

gender performances in the few bars and nightclubs catering to male same-sex desiring clients are more fluid, challenging normative masculinity. Inhabiting the spaces of the downtown, destroyed during the civil war and rebuilt to be a veritable consumptive playground, meant performing class-based consumption revealed by manner of dress, expensive vehicles, and food consumption in expensive cafes and restaurants. Such is a politics of appearance and prestige based on class performance. Those men excluded from these spaces due to limited financial resources would gather at the nearby Roman staircase and encounter one another in manners that appropriate a politics of appearance, while transcending and resisting normative manners of displaying class and wealth.

Merabet's text reveals how men navigate through socio-spatial exigencies of class, gender, and sect, sometimes complying with their exigencies, or challenging their normative disciplinary tactics. Against the backdrop of social, legal, and political homophobia, he demonstrates how queer-desiring men appropriate spaces, turning them into a microcosm of Lebanese life where spatio-social exigencies are reckoned with, opening theoretical and performative spaces for emergent queer practices and identities. These form in the ways that men differentiate themselves within identitarian structures as not being like others, or not embodying the same kinds of identity from the performances of others.

Merabet measures queer identity formation in relation to the local spaces in which they unfold, demonstrating that they are just as mercurial as they are vulnerable to forces that control and order those spaces. Navigating the forceful and risky socio-spatial urban terrain is, as he shows, made easier in different spaces that enable multiple forms of queer bodily performances, identities and representations through informal signs and codes of gender and sexuality unfolding within.

Despite the transformation and disappearance of many of these queer spaces in the decade since his primary fieldwork – not to mention the wide usages of gay social networking applications to arrange intimate lives – his theoretical conclusions resonate still. The various spaces in and around Beirut popular among queer men remain central to queer identity formations. Even in the digital age, offline spaces where queer men meet continue to provide social and cultural reference points for creating and differentiating queer social formations.

Merabet describes the historical and social productions of the spaces he strolls through. As such, Merabet's work connects to the anthropology of urban Beirut in the ways that queer performances, spatial histories, and socio-cultural codes operate together to reassert collective relations “where the status quo is challenged and asserted, social space in Beirut continually incorporates a range of social practices, namely those of commonly shared, as well as those of individual, content” (111). While documenting the lived realities of queer men in navigating socio-cultural referents of spaces, Merabet reveals not only the dynamics of socio-cultural reproduction, transformation, and cohesion, but also how those on the margins of Lebanese society challenge, appropriate, and trans-

gress them, at least in the moment of being together with “zones of encounters” or those spaces that give rise to different manners of interacting with queer others.

Of benefit to urban anthropology, Merabet's text includes methodological considerations for the ethnography of urban terrain. Borrowing from Bourdieu, he advances a practice of “participant objectification” as a methodological manner of researching urban spaces. He makes walking into a methodological practice, arguing that anthropologists must activate all their senses in order to fully comprehend the low-laying events, encounters, codes, and symbols imbued and unfolding in space. Social spaces have the “capacity to orchestrate the desire of those who inhabit them” (210) yet, methodological tactics to activate the various emotional, physical, affective, and intellectual tools of the anthropologist are required to perceive such orchestrations in a place like Beirut where queer forms are incorporated into the intricacies of social space.

Merabet's text is a reminder that tropes characterizing Beirut as a more “liberal” location for queer life relative to the more authoritarian regimes of other Arab cities, or those characterizing queer life in Beirut as a Western import, are much too facile. While these tropes use the presence a few gay bars, beaches, and other spaces as evidence of Beirut's liberal environment, Merabet demonstrates that queerness in Beirut is complexly impacted by social and political exigencies beyond the public and semi-public spaces where queer life is relatively permissible. Indeed, these forces are part and parcel of the very ways that queer forms are produced and lived in alternative socio-spatial landscapes.

Mathew Gagné

Miller, Daniel, and Jolynna Sinanan: Webcam. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014, 204 pp. ISBN 978-0-7456-7147-5. Price: £ 15.99

This book, like Miller's previous works is both appealing and accessible. It is a comprehensible and informative read about webcam that is primarily based on Sinanan's doctoral ethnographic research and interviews in Trinidad. That said the book begins with a conclusion that clearly sets out the theoretical framework for the remainder of the book, and poses important questions about the place of the visual within social relationships.

Using the notions of polymedia and attainment, the authors move us on from looking at communications as a way of connecting separate long-distance locations, to thinking about new media as a place which people inhabit. To do this the book investigates notions of self-consciousness, intimacy, sense of place and relationships.

The examination of webcam through the framework of “polymedia,” reflects on how communication practices have changed: from selecting “one” to configuring “several.” Miller and Sinanan explain how increased access to different types of media (webcam, phones, computers, etc.), together with decreasing costs have impacted on decision making, and resulted in the adoption of webcam within polymedia. In other words, the emphasis of choice is now on the social use of media rather than on the cost.

In a similar vein the authors' theory of attainment is

seen as neither positive nor negative, but simply a theory of how technology and the webcam seamlessly embed themselves into everyday communication practices, and “become an ordinary aspect of being routinely human” (13).

Using these notions of polymedia and attainment, it was obvious to Daniel Miller and Jolynna Sinanan that webcam was not simply developing a significant role among new media technologies. Webcam was, in fact, so deeply embedded in everyday social practices that it had “arrived” already. As a result, Miller and Sinanan set out to explore these everyday social practices from an anthropological perspective in order to understand webcam’s use in mediating social encounters and relationships.

The authors’ discussion of self-consciousness draws on the work of Goffman, and is interesting in that it identifies our desire to see ourselves as others do. At the same time, their discussion encourages us to think reflexively about the concepts of “I” and of “me” as elements of the self. And that is exactly what webcam does in everyday life; it enables us to monitor and transform the self that is seen by others (46).

The trick with notions of intimacy is that for many of us the word webcam raises sordid and seedy imaginings of the hidden sex trade, and yet now webcam, as Miller and Sinanan explain, has moved past this to become part of the mundane and ubiquitous global communications network. Webcam is now part and parcel of our everyday lives through the use of Skype and FaceTime, etc. Webcam has even been adopted by those groups of people previously resistant to using new media technologies, such as the elderly. The authors go further by narrating snapshots of intimacy in which the “always on” webcam changes our focus from “intense concentration on the other person” to the exposure of “the routines, presumptions and hidden collusions” that lead to a more complete sense of intimacy (80, 81).

The book itself is worth a read, not for the depth of theory, since the explanations are sometimes broad, but it certainly provides a sound basis for a wider discussion on what it means to be human. This traditional anthropological approach to understanding the practice and experience of webcam is demonstrated to be a valuable tool in better understanding our uses of new media. In this, the book is successful: it situates studies of new media “within the embrace of anthropology” (190).

Denise M. Carter

Mori, Akiko (ed.): *The Anthropology of Europe as Seen from Japan. Considering Contemporary Forms and Meanings of the Social*. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2013. 198 pp. ISBN 978-4-906962-01-3. (Senri Ethnological Studies, 81)

“The Anthropology of Europe as Seen from Japan” is the first edited volume in English on the topic by Japanese anthropologists. Together with an introduction by the editor, Akiko Mori, and an opening chapter by Jeremy Boisrevain, the contributors examine the meanings and practices of the social within European societies. The eleven chapters are organised into four sections. The first part

discusses the dynamic of “Social Change and the Construction of Community” with a focus on the people of Malta, England, and Northern Ireland. The second section examines the interplay between “Solidarity and Individualism” among French villagers and farmers, and the elderly in Finland. The third part turns to the subject of “Cultural Manifestations and Communal Entities” in Spain, Turkey, and Malta. The book closes with two commentaries on the volume by Joy Hendry and Gergely Mohácsi, both European anthropologists of Japanese descent. In her introduction, Akiko Mori explains that the aim of this book “is to seek a new epistemological approach” for the study of Europe as well as “a new way of thinking about contemporary society” (3). To do so, these Japanese anthropologists come together to examine people’s ideas and practices of the “social” or “what they want to have in common” whether they may be new incomers in rural Malta (Boisrevain) or England (Shioji), victims of political violence in Ireland (Sakai), farmers in France (Miura and Nakagawa), the elderly in Finland (Takahashi), actors of heritage politics in Spain and Turkey (Takenaka and Tanaka) or even pilgrims in Malta (Fujiwara). Their works echo the Scott Lash’s argument that “one is not born or ‘thrown,’ but ‘throws oneself into’” communities.

The first merit of this volume is to make accessible in the English language Japan’s anthropological scholarship of Europe. Via their consideration of the social, the authors cover a broad spectrum of issues including class, memory and violence, economy, globalisation, welfare, heritage, pilgrimage, identity, and politics. Not being an expert of most of the other fields or the anthropology of Europe, I will abstain from commenting on the merit of each contribution. As a specialist of memory, trauma, and storytelling, however, I would suggest that an example of the excellence of their scholarship is Sakai’s chapter on the making of the social in the context of political violence in Northern Ireland. Her article is an excellent treatise of the relationship between the making of memory and imagined community, breaking the gap between individual and collective memory. Considering the quality of many of these articles, I highly recommend these collections of essays to any specialist of the themes analysed or/and of Europe.

Another important contribution made by this volume is its initiation to “mutual anthropologies.” Since 1978, the National Museum of Ethnology of Japan has published over 80 volumes as part of its Senri Ethnological Studies enabling ethnographic and intellectual exchanges between Japanese anthropologists, visiting academics, and a wider international audience. Building on this tradition, this latest volume is the outcome of a workshop held at the museum on the 29th January 2011 when Japanese anthropologists of Europe discussed their findings with their European counterparts mentioned above. The idea behind this publication is thus also an exchange between Japanese anthropologists of Europe and European anthropologists of Japan. It aims at breaking down the dichotomy or the boundary between the researcher and the subject of the research or the observer and the observed. As Joy Hendry points out in her commentary, this exercise is