

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 protagonistic 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-

tive," 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 sociopolitical 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,

gender performances in the few bars and nightclubs catering to male same-sex desiring clientele 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 space that gives 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 of 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