

questions of “whose ethics?” and “ethics for whom?” persist as the enterprise of anthropology continues to be overwhelmingly Western, although the demographics of younger fieldworkers is changing slightly. Indeed, Laidlaw acknowledges that contemporary anthropology is inevitably ethnocentric. Nonetheless, this ambitious work remains one for philosophers and philosophical anthropologists, and not for anthropologists primarily concerned with practical ethics.

However, public discourse on subjects such as the ethics of politicians, truth in advertising, and a host of medical issues, such as the right to die, are more popular than ever and are featured in major media outlets. This speaks to a larger public mission for anthropologists engaged with ethics that has not been met.

Laidlaw and I would likely agree that much work remains to be done on the subject of anthropology and ethics. For example, systemic study of indigenous concepts of morality and ethics is a long-awaited field of work. Poignant remarks, such as that of the Crow Indigenous American leader Plenty Coups that “nothing happened” after their conquest and subordination (135), were uttered to mean that nothing could count as an event or ethically noteworthy action after this cataclysm. This tantalizes the anthropological imagination and begs us to research, document, and analyze ethical systems outside of a Western framework. I would have enjoyed a more thorough treatment of the north Indian Jains’ unique system of an ethics of nonviolence and nonattachment where Laidlaw has conducted his research.

Finally, although codes of ethics may be viewed as outside of the philosophical purview of this work, it would have been helpful for Laidlaw to “weigh in” on the subject as both professional anthropologists and students must engage with institutional, national, and international codes in their studies and research. In the end, we want such treatises to instruct as well as to engage our intellect, the latter which this work certainly accomplishes.

Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban

Lipset, David, and Richard Handler (eds.): *Vehicles. Cars, Canoes, and Other Metaphors of Moral Imagination*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2014. 214 pp. ISBN 978-1-78238-375-8. Price: \$ 95.00

This edited volume compiles a set of original ethnographic case studies focusing on the diverse ways vehicles that convey people through geospatial territory and also convey metaphorical meanings and constructions of the moral. Contrary to the introduction’s claim that “the signifying value of vehicles, as a whole category, seems to have gone unrecognized up to this point” (3), the burgeoning interdisciplinary mobilities’ literature on the intersections of transportation, society, and material culture has not been insensitive to the symbolic and metaphorical meanings of vehicles as a broader category, much less ignored what specific vehicles signify in specific social contexts. But while there has been plenty of attention given to *what* vehicles signify, there has been little given to *how* vehicles signify, which is precisely where this book

comes in, drawing on a number of theoretical and comparative propositions about how vehicular metaphors create meaning and are operationalized in a range of ethnographic contexts.

One of the book’s primary theoretical arguments is that the cultural work of vehicle metaphors is to help people work through some moral *lacunae* “in response to which something figural is done to imagine that transportation across the missing relationships is possible, if not necessarily secure” (13). The emphasis here is thus not so much on understanding the everyday embodied experiences of getting around using vehicles or the political-economic and infrastructural conditions under which vehicles operate, but in exploring the notion that involvement with vehicles is always rooted in shifting and equivocal viewpoints about morality and the moral journey of life itself. This book aims to show that those processes are productively complicated and dense, primarily by demonstrating ethnographically how certain vehicles – cars, Melanesian canoes, and rebuilt WWII warplanes, which is an admittedly limited range – are symbolized and metaphorized on multiple levels, providing both a means through which people can make sense of their place in their immediate social worlds, and – through their service “cross-culturally as master-signifiers of the moral” – help them work through the uncertainties, alienation, indeterminacy, equivocation, and ambivalence about moral matters that are part and parcel of social lives in any community.

The book is divided into three sections, each exploring how vehicles are used to construct the moral. The first section on “Persons as Vehicles” focuses on how people in two distinct cultural contexts sort out who they are and their relationships and obligations vis-à-vis others through vehicle metaphors. David Lipset describes how among the Murik people of Melanesia the canoe serves as a master metaphor through which human bodies can be thought of as canoes; canoes can be thought of as human bodies; and canoe metaphors enable consideration of moral agency in a rapidly changing social order. A chapter by Richard Handler follows that, in intellectual history mode, couples a reading of Erving Goffman’s famous analysis of traffic codes and personhood with description of early-twentieth-century American driver’s manuals, the goal being to describe the co-construction of persons, cars, and streets in the United States during a particular historical period.

The second and third sections of the book – “Vehicles as Gendered Persons” and “Equivocal Vehicles” – are the most lively and engaging sections of the book, where the quality of the ethnographic description is strong and the authors generally offer compelling insights related to the volume’s concern with the intersections between morality, metaphors, and vehicles. In the second section, Kent Wayland discusses how the artistic reproduction of sexualized female imagery on the nose art of restored WWII-era American warplanes exists as a means through which multiple, complicated social phenomena – shifting gender politics, the violence of war, and male intimacy with machines – are negotiated and given a “choateness” that is otherwise elusive. This section also has one of two chap-

ters in the volume that focus on the dynamic metaphorization of automobiles in Asian contexts where mass motorization is associated with chaos and congestion, in this case recessionary Japan. Joshua Hotaka Roth's chapter astutely examines the destabilizing effects of that country's economic recession on what he calls the "cognitive schemas" and gender metaphors associated with particular automobiles and driving practices, which are primarily expressed through normative concerns around speed, safety, and manners.

The third section, which focuses on the equivocal connections between vehicles and nation-states, includes Beth E. Notar's subtle analysis of the ongoing flux in popular associations of automobiles with official corruption in China as more nonelite individuals gain ownership of cars themselves, usefully pointing the reader to consider how these dynamics are shaped not simply by historically-contingent meanings of cars but also by culturally-specific understandings of metaphor. One of the most insightful (and entertainingly written) chapters in the entire volume appears in this section, which is Marko Živković's discussion of the Yugoslav Fiat known as a *Fića*, a notoriously unreliable yet practical car that is no longer produced but offers a metaphorical lens through which Serbians have negotiated socialist and post-socialist eras. He describes it as a "relic bearing of all kinds of ironies" (118), not least of which is a kind of theoretical "motion sickness" (126) that results from trying to understand the heady mixing of metaphors associated with this vehicle. Ben Chappell's chapter that follows examines the aesthetics of Mexican-American lowrider customizations, emphasizing that these vehicles are both a means of representing the *barrio* as an object of contemplation – where ambivalence about race and class stratification is a central part of life – and help constitute a particular *barrio* subjectivity through their artistic representations. The last chapter by Mark Auslander describes the annual reenactment of a 1946 lynching of four African Americans in southern Georgia, in which an unreliable, locally owned 1977 Lincoln Town Car plays a central protagonist role, even though tensions persist about the historical inaccuracy of using a car of such recent vintage.

The volume closes out with an afterword by James W. Fernandez reflecting on the ongoing challenges of studying figuration and moral imagination in everyday life, with a brief reference to anthropology's own moral responsibilities in relation to these issues. It is here, perhaps, where one realizes most clearly that for a volume about the moral urgency projected onto vehicles in particular ethnographic contexts, the book as a whole curiously lacks its own moral urgency about vehicles, the kind of moral urgency that can be seen in more critical anthropological treatments of vehicles, such as in Catherine Lutz and Anne Lutz Fernandez's book "Carjacked" (New York 2010). Similarly, in a book with such close attention to cars, it is surprising not to see any systematic exploration of the widespread ambivalence around automobility and questions of overconsumption, environmental sustainability, climate change, etc. To be fair, the editors note at the outset that their project is more "evocative than exhaus-

sive," suggesting that there is much more ethnographic work to be done on the dynamics of vehicles, metaphors, and moral imagination. This is certainly the case, and this volume represents a solid beginning.

Luis A. Vivanco

Merabet, Sofian: *Queer Beirut*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014. 287 pp. ISBN 978-0-292-76096-7. Price: \$ 55.00

This monograph is first and foremost an ethnography of the "human geography of queer identity formation" (3) among men in Beirut. It is the first of its kind, making it an invaluable contribution to scholarship on queer sexualities, urban space, and social production in Lebanon. This is also an urban ethnography of Beirut and of its reconstruction after the 15-year Lebanese civil war that left much of the city in ruins. Scholars have examined Beirut's spatial politics through the prism of sectarianism, yet this is a first to examine socio-spatial formations from the perspective of queer dissident sexualities. He examines the production and representation of queer identities amidst a host of post-civil war social, cultural, and spatial transformations. Merabet argues that queer identity formations cannot be disassociated from the spaces where they occur, and that queer identities are tied to the socio-cultural codes that make spaces meaningful. He explores the construction of norms and forms of social inclusion and exclusion through the politics and social construction of spaces and the ways queer performances contest, transgress, appropriate, and sometimes reproduce socio-political normativities.

Described to me by its inhabitants as a city of contradictions, below Beirut's concrete base, congested roadways, and hectic urban movement is a socio-politically divided city where multiple kinds of contested social relations fold and unfold. Merabet leads readers through this dense thicket of socio-spatial connections with such rich ethnographic detail that one feels as if one is traveling alongside him. His ethnographic eye and writings are calibrated toward the minutia details of queer bodily performances, from style of dress, mannerisms and gesticulation, verbal utterances, glances, and movements. It is a formidable ethnographic look at how queerness is performed in relation to broad spatial patterning, but also how these performances turn into social and subjective differentiation and identities through psychoanalytic processes of gazing and viewing others in space.

Within the urban locations Merabet examines, encounters between men unfold in ways that include queer sexualities through bodily performances and expressions of queer desires, while reckoning with the socio-spatial codes of class, sectarian, and gender these spaces stake claims to. For instance, the Dunkin' Donuts in Zalqā was a popular location for men to see and be seen, instantiating a manner of queer performance that involved conformity to normative ideals of masculine behaviours in order to abide by the heteronormative exigencies of the space. Eventually, management began ejecting men engaging in bodily performances that violated these exigencies. In contrast,