several dresses are used as ethnic signifiers to trace connections between them and their Other, throughout the troubled history of Banabans’ relocation to Fiji from their home island and its subsequent incorporation into the Kiribati nation-state. By displaying different dress-signifiers “to achieve mimetic equality with powerful others, … [Banabans] show they are capable of bridging the cultural … distances separating … [Banabans and their Others] and demonstrate the agency they need in intercultural negotiations” (204).

Two chapters insert the relation between mimesis and change into recent debates over continuity and change raised by the Anthropology of Christianity. Carucci (chap. 8) argues against the idea of a possible rupture with previous cultural forms, using his rich material on Marshall Islanders’ Christmas celebrations to analyze the mimetic reminders to past practices and images as

well as novel ones that look at the US historical presence in the region. Dalton (chap. 9) proposes a thought-provoking framework to overcome the change/continuity dichotomy, grounded in his elegant and compelling history of how Rawa people of Papua New Guinea adopted various forms of mimesis during the German colonization, resulting in their embracing of Christianity as a ritual form to reconcile the violence triggered by secular colonial institutions. Moving to a more recent context Dalton argues that, in attempting to reconcile the Western introduced divide between secular and religious spheres, Rawa people have partially achieved their long-held ideal to prevent frictions and disrupting violence in continuity with pre-colonial practices.

Taken as whole, the volume is a rich and nuanced thesaurus of instances of mimesis. Common themes are developed across the chapters, skilfully knit together in the “Afterword” penned by Bell. The cases presented in the volume will have an echo of familiarity to scholars of the Pacific, prompting the question whether or not (and how) there is a regional specificity. A tentative answer is offered by Mageo’s passing reference to the relational nature of forms of personhood in Oceania (15f.; but see Dalton, 234). The very intellectual history of the region’s place in anthropology might also shed light on this issue. On another but related note, the volume’s laudable attempt to go beyond the “first-contact” literature remains limited in its realization. It is the reviewer’s opinion that the basic assumption of first-contact scholarship remains largely unaltered: the encounters “of two radically different cultures” (70) are considered as “turning points in a [note the singular] cultural history or an intersecting set of histories” (6). Such framework obscures the processual and uncertain nature of history in its unfolding (see Bell, 267). The diachronic examination of mimetic practices remains impaired from the recourse to history as background, frozen at particular junctions.

The impressive internal coherence of the volume and the questions it generates encourage an engagement with this publication beyond its regional specificity. Borrowing Bell’s closing line: “While this volume is by no means the last word on mimesis” it “reveal[s] the ways in which mimesis has been and remains central to the intersecting histories of Oceania” (268).

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Mans, Minette: *The Changing Faces of Aawambo Musical Art*. Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliografien, 2017. 188 pp. ISBN 978-3-905758-83-2. (Basel Southern Africa Studies, 11). Price: € 46,99

“The Changing Faces of Aawambo Musical Art” is an eminently readable ethnography that examines cultural practices in the lives of the Aawambo (Owambo) people of central northern Namibia. Its stated aim is more specifically to “provide insight into an area seldom addressed in Namibian cultural studies, namely music, dance and drama of indigenous people, past and

present” (xiv). Delivered in a descriptive style, devoid of the jargon-heavy and elaborate theorization of much contemporary ethnomusicological scholarship, the book is as much an analysis of a rich cultural heritage as it is a personal account of Mans’ fieldwork encounters. In it, we meet individual musicians, toil in the fields in the intense midday heat, experience the daily rhythms of village life, and celebrate full moon festivals. These events are delivered in a range of narrative styles, including almost diarised ruminations by the author, and enticingly illustrated with photographs, sketches, and musical transcriptions.

Minette Mans is a seasoned researcher of Namibian music, who has for much of her career, been a solitary spokesperson for music scholarship in her native Namibia. This publication draws on 18 years of research, and though accredited to Mans alone, is a partial collaboration with four Oshiwambo-speaking professional performers and graduate students, namely, Trixie Munyama, Jacques N. Mushaandja, Shishani Vranckx, and Ismael Sam. While their contributions are assigned to specific chapters in the latter section of the book, their presence is made palpable from the outset by the inclusion of short, evocative biographical sketches that position their cultural interests and areas of expertise.

Dedicating a book to the “musical arts” of a single group in Namibia, where the enforcement of ethnic identities and territorial segregation under South African apartheid continues to cast a shadow, immediately calls to question the scholarly framing of people, place and cultural heritage. However, as Mans makes clear in chapter 1, the Oshiwambo-speaking people constitute a diverse but broadly related group, whose identities have shifted significantly over time. Her determination is to better understand the ways in which they account for their own histories and cultural practices, drawing insight from the discursive intimacies and details of their songs and related performance practices. As she states emphatically: “Songs don’t lie!” (1).

The book opens with a contextual chapter that positions the Aawambo in time and space. Commencing with a brief exposition of Aawambo pre-colonial history, we learn of their migration into central northern Namibia in the 15th century, and of their political organisation based on matrilineal clans and subclans, each distinguished by kings, totems, and occupational specialisms. These power structures shielded them to an extent from the effects of the Portuguese, British, and German colonial intrusions that ensued, but ultimately succumbed to South African rule in the immediate aftermath of WW1.

Unlike the peoples and cultures of the south of Namibia, the Aawambo were slow to absorb the Christian teachings of the Rhenish and Finnish Missionary Societies. However, by the 1920s, the influences of missionisation had begun to permeate the social and cultural fabric of the Aawambo, manifesting in their music by the adoption of the European diatonic scale, 4-part harmonies, and by the sharp, shiny aesthetics of brass in-