

# Book reviews = Comptes rendus = Rezensionen

Objekttyp: **BookReview**

Zeitschrift: **Tsantsa : Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Ethnologischen Gesellschaft = revue de la Société suisse d'ethnologie = rivista della Società svizzera d'etnologia**

Band (Jahr): **26 (2021)**

PDF erstellt am: **29.06.2024**

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# BOOK REVIEWS/COMPTES RENDUS/ REZENSIONEN

## FEMINIST TROUBLE: INTERSECTIONAL POLITICS IN POST-SECULAR TIMES

Éléonore Lépinard, 2020. New York:  
Oxford University Press. 336 p.

Éléonore Lépinard is a sociologist and professor at the University of Lausanne focusing her research on intersectionality and feminist movements. Her new book *Feminist Trouble: Intersectional Politics in Post-Secular Times* (2020) contributes to this field in a way that is descriptive, analytical, and normative. The book offers a rich argument of how whiteness shapes the political subjectivations of white and racialized feminists and proposes a new feminist ethic of responsibility. Éléonore Lépinard's comparative methodology is based on qualitative data as she conducted fifty interviews with feminist organizations that represent white and racialized women in France and the Canadian province Quebec.

The book contains six chapters and is divided into three main parts. The first part, chapters 1–3, provides the reader with a theoretical contextualization and an analysis of the public debates which articulate gender equality and secularism in France and the Canadian province Quebec. The second part comprises chapter 4 and 5 and comparatively analyzes the subjectivations of white and racialized feminists in the two locations. In the final part, chapter 6, Éléonore Lépinard unfolds her normative argument and proposes a feminist ethic of responsibility.

Chapter 1 places “Feminist Trouble” in a context of “femonationalism” (Farris 2017) where neoliberal governments and xenopho-

bic parties are increasingly instrumentalizing issues of women's equality. The author claims that there is a need to understand the way hierarchies and white hegemony are sustained within feminism. According to Éléonore Lépinard, heated debates regarding pious Muslim women's agency question the basic premise of liberal feminism grounded in Eurocentric conceptions of agency, equality, and resistance. At the same time, these debates contribute to define proper and improper feminist subjects and renew attention paid to the moral dimension of the feminist project.

In chapter 2 Éléonore Lépinard builds upon existing intersectional feminist theorists who provide a critic of power asymmetries between women. In particular, she engages with an alternative genealogy of intersectionality which considers that there is a need to look beyond identity politics in order not to conflate identities with interests and experiences. Therefore, focusing on feminist's political subjectivations allows her to explore the relations between feminists “based on other grounds than identity, such as solidarity, shared ideals, recognition or even love” (p. 33).

The third chapter describes how “secularism” debates which articulate racialization, religion, migration/national identity, and gender (Scott 2011), contribute to defining the boundaries of national identity differently in France and the Canadian province Quebec (p. 46). France is famously known for sustaining a so-called French “secular exception” and a majority of French mainstream feminist organizations are end-

owing this vision and have been supporting veiling bans and regulations. Meanwhile, Québec has passed a series of amendments and laws enshrining the secular values of the Quebecois political community in the name of “interculturalism”, in opposition to the multicultural Canadian model (p. 51). While the latter grants an equal recognition to all cultures, interculturalism recognizes pluralism but gives greater weight to Quebecois culture and values secularism in public spaces (Banting and Soroka 2012).

Chapter 4 centers on the concept of “feminist whiteness” which the author defines as the outcome of a process of political subjectivation as a white feminist as well as a location of privilege (p. 81). In France, white feminists rely on two main discursive repertoires to shape their feminist whiteness: universalism, on the one hand, and, on the other, placing race outside of the nation (p. 87). The first consists of downplaying racism either by reaffirming the primacy of social inequalities over racial concerns or by refusing to see how racism shapes power relations within feminism (p. 91). The second repertoire allows white feminists “to situate themselves not in the configuration of racial relations in the French contemporary context, but in racial configurations of international solidarity” (p. 93). Both result in an active resistance to approach feminism from an intersectional perspective (p. 95).

In Québec, feminist whiteness is articulated around the repertoires of interculturalism and intersectionality. Interculturalism is used by some white feminists to acknowledge racial differences but it is often understood in culturalist terms, without engaging the responsibility of white feminists to account for power asymmetries. On the contrary, those who join the intersectional repertoire are more willing to do so. This section

provides an insightful bottom-up analysis of the way national cultural repertoires can be mobilized and resignified through discursive strategies in order to secure white privileges.

In addition to this geographical comparison, Éléonore Lépinard also brilliantly analyzes how different views of the feminist project lead white feminists in both countries to adopt diverging moral dispositions. On the one hand, when feminism is understood as a social practice, non-white women are either seen as passive recipients of care, as subjects to be potentially enrolled in a pre-determined feminist collective project, or as subjects to be granted autonomy. On the other hand, when feminism is conceived first and foremost as a political project, it involves answering legitimate questions about the exclusion of racialized women. These questions are often dismissed by white French feminists, producing emotions of fear, anger, and melancholy of what they perceive as a long-lost unity among feminists (p. 117).

In the fifth chapter, the author looks closely at racialized feminists’ self-identification in France and the Canadian province Québec. She notes that presenting oneself as a racialized feminist in the public sphere, rather than a feminist, must be interpreted not only as subversion or identity-claiming. Rather, it is also a way to reformulate feminism and to claim visibility within the women’s movement. The author argues that negative emotions expressed by racialized feminists, in particular resentment, should be interpreted as resistance to power as well as a moral address and as a call for action (p. 170). Indeed, racialized feminists want white feminists to recognize the political nature of their claims, rather than to deem them as specific or marginal.

In the last chapter, Éléonore Lépinard develops an approach to a feminist ethic of

responsibility which is resolutely pragmatic. She exhorts that the concrete consequences of our actions – rather than our values – define our responsibility towards other feminist subjects. Indeed, when non-Muslim women favor a ban on Muslim headscarves, they will not bear the direct consequences of their action, such as exclusion from school and job discrimination, while Muslim women will (p. 213).

Identifying herself as a white feminist scholar and activist from the global North, her invitation to be morally responsive to “other” feminist subjects seems to be directed at feminists who structurally benefit from white privilege. Given the author’s intention to focus on feminists’ emotions, it would have been interesting and relevant to further include in the analysis how her standpoint and positioning on the issues at stake may have triggered emotions during interviews.

The author’s ambition to revisit the “foundations” of feminism results in the argument that a feminist ethic of responsibility should not be directed at all women but exclusively towards “other feminist subjects”. Such a statement could seem surprising at first, since women who face discriminations on the basis of their racial identity may be less likely to give an account of themselves as feminists in their everyday interactions, as the author rightly points out in the appendix (p. 252). However, in the last chapter, Éléonore Lépinard proposes a broad, yet relevant definition of the feminist subject, which goes beyond discourse and self-identification to include objective power relations. As she describes, those who should be considered feminist subjects are also “those who are put in relation with feminism through their claims – such as a claim to wear an Islamic veil in school or public spaces” (p. 231). The author’s argument on feminist’s ethical dis-

positions towards other feminists can be seen as part of a broader reflection on the articulation between a political project and the common moral ground which sustains the members of a political community. In this sense, the book’s contribution exceeds the fields of feminist theory and extends to social movement theory, normative theories, and literature on care.

Highlighted in the #metoo movement, questions of gender and sexual equality are today at the forefront of societal debates in numerous countries. But shifts in laws and norms are often accompanied by a displacement of boundaries of exclusion. For this reason, the author’s argument could be applied to the analysis of other forms of exclusions perpetrated in the name of feminism. Indeed, women wearing the veil, but also transgender persons and sex workers, are being relegated to the margins of the feminist struggle. In this context, Éléonore Lépinard’s reminder that the ethical responsibilities that feminist subjects have towards each other depend on their power and privilege is, above all, necessary and powerful.

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- Camille Giraut, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, camille.giraut@graduateinstitute.ch*

## ÉMIGRER EN QUÊTE DE DIGNITÉ: TUNISIENS ENTRE DÉSILLUSIONS ET ESPOIRS

*Simon Mastrangelo, 2019. Tours: Presses  
Universitaires François-Rabelais. 302 p.*

Ce travail s'intéresse à la migration non-documentée, à l'Islam et à la Tunisie. Issu d'une thèse de doctorat soutenue à l'Université de Lausanne, l'ouvrage s'attache principalement au vécu migratoire de huit hommes migrants non documentés (*harraga*) entre la Suisse, l'Italie et la Tunisie. Ces témoignages principaux sont complétés par ceux d'une quinzaine d'autres *harraga*. Ces vécus oscillent entre enfermement et liberté, désillusions et espoirs, dans le contexte tunisien de l'après-révolution de 2011 (2013–2016). Quelques années après la chute du régime de Ben Ali, une majorité de Tunisiens est désillusionnée par l'absence de changement apporté par la révolution. Ayant perdu foi en l'avenir de leur pays, de nombreux jeunes tunisiens tentent alors de rejoindre l'Europe, en quête de « dignité ».

Le livre débute par l'extrait d'un journal de terrain qui met en évidence les difficultés d'accès au terrain de l'auteur. Il se confronte ainsi rapidement à des mises en garde de ces contacts sur place, issus de la classe moyenne, contre les sujets de son étude, considérés comme des « voleurs » et des « clochards ». Les représentations sociales portées sur les *harraga*, ainsi que le sentiment d'insécurité qu'elles font émerger chez l'auteur, de son propre aveu, illustrent bien les obstacles récurrents de la démarche ethnographique. Une fois dépassés, ceux-ci permettent d'éclairer des dynamiques sociales plus vastes, de « marginalisation, stigmatisation, segmentation des sociétés, précarité, injustices et enfermement » (p. 16).

Le propos de l'auteur est de « comprendre quelles sont « les stratégies de résistance » des individus qui sont victimes d'injustice,

quelles sont « leurs interprétations des obstacles rencontrés » et comment se développent « leurs quêtes de nationalité des discriminations subies et des injustices ressenties » (Mazzocchetti 2012, 1) » (p. 18). L'auteur privilégie ainsi une analyse qui explore les migrations du point de vue de la subjectivité de ces acteurs et des imaginaires de la migration. Il utilise pour cela tant les discours des *harraga* que des paroles de chanson et des contenus postés sur Facebook, et « cherche à dépasser une approche purement factuelle des migrations non documentées » (p. 264). Tout en adoptant une perspective anthropologique, l'auteur souhaite établir des ponts avec les disciplines de la sociologie, de l'histoire et de la psychologie (p. 266).

En guise d'introduction, l'auteur pose le contexte historique de son étude ainsi que ses jalons théoriques, principalement autour du concept d'« injustice » et d'une littérature sur les imaginaires migratoires. Il consacre ensuite un court premier chapitre à la problématisation des termes utilisés ainsi qu'à l'historique des migrations au départ de la Tunisie et aux politiques migratoires en Tunisie, en Suisse et en Italie.

Un excellent deuxième chapitre approfondit de façon concise la méthodologie utilisée par l'auteur ainsi que son expérience de terrain. Confronté à une population difficile d'accès, l'auteur fait face à des défis méthodologiques. Il a d'abord recours à des intermédiaires avant de privilégier un travail de flânerie dans les rues de Tunis, notamment dans le quartier de Mellassine, qui lui permet de rencontrer « au hasard », puis par effet boule-de-neige, la plupart de ses interlocuteurs. Il mène d'abord avec eux des entretiens semi-directifs de type biographique. Cependant la plupart de ses données sont produites lors d'échanges informels et d'observations qu'il recueille en partageant le quotidien et en fréquentant les

mêmes lieux de sociabilité que ses interlocuteurs privilégiés, construisant ainsi une relation de confiance sur le long terme. Les propos de l'auteur sont aussi agrémentés de paroles de chansons (de rap principalement), de contenus trouvés sur Facebook ainsi que de photographies, qu'il utilise aussi comme support lors d'échanges par une méthode de *photo elicitation interviews*.

Simon Mastangelo définit la *harga* comme l'action de « brûler » à la fois les frontières et les papiers d'identité. Elle constitue une des échappatoires possibles à l'injustice sociale à laquelle ses interlocuteurs sont confrontés. Issus des quartiers populaires tels que celui de Mellassine, les interlocuteurs de Simon Mastangelo ont difficilement accès à une mobilité tant sociale que géographique. Ils se sentent coincés dans des quartiers minés par l'absence de perspectives, et tentent de survivre par des pratiques de « débrouille » et de petite délinquance. Selon l'auteur, dans le cours des « événements de 2011 » (une expression que l'auteur utilise pour parler de ce qu'il a été coutume d'appeler « la révolution » les nombreux cas d'auto-immolation ont laissé la place à la multiplication des départs vers l'Europe. Plutôt que de brûler leur identité physique, les *harraga* brûlent leurs identités symboliques, dans l'objectif de détruire leurs liens avec une société injuste, dont ils ont abandonné l'espoir de changement. L'espoir se situe ici dans l'imaginaire d'un ailleurs qui, s'il n'est pas idéalisé, ouvre le champ des possibles sur le plan individuel, et notamment la possibilité de « vivre dignement ». Considérée alors comme la seule possibilité d'ascension sociale, la *harga* est revendiquée comme un droit pour échapper à la *hogra*, définit comme « le mépris des élites » (Chena 2012, 59) et « l'humiliation corrélatrice des classes populaires » (*ibid.*).

Dans le chapitre 3, l'ouvrage traite des discours qui présentent la *harga* comme la seule

voie possible et la voie la plus juste, en comparaison à deux autres options : la folie, qui mène au suicide, et attend ceux qui restent, et le *djihad*, avancée comme une autre réponse à l'injustice. Les inégalités entre le Sud et le Nord, incarnées par les nombreux·ses touristes européens·ne·s présent·e·s en Tunisie, et ressenties comme injustes, motivent aussi les désirs de partir des *harraga*. Finalement, l'auteur souligne comment la foi en Dieu, et notamment la croyance au *maktoub* (le destin), soutient ces revendications.

Dans le chapitre 4, l'auteur explore l'expérience de ceux qui ont été expulsés et renvoyés en Tunisie, mais qui ne pensent qu'à repartir. Pour parler de ces allers-retours, Simon Mastangelo parle de « carrière migratoire ». Malgré des expériences de vie difficiles en Europe, avec des étapes en prison, les *harraga* tentent souvent de donner du sens à cette « carrière migratoire » à l'aide d'une grille de lecture religieuse. Certains aspects de ces parcours, mis en récit par des interlocuteurs qui parfois mentent, exagèrent ou au contraire gardent sous silence, doivent être reconstitués à partir de fragments de récits, ainsi que dans les gestes et les non-dits. Malgré ces limites, l'auteur est parvenu à mettre en lumière le caractère non linéaire de ces phénomènes migratoires. La représentation des itinéraires de ses *harraga*, sous forme de cartes, ajoute de la clarté au propos. Par ailleurs, pour faire face à ces vécus souvent douloureux, tant à l'étranger qu'en Tunisie, ses interlocuteurs « se soignent » (l'auteur parle « des médicaments des *harraga* », p. 210) à l'aide de cigarettes, d'alcool et de *zatla* (cannabis). Selon l'auteur, ces pratiques illustrent le désinvestissement physique et symbolique de ces individus vis-à-vis de la Tunisie, dans l'attente du départ. En restituant les émotions de ses interlocuteurs ainsi que celles que leurs récits ont suscitées en lui, Simon Mastangelo parvient

à provoquer en nous de l'attachement et de l'empathie pour ses *harraga*, ainsi que de l'intérêt pour ce que l'avenir leur réserve.

Pour conclure, l'auteur souligne l'originalité de sa recherche par rapport à d'autres travaux sur la *harga* tunisienne, notamment par rapport au contexte historique particulier dans lequel a été effectuée la recherche, ainsi que par son interdisciplinarité et le type de matériaux utilisés (paroles de chansons, ethnologie digitale).

Sur ce dernier point, il m'a semblé au contraire que l'ouvrage revient peu sur l'apport de ces différents matériaux se contentant trop souvent de les utiliser à titre d'illustrations. Ayant moi-même travaillé sur des paroles de chanson de rap pour explorer l'imaginaire migratoire au Sénégal, j'ai défendu que ces chansons ne doivent pas uniquement être considérées comme le lieu d'énonciation d'une parole migrante, mais aussi comme le lieu d'énonciation des positionnements de leurs interprètes sur la migration, à l'intérieur de genres musicaux singuliers (Navarro 2019).

Les mentions à la dignité dans l'ouvrage, qui apparaît pourtant dans le titre, sont assez anecdotiques. Il est dommage que cette notion n'ait pas été davantage explorée, notamment à la lumière d'autres terrains, ce qui aurait permis à l'auteur de renforcer la pertinence de son propos. En croisant ses données avec d'autres contextes, l'auteur aurait ainsi gagné à préciser les apports de son travail, non seulement vis-à-vis de l'analyse de la *harga* tunisienne, mais aussi vis-à-vis d'autres travaux sur la migration non documentée.

D'autre part, si l'auteur se présente comme anthropologue et historien des religions, et s'il développe certains éléments ayant trait à la religion, il ne défend pas de posture épistémologique sur la manière dont l'approche en sciences sociales des religions permet d'enrichir l'analyse de la migration non documentée.

Je trouve par ailleurs intéressante l'exploration des phénomènes de déviance sociale mis en évidence par l'auteur. J'y vois notamment de nombreux parallèles avec l'ouvrage de Philippe Bourgois, *En quête de respect: le crack à New York*, qui n'apparaît pas dans la bibliographie de l'auteur. Dans les deux ouvrages, la quête de dignité est au cœur des motivations que les auteurs prêtent à leurs sujets, exclusivement masculins et aux comportements «déviant» : recours à l'économie informelle, petite délinquance, consommation et vente de stupéfiants. Ces comportements sont pour Bourgois (2001) associés à une «culture de la rue» [...] émergeant en opposition à l'exclusion suscitée par la société dominante. La culture de la rue est un véritable forum alternatif où peut s'affirmer une dignité personnelle autonome » (p. 36). La *harga* comme la «culture de la rue» chez Bourgois se présentent comme des manières d'échapper à l'humiliation et de restituer une virilité menacée. Il y aurait eu là matière à creuser davantage le rôle des sociabilités urbaines, à l'échelle du quartier, y compris par la voie du rap, chez les *harraga*, et à générer d'autres ponts possibles entre migrations non documentées, imaginaires et créations culturelles.

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imaginaires migratoires à l'aune des carrières artistiques dans le rap au Sénégal. *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales* 35, no. 1–2: 149–169.

*Cécile Navarro, HES-SO Valais//Wallis, cecile.navarro@hevs.ch*

## LA FABRIQUE DE L'INTÉGRATION

*Flora Di Donato, Élodie Garros, Anne Lavanchy, Pascal Mahon, Tania Zittoun, 2020. Lausanne: Antipodes. 351 p.*

Cet ouvrage collectif est le résultat d'un projet de recherche interdisciplinaire, mené de 2013 à 2017. Les cinq auteur·e·s y interrogent la manière dont, en Suisse, l'intégration se construit et est contestée, principalement durant les procédures de naturalisation. L'ambition de ce livre est de montrer que l'intégration «constitue la somme de processus vivants, mis en œuvre, régulés, entravés, agis et vécus, subis ou soufferts, par de très nombreuses personnes, dans des postures et des rôles différents» (p. 16). En d'autres termes, plutôt que de répondre à la question «Qu'est-ce que l'intégration?», les auteur·e·s s'attachent à identifier comment cette notion, dans sa dimension légale, est construite par les acteurs et actrices concerné·e·s, dans un contexte particulier.

Ce livre est organisé en quatre parties. L'introduction s'attarde sur l'un des importants apports de cette étude, à savoir son approche interdisciplinaire. D'un point de vue méthodologique, toutes et tous auteur·e·s prennent en compte «l'historicité» des phénomènes étudiés (p. 48) et leur nature socialement construite. Ensuite, une attention particulière est donnée «aux perspectives spécifiques des actrices et acteurs sur un objet donné» ainsi qu'«aux notions, valeurs et pratiques qui font faire des choses aux gens ou dont les gens font usage dans certaines circonstances» (pp. 49–50). Ce livre est

ancré dans une démarche de recherche qualitative donnant à voir différentes dimensions de la procédure de naturalisation dans le canton de Neuchâtel. Pour l'épistémologie, les auteur·e·s s'appuient sur des approches issues de leurs matières respectives, à savoir «l'analyse juridique, l'approche socio-clinique du droit, l'anthropologie des institutions et la psychosociologie culturelle» (p. 48). Sur ces bases, trois perspectives analytiques sont élaborées pour éclairer l'intégration à l'aune de la procédure de naturalisation. La première consiste en l'analyse de la trajectoire administrativo-légale d'une naturalisation. Cette perspective s'intéresse à l'intégration en tant qu'«institution de réinvention [...] dont la fonction principale est de transformer le statut identitaire de personnes qui y entrent en principe de manière consentante» (p. 37). Empruntée à la sociologie, la notion d'institution de réinvention révèle l'introduction de mesures d'individualisation du droit des étrangers comme autant de mécanismes visant à modifier la personne afin qu'elle puisse prétendre à devenir suisse. La seconde perspective porte sur la trajectoire de la personne candidate. Ici, la notion de «sphère d'expérience» est centrale, désignant «la diversité d'expériences cohérentes et socialement situées que traverse une personne» (p. 39). Dans cette perspective, la procédure constitue une sphère d'expérience qui, pour les candidat·e·s, peut avoir des effets considérables sur d'autres sphères, personnelles ou professionnelles, en les validant ou les annihilant. La dernière perspective consiste en l'analyse des «transactions» (p. 41) qui s'opèrent entre la trajectoire administrativo-légale et la trajectoire de vie «susceptibles d'accélérer, de ralentir et d'infléchir les trajectoires elles-mêmes» (p. 41). Les transactions peuvent être explicites, tels les échanges formels entre personne requérante et administrations, ou implicites,



voire invisibles, telles les dissimulations d'information réalisées par les parties impliquées. On notera l'exemple de notes manuscrites apposées aux dossiers contenant des informations qui ne seront jamais communiquées aux candidat·e·s à la naturalisation.

La deuxième partie, intitulée « Construction du contexte institutionnel » s'attache en premier lieu à « reconstruire la genèse de la notion d'intégration dans l'ordre juridique suisse » (p. 77). Par une analyse socio-légale des évolutions législatives en matière d'accès à la nationalité Suisse, les auteur·e·s montrent comment l'intégration a progressivement fait son entrée dans l'attirail législatif destiné à réguler le séjour des étrangers en Suisse. L'analyse débute avec la Constitution de 1848. A cette époque où la Suisse est avant tout un pays d'émigration, l'intégration ne fait pas partie du débat. Or, déjà, la nécessité d'évaluer les liens des candidat·e·s avec leur pays d'accueil et « leur valeur morale » est mise en avant dans les débats politiques (p. 82). Ce chapitre est particulièrement intéressant en ce qu'il retrace les différentes manières dont les étranger·ère·s ont été transformés en suisses, légalement, mais aussi du point de vue identitaire « à travers l'implication active de la population locale » (p. 105). En effet, l'afflux étranger·ère·s durant et après la première Guerre mondiale alimentera l'opinion selon laquelle les candidat·e·s doivent « déjà être assimilés avant de – et pour – pouvoir être naturalisés » (p. 85). Selon les termes du juriste Sausser Hall, c'est à la population Suisse « d'insuffler à ces nouveaux citoyens un peu de l'amour civique qui nous anime, de les gagner à nos idées de tolérance et de solidarité, à nos traditions démocratiques » (p. 86). Dans les années 1920, l'institution de réinvention prend forme avec l'instauration des permis de séjour et d'établissement individualisant le droit des étranger·ère·s et créant ainsi un sas préalable à

la naturalisation. Dans le discours public, l'assimilation, jugée réactionnaire, laisse place à l'intégration dans les années 1970, ce dans une optique plus inclusive. Le chapitre suivant s'emploie à « expliciter la notion d'intégration telle qu'elle est conçue et perçue aujourd'hui » (p. 107). Les lois fédérales sur la nationalité et sur les étrangers, ainsi que de la réglementation du canton de Neuchâtel, en vigueur au moment de la recherche, servent de base à cette explication. Les auteur·e·s relèvent l'« ubiquité » de l'intégration dans le droit suisse. Elles cherchent à savoir si la notion d'intégration « revêt ou doit revêtir des significations identiques ou, au contraire, différentes » (p. 108–109). Au niveau fédéral, le constat est celui d'un renforcement progressif des critères d'intégration et d'une harmonisation de ces derniers dans les lois sans pour autant offrir de « garanties spécifiques en faveur des personnes candidates » (p. 123). Les auteur·e·s distinguent les critères individuels d'intégration des critères d'ordre public, chacun évalués à l'aide d'entretiens et d'enquêtes administratives. Les premiers, tels la maîtrise d'une langue nationale ou la participation à la vie associative locale, semblent « jouer un rôle clé dans la procédure » tandis que les seconds, tel le respect des lois et l'absence de dépendance à l'aide sociale « représentent les principaux facteurs d'une intégration réussie » (p. 126). Cependant, il est observé que l'autonomie des cantons « peut être mise au service d'une conception plus ou moins libérale de l'intégration » (p. 145). Le dernier chapitre de cette partie tente de rendre lisible la complexité de la procédure de naturalisation dans le canton de Neuchâtel résultant de cet enchevêtrement législatif et administratif. Force est de féliciter les auteur·e·s pour cet exercice qui met en exergue « les ambiguïtés terminologiques » (p. 176) d'une procédure prêtant à confusion dans la répartition des tâches entre

échelons administratifs communaux, cantonaux et fédéraux. Ielles posent la question cruciale de la responsabilité dans le processus de décision et constatent sa dilution.

«L'analyse des trajectoires» constitue la troisième partie. Un premier chapitre est dédié à l'analyse de la trajectoire de vie de M. Charles, qui est utilisé à titre illustratif. On y retrouve de larges extraits de son récit biographique, décrivant sa vie dans son pays natal, les conditions difficiles de son voyage vers la Suisse à l'âge de 17 ans et une analyse de son parcours de naturalisation, débuté en 2003. Face à une administration qui doute de son intégration en Suisse, M. Charles mobilise notamment des éléments de ses différentes sphères d'expérience, comme son engagement au sein du Conseil général de sa ville et en crée de nouvelles, notamment en engageant un avocat pour construire son argumentation. Après maintes pérégrinations, le Département de la justice informe M. Charles que «son dossier a été classé» en 2012. La naturalisation ne lui a pas été formellement refusée, mais s'il souhaite y prétendre, il doit entreprendre une nouvelle procédure. Cependant, selon Charles, sa transformation identitaire a bien eu lieu. Convaincu de son intégration en Suisse et donc de sa capacité à devenir suisse, M. Charles est néanmoins renvoyé à la catégorie d'étranger: «Plus tu passes le temps ici, plus tu es embêté avec la loi, pourquoi, parce qu'au lieu de «plus tu passes le temps, plus tu dois [t']intégrer», c'est «plus tu passes le temps, plus tu te désintègres» (p. 194). S'ensuit une analyse transversale de tous les cas, confirmant les hypothèses exploratoires des chercheur·e·s s'agissant des trajectoires de vie: «les personnes formulent une demande de naturalisation en fonction d'une certaine imagination de leur trajectoire de vie» (p. 214). Leurs sphères d'expériences sont amenées à être reconfigurées, par-

fois dramatiquement, notamment en cas de refus. Les deux chapitres suivants explorent plus en détail l'agentivité limitée des candidat·e·s à la naturalisation et «les pratiques professionnelles de la naturalisation» (p. 264) au regard du critère d'intégration. Ces chapitres donnent à voir comment, à «la fragmentation du pouvoir décisionnel» (p. 298), répondent des stratégies pour «devenir actrice et acteur de son histoire légale» (p. 256).

La partie conclusive revient sur ce qui a été démontré à travers le livre, à savoir que la diversité des compréhensions du terme intégration engendre «des effets indirects et paradoxaux» (p. 303), telle la défiance envers des institutions dont les candidat·e·s souhaitaient *a priori* se rapprocher. Ainsi aux termes de leurs procédures, plusieurs des candidat·e·s interrogé·e·s partagent le sentiment selon lequel en Suisse «la loi [...] est appliquée de manière injuste» (p. 209). *In fine*, il reste difficile aux auteur·e·s comme aux lecteur·rice·s de savoir en quoi consiste l'intégration réussie requise par la loi. Bien que l'étude porte sur le cas particulier de Neuchâtel, il est vrai qu'elle met en évidence «des processus complexes de portée générale» (p. 313) utiles tant à la recherche qu'à la pratique. En ce sens, *La fabrique de l'intégration* remplit pleinement ses objectifs. Il semble qu'une approche interdisciplinaire est la mieux à même de rendre compte de la complexité d'une notion certes définie par la loi, mais difficilement saisissable en pratique.

*Doris Niragire Nirere, Université de Neuchâtel,  
doris.niragire@unine.ch*

## TRADING CATERPILLAR FUNGUS IN TIBET: WHEN ECONOMIC BOOM HITS RURAL AREA

*Emilia Roza Sulek, 2019. Amsterdam:  
Amsterdam University Press, 328 p.*

In *Trading Caterpillar Fungus in Tibet*, Emilia Roza Sulek provides a nuanced account of pastoralists' everyday life in Golok, a region on the Eastern Tibetan plateau which today forms part of Qinghai province in the People's Republic of China. The pastoralists that Sulek did research with over eleven months between 2007 and 2010 are involved in the harvest and trade of caterpillar fungus, a very peculiar commodity. Caterpillar fungus (*Ophiocordyceps sinensis*) – or *yartsa gumbu*, “summer grass winter worm”, as it is called in Tibetan – is parasitic on the larvae of species of ghost moth that are only found in high-altitude regions of the Tibetan plateau and the Himalayas. While *yartsa gumbu* has long been used in traditional medicine, in recent decades it has emerged as a luxury product in China, being ascribed the function of a natural Viagra among other things. Consequently, its demand underwent an unprecedented boom which – so goes the book's central argument – has profoundly transformed the livelihoods of Tibetan pastoralists involved in digging and trading caterpillar fungus and in leasing out their land to others for digging.

This monograph is the first in-depth, book-length analysis of how the commodity of caterpillar fungus leads to changes in pastoralists' socio-cultural lives and the region of Golok more broadly, also paying close attention to the historical and legal dimensions of a commodity largely produced for an external market, not the pastoralists' own consumption. As stated in its introduction, the book sets out to understand “the inner mechanisms and consequences” (p. 16) of a

phenomenon that every year draws together a multitude of actors in two main places: the pastureland where caterpillar fungus is harvested and the market where it is traded, heading off to consumers all over China and abroad. Sulek demonstrates that pastoralists use their newly generated income actively to participate in developing their region – claimed in official discourse as being an area exclusively attributable to the Chinese state – instead of merely wasting the money on consumer goods and short-lived pleasures.

The introduction is followed by nine chapters, a conclusion and an afterword. The first three chapters introduce the region of Golok and its population, along with the digging process, which the author participated in for many weeks, and the usage of caterpillar fungus as medicine and commodity. The next three chapters, on the market and trading as well as laws and state regulations, delve deeper into the processes and practices surrounding the caterpillar fungus economy. Throughout these chapters Sulek shows that in addition to the pastureland and the market, townships and roads are also crucial to the booming economy. A whole bundle of income-generating practices and diverse networks of actors are associated with caterpillar fungus: pastoralists, diggers, traders, migrant workers, seasonal businesses in town, and the (non-)regulatory state all play their part in a complex translocal economy. The final three chapters address money and, more specifically, the individual and structural consequences of a novel income stream. The central question of what pastoralists decide to do with their newly acquired wealth is considered throughout these chapters too. All chapters and the afterword are designed as independent units; they can be read in any order, enabling readers to learn about the themes

they feel most curious about first. Significantly though, the overall structure reflects the author's commitment to staying close to the pastoralists' everyday lives: The focus is on telling their stories through caterpillar fungus, not vice versa.

Sulek's skilful ethnographic descriptions bring Golok, the pastoralists' lives, and the caterpillar fungus economy into sharp focus. In a captivatingly written opening vignette, for instance, we not only learn about but can almost feel the atmosphere during the harvesting season, which starts in May and lasts for around 40–45 days: it is busy, exciting, joyous but also filled with conspiracy and rumours that manifest in whispers about illegal digging and state regulations. Chapter five includes lively snapshots of dialogue that outline the occasionally heated bargaining process between pastoralists and traders. An accompanying sketch illustrates the various hand signs used during bartering – these are often invisible to observers since they are hidden by the involved parties inside long sleeves for secret negotiation.

The transformation of pastoralists' livelihoods is discussed in greater detail in the later chapters of the book. Sulek's analysis of Golok pastoralists as active agents of social change in their individual lives and on a more systematic level in their wider region makes an important ethnographic contribution to scholarly debates on rural development processes in China's Western region. Chapter eight addresses pastoral production and the changes it has undergone due to the caterpillar fungus trade. Improvement in the general economic situation enables pastoralists to choose more freely which of their products they want to sell. Consequently, there was a decrease in the sale of yaks to slaughterhouses and of dairy products to the market. Pastoralists explain these changes

with reference both to their additional revenue stream and their religious values. On the one hand, they no longer need the income from selling butter and cheese, and they perceive this as benefitting the growth of their yak herds since it leaves more milk for the calves. On the other hand, they stress that according to Buddhism it is bad to kill animals; selling fewer yaks to slaughterhouses reduces the accumulation of negative karma. Sulek shows that at the time of her research the pastoralists viewed yaks as less crucial for their economic survival than they had done in the past. Herds continue to be kept because of diet, lifestyle and, most importantly, the preservation of pastoralists' self-understanding as yak-breeders. In contrast, sheep flocks diminished in size or disappeared altogether due to a combination of educational, environmental, and economic factors. First and foremost, though, pastoralists emphasise that as a quick source of cash sheep were replaced by caterpillar fungus – the latter is simply seen as an easier source of income. These shifts in pastoral production fuel debates among Sulek's research participants about the social effects of *yartsagumbu*. Some pastoralists view the consequences of the caterpillar fungus economy as problematic since these appear to be linked to a decline in what is perceived as a more traditional pastoral lifestyle.

In chapter nine, Sulek reveals that improvement of the material situation due to caterpillar fungus is linked to complex transformations in the local society. She shares stories of what pastoralists have done with the previously unimaginable amounts of money they earn and what, in turn, this money does to them. Certainly, pastoralists consume and purchase more commodities such as furniture, electrical appliances, mobile phones, cars, and motorbikes – all of

which introduce new dynamics into everyday life. The availability of washing machines and fridges make infrastructural changes in the form of running water desirable. Cars and motorbikes ease seasonal migration and extend mobility beyond sites of immediate pastoral activities, namely the county seat and urban centres farther afield. At the same time, households save up substantial funds. They make long-term investments, for example by building roads leading to their pasturelands or new houses, which are thought of as the best way of investing one's savings. Chapter nine in particular complicates views that exist in the local community as to pastoralists' supposedly short-lived consumption habits.

The conclusion suggests that the local authorities which interpret formal regulations concerning the caterpillar fungus economy often turn a blind eye to certain practices, or side with their communities rather than representing state interests. This subtlety of observation negates a simplistic understanding of "the state" as a monolithic category. Impersonal constructs such as "the state" or "the government", after all, consist of individual people who have multiple positionalities and interests. In addition, the author convincingly argues for an understanding of caterpillar fungus as a symbol within broader political processes. Ultimately, it is through this commodity that some pastoralists feel they can take a symbolic revenge on the state as well as against Han Chinese men who rely on a product from the Tibetan plateau. Han Chinese men must be in such dire need of this natural Viagra, so a common explanation in Golok goes, that they are willing to pay any price and believe in all sorts of magical stories about its effectiveness. But why is the state not interfering more directly in the caterpillar

fungus economy, which in many aspects stays outside of its tight control? Sulek sees one key explanation in the widespread belief by the Chinese authorities that material satisfaction leads to political stability and harmony. According to this logic, as long as the pastoralists are generating and spending money, they share in the state's goal of economic development, which diminishes the likelihood of political unrest.

In the insightful afterword, Sulek reflects on her research process and methodology. She describes her fieldwork as "partisan research" (p. 265) carried out as a series of several three- to four-month stints due to the lack of an official research permit. Moving around on a tourist visa allowed her to navigate practices "at the border of the law" (p. 267) more easily, while not speaking Chinese and coming from a former communist country created a degree of curious familiarity between herself and many of her research participants. It is unusual at the end of an ethnography to learn about the challenges but, importantly, also the advantages of conducting fieldwork without official research status, as well as the mobile nature of such a research project and its sampling methods. However, Sulek's declared aim to put the pastoralists centre stage from the outset and the fact that the chapters can be read in any order explain this decision. Since critical discussions about difficulties and dilemmas arising from research in the region mostly take place privately or are hidden away in footnotes, Sulek's afterword is a valuable addition to the few existing accounts on the messy realities of fieldwork in contemporary Tibet.

The book's particular strength lies in its evocative, vivid, and clear language, as well as the numerous rich ethnographic descriptions attesting to the power of sustained fieldwork in a region that is generally not

easily accessed and travelled by researchers. Photographs, maps, and comprehensive tables depicting quantitative data on caterpillar fungus pricing, ownership of livestock, and household appliances complete this thoroughly researched and enjoyable ethnography. Readers looking for a comparative approach on sudden economic booms and commodity chains might feel that the book lacks a more global perspective, including a discussion of literature on similar phenomena beyond rural Tibet and China. However, the author's explicit aim was to analyse Golok pastoralists' everyday lives, the rapid transformation of their livelihoods and, finally, the socio-economic shifts observed in a region due to a new form of income; in this the book admirably succeeds. Emilia Roza Sulek has produced a beautifully written and accessible monograph that will be of interest to scholars working on pastoralism, shadow economies, and resource extraction, as well as processes of development and state-making in Tibet, the Himalayas and China. This book is not only an illuminating piece of work for undergraduate and graduate courses on Central and East Asia, but also offers a comprehensive case study for courses in economic anthropology.

Anne Kukuczka, University of Zurich,  
anne.kukuczka@uzh.ch

**GIFT EXCHANGE: THE  
TRANSNATIONAL HISTORY  
OF A POLITICAL IDEA**

Grégoire Mallard, 2019. Cambridge:  
Cambridge University Press. 280 p.

Grégoire Mallard's monograph *Giftexchange: The Transnational History of a Political Idea* adds to scholarly work that reinterprets Marcel Mauss' seminal essay *The Gift* (2011 [1925]) in the light of his political writings.

Mallard's interpretation goes against the grain of what has become a consensus among anthropologists, i.e. the idea that in *The Gift* Mauss investigated non-contractual and ambiguously disinterested yet constraining intra-group socio-economic solidarity. Instead, Mallard argues that for Mauss gift exchange provided a blueprint for building inter-group or international solidarity. Mallard abundantly demonstrates that in the context of widespread colonialization – contemporaneous with Mauss and his essay – such a theory had a dangerous colonial underbelly. Mallard's book, however, does not stop at pointing to the pro-colonial ends to which the theory of gift exchange could be used. He tries to decolonize the gift exchange as a doctrine for constructing international relations by exploring how it has been employed and could be employed in debates around national sovereignty and international socio-economic interdependency. This brings Mallard to his second central argument: Mauss-inspired gift exchange theory reminds us that – contrary to the present-day doxa – illegitimate sovereign debts can be forgiven, if debt forgiveness serves to increase inter-societal cooperation.

Grégoire Mallard is a sociology professor who works on global governance, law and expert knowledge regimes. His interest in Mauss' work and political engagements was sparked almost accidentally, when he and his wife rented the apartment of Mauss' biographer Marcel Fournier in Montreal. Mallard's findings on Mauss' involvement in interwar politics was first translated in a 2011 article and now in this monograph. The seven chapters that compose the book do not draw only on Mauss' political writings made widely available by Fournier, but also on extensive archival work, writings of Mauss' contempo-

raries and more recent secondary sources and analysis.

Mallard opens the book by reminding the readers that throughout the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, colonial administrators-turned-ethnologists believed that gift exchange was an efficient way to extract resources from the colonized without political revolts. If the gift exchange theory fell under the critique of 19<sup>th</sup>-century utilitarian thinkers, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the model of gift exchange came back to theories of good government through the work of anthropologists such as Boas, Thurnwald, Malinowski, and Mauss. Mallard notes that they tried to show that there was nothing premodern or irrational in the governance through gifts.

In chapter two, Mallard reconstructs Mauss' position in the French academic and political fields. In 1925, when *The Gift* was published, Mauss was already academically recognized in France and abroad. However, because of his Jewish origins, he belonged to the French elite only precariously. Mauss was actively engaged in establishing ethnology – that he called “descriptive sociology” aimed at studying peoples of “inferior rank” (p. 5) – as a recognized academic discipline in France. To do this, Mauss promoted ethnography as useful for colonialization: ethnography could help to translate the French colonial law acceptably to the colonized. In 1926, he won support for his cause and got the resources for founding an independent Institute of Ethnology. To raise the prestige of his institution, Mauss was teaching ethnography also at the Colonial School that prepared colonial administrators. He also collaborated with bankers and art collectors who financially supported ethnographic and “Negro art” – at the time extremely popular

in Paris – collection missions of his institute's students.

In the next chapter, Mallard situates *the Gift* in the interwar political debates around the sovereign debt crisis. After WWI, Mauss and other Durkheimians were curious whether wartime industrial cooperation and financial solidarity among allies would endure and whether this solidarity would also be extended to Germany. Without German reparations the French debt to the allies was unsustainable. Yet, according to Mallard, Mauss believed that it was necessary to give a moratorium to German reparations so that Germany could first recover and then pay for the damages that it had caused. Mallard argues that Mauss used anthropological records in *The Gift* to back up his arguments for debt rescheduling, aimed at proving that over time the gift would be paid back and suggesting that a delay in time between gifts would create solidarity. Mallard underlines that many of the terms employed in *The Gift* – quasi-contracts, obligations, reparations – were used in the debates around interwar sovereign debt crisis.

Chapter four transposes the Maussian theory of gift exchange to the colonial context by exploring Mauss' unfinished manuscript *The Nation* (2013). In *The Nation*, Mauss lays out a theory of “integration”, where poly-segmentary societies were the least “integrated” while the “nation” – a society ruled by organization, law, and justice – represented the highest level of “integration”. Mauss believed that high levels of integration were necessary to bring about world peace and that intersocietal exchanges – not Durkheimian internal division of labor – were the real drivers of history. Hence, although Mauss was critical of colonialism administered by chartered private companies, he held that state-managed colo-

nialism – with the right type of gift exchanges that increase solidarity – could have a civilizing mission.

Chapter five follows Mauss' students, such as Jacques Soustelle and Germaine Tillion, in post-WWII colonial Algeria to see how Mauss' theory of integration and gift exchange after his death was tested by decolonization struggles. Mauss' followers – faithful to the ideas espoused in *The Gift* and "The Nation" – believed that Algeria did not deserve independence because it had not reached the required level of integration. Besides, they held that the current state of disarray was not due to French overinvestment, but French underinvestment in Algeria. According to Mauss' students, French were not being enough generous to Algerians, hence the discontent with French colonisation.

A competing use of the gift exchange theory came from Pierre Bourdieu who was first brought to Algeria as part of the French army. Based on fieldwork data, he, contrary to the Maussians, argued that there was an Algerian nation which functioned according to the "logic of the gift". Moreover, this local solidarity, according to Bourdieu, was being destroyed by French colonialism. With Bourdieu's critique that found gift exchange in intra-societal not inter-societal relations and the emerging academic discipline of political science, anthropology was pushed out of international matters and retreated to the local.

In chapter six, Mallard considers the potential continuing relevance of gift exchange theory as a doctrine for international relations. He resurrects the spirit of the gift exchange theory in the work of Algerian jurist Mohammed Bedjaoui, one of the key architects of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) doctrine. Within the UN International Law Committee (ILC),

Bedjaoui worked to change the international economic law of decolonization, particularly the financial obligations of successor states to former colonial metropolises and – in case of nationalizations – to private property owners. After 20 years of work, the 1983 Vienna Convention attempted to enshrine internationally recognized rules that laid out the procedures for the succession of rights on property and debts, but it never went into force because it lacked the signatures of key UN member states. Mallard argues that the NIEO doctrine laid out in the convention inherited the spirit of the model of the gift exchange because it attempted to put long-term international relations based on trust and reciprocity above short-term interests of private multinational companies that held important investments and concessions in the former colonies. However, this time the model of gift exchange was applied to independent nation-states to regulate international economic interdependency and was not used to justify colonial relations.

Chapter seven explores the pertinence of gift exchange theory to the Eurozone recently put under the test of the European sovereign debt crisis. Mallard concludes that European citizens should "decolonize" the principles of financial responsibility, understand whose interests are served by debt accumulation, and envisage forgiving illegitimately acquired debts if they increase inter-societal solidarity.

Mallard's innovation hides in situating *The Gift* in Mauss' political writings on the sovereign debt crisis during the inter war period. Other approaches instead situate *The Gift* in the genealogy of Mauss' academic thought or consider it in the light of his political writings on cooperatives. This shift enables Mallard to argue that Mauss' *The Gift* was about inter-group and not intra-



group solidarity, which is clearly against the grain of the mainstream anthropological theory on the gift exchange.

The reader remains wondering whether it is possible or useful to try to find the most truthful interpretation of Mauss' oeuvre. Between 1920 and 1925, Mauss' political writings were prolific and at the time cooperatives – not only sovereign debts and monetary stability – continued to shape Mauss' interests. Could it not be simply the case that Mauss was transposing his ideas from one field to another, even when they were not fully elaborated and researched? Does Mauss' interest in inter-societal solidarity during the interwar sovereign debt crisis or his pro-colonial sentiments make the gift exchange theory as an exploration of various socio-economic rationalities among group members irrelevant?

Regardless of what was Mauss' real intention behind *The Gift*, Mallard's monograph opens refreshing – if underexplored – perspectives on international solidarity and the present-day neoliberal international governance, where it has become impossible not to honor one's debts, no matter how unjustly acquired. It provides a dense and stimulating read that brings to the fore events, theoretical and political engagements that are insightful not only for those interested in the history of anthropology but also the history of France and the NIEO.

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*Ieva Snikersproge, Institut Interdisciplinaire de l'Anthropologie du Contemporain, ieva.snikersproge@ehess.fr*

### DU BIDONVILLE À L'HÔPITAL: NOUVEAUX ENJEUX DE LA MATERNITÉ AU RAJASTHAN

*Clémence Jullien, 2019. Paris: Maison des sciences de l'homme. 400 p.*

Clémence Jullien's book opens by discussing a major shift that took place in India over the course of only a decade. Where almost all women used to give birth at home with the help of a traditional midwife (Hindi: *dāī*), now they are predominantly doing so in clinics and hospitals. The numbers are striking: whereas in 2005–2006 just 38.7% of Indian women gave birth in a medical facility, by 2015–2016 that figure had risen to 78.9% (p. 166 individuals) – including in Rajasthan, a state that has one of the Indian lowest scores on the Human Development Index, and where Jullien's research is focused. This process of biomedicalization followed a series of strong financial incentives from the Indian central government, which opened the doors of public health institutions to women who could not previously afford to use them, namely by making all maternity-related services free of charge and by paying those who give birth in hospitals.

The explicit aim of this series of government provisions was to combat maternal and child mortality, which is still very high in India and higher even than the rates of its neighbours, Bangladesh and Pakistan (pp. 17–18). But reproductive health in India, as Jullien notes, also faces several other challenges: soaring socioeconomic disparities (pp. 275–288, 292–303); an increasing sex-ratio imbalance (with Rajasthan presenting a particularly imbalanced situation;

pp. 255–274, 336–346) that is the result of the preference for boys, itself a cause (among others) of men’s struggle to find a spouse; and political instrumentalization of the higher fertility rates among Muslims in comparison to the Hindu population (pp. 304–324). Yet, in spite of the statistical success of governmental measures encouraging women to give birth in hospitals, some authors argue that the solution put forward, in the form of financial incentives, presents a risk of treating the symptoms of the issues – that many women do not give birth in clinics and that sex-based discrimination is still practised – rather than their root causes.<sup>1</sup> Clémence Jullien’s monograph is of major importance in this respect, as it thoroughly investigates those causes. Its author reveals how policies that seem to promote equal access to healthcare in India for all mothers actually have the adverse effect of reinforcing divisions along the lines of caste, class, and religion.

One of the strongest assets of the book is its constant back and forth between micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis. Jullien’s fifteen months of multi-sited fieldwork (in three slums on the outskirts of Jaipur and at the town’s main public hospital) and her explicit ethical stance do proper justice to the actors involved, in that she does not fall into the trap of pointing the finger at one group in particular but rather does a fine job of accounting for the complexity of the issues at stake.

The first chapter frames the topic, offering a historical perspective on policies pertaining to maternal-child health since colonial times, and considering the aims, impacts, and challenges of this process of biomedicalization (pp. 21–22) up to the contemporary period. 150 years of maternal-child health

are covered, from the perception and biopolitics of the female colonial subject to the postcolonial era, especially from the turn of the millennium. Today’s voices on the issue of maternal health bring different agendas while at the same time revealing a certain continuity with those of the colonial era: sharing humanist ambitions particularly regarding women’s rights, around efforts to control the population, and concerning the promotion of Hindu and nationalist values – for all of which the control of procreation constitutes a keystone strategy.

In the second chapter, Clémence Jullien investigates the complexity and ambivalence of the relationship between the social workers of an NGO working in two peri-urban slums of Jaipur, the female inhabitants of these illegal settlements, and the role of governmental institutions in granting the latter provisions and rights. This study reveals the inhabitants’ resentment towards the state, deemed indifferent to their fate, as well as the social workers’ internal contradictions. On the one hand, social workers strive to help the slum’s population to exercise their rights as citizens and “empower” themselves, while on the other, they express irritation whenever slum dwellers protest against violations of said rights. Clémence Jullien analyzes the strategies deployed by these social workers to strike a delicate balance between a commitment to empowering the women of these slums while also keeping them under control and reasserting their own dominant position; mainly in terms of class, caste and education. Another disjunction is visible in the NGO’s efforts to facilitate slum dwellers’ access to, and use of, government provisions, thereby supporting a state apparatus it nevertheless qualifies as deficient. This double bind leads the NGO, despite its aspirations, to sometimes rein-

<sup>1</sup> See the preface to the book by Roger Jeffery.

force the very social and political inequalities it seeks to fight.

Chapter three is situated in the public hospitals, where Jullien analyzes the dynamics at play in interpersonal relations between health practitioners and the female patients who live in the slums. The starting point for reflection is these women's reluctance to go to hospital, in spite of the existing financial incentives. Through the reasons put forward by slum dwellers, the reader is brought to understand how the democratization policies enacted by the government, with the aim of ensuring equal access to health services for all, are hindered by the hospital staff's domination over and discrimination against these patients – the form of which ranges from both explicit and implicit derogatory comments to blatant mistreatment and neglect. Instead of simply accusing these health practitioners, though, Clémence Jullien does them justice and shows empathy for their position by allowing their distress also to be heard, and by demonstrating how discretionary practices are implemented according to these individuals' own visions of progress and development. On the other side, she breaks from the simplified image of female patients as mere victims by accounting for their discreet forms of resistance and their negotiations with hospital rules, with the staff and doctors' practices, and with pressure from in-laws. This nuanced analysis highlights the prejudices of the end of both patients and medical practitioners about the other and the lack of, or failure at, communication.

The fourth chapter sheds light on how contemporary debates within Indian society transpire through interpersonal conflicts between parturient women, their families, and medical staff at the moment of the birth. Hindu principles of modesty and honor, the

impact of statutory inequalities, and fears of the impurity of bodily fluids are intertwined here, compelling medical staff to resort to preventive as well as punitive measures. Preventive measures stem from the duty to limit sanitary risks but also mingle with the socio-moral disgust that contact with lower-caste and/or Muslim women provokes among medical practitioners. Punitive measures consist of a variety of strategies to dominate and humiliate, which are all part of a response to the injustices of which staff performing them feel victim. These perceived injustices range from the overcrowding of public hospitals, the feeling that the government's policies on maternal health are just an attempt to win votes, the sense of being left out of the equation for positive action measures, to the fear of a growing Muslim and/or low-caste population.

In the fifth chapter, Clémence Jullien investigates the proximity of life and death at the clinic. Indeed, newborn babies are considered to have liminal status, as imperfect beings of “raw flesh” (Hindi: *kaccā mans*), and are therefore regarded by patients and their families as more vulnerable to predators and evil spirits. Taking three widespread beliefs among parturient women as a starting point, the author examines the medical staff's positioning: between acknowledgement of the legitimacy of different aetiologies, and their rejection when the staff's responsibility is invoked – as in the case of the death of a newborn, for instance (pp. 253–254).

The sixth chapter tackles the much-studied topic of son preference in India from a new angle: The ethnography reveals how each set of actors within the hospital structure identifies different causes for the perpetuation of the preference for sons, thereby positioning themselves socially by reasserting a set of prejudices. It also emphasizes the

ways in which gender discrimination is covertly practiced and expressed here, at a time when it is no longer acceptable in most public spaces. This situation produces a paradox in which son preference has become shameful to express, while remaining obvious.

The final chapter of the book shows how women's fertility is at the intersection of three kinds of issue. The first is politico-religious, touching upon Muslims' supposed higher fertility rates and demographic agenda to take over India. The second is of a social nature, relating to the assumed strategy of the underprivileged to have as many children as possible in order to increase the family's workforce. The last deals with gender, through the multiplication of births until a son is born. Jullien shows the discrepancy between the proclaimed intention of the states to encourage families' wellbeing and individual freedom in making informed choices about family planning, and the implicit and explicit intentions of the different actors at work on a state, medical, family, and individual level. She does so through an account of counselling sessions which reveal that IUDs (intra-uterine devices for birth control) and sterilization are the only options presented to patients,

and by delving into the medical staff's rationale for this bias.

The major contribution of this work is to go beyond what apparently stands as a success story in the history of reproductive health in India, and rather approach it as a prism through which one can understand how social relations of class, caste, and gender are constructed and reproduced. This book will be of interest to social scientists as well as to action-oriented readers who have a specific interest in health, biopolitics, development, intersectional discriminations, and the relationship between citizens and the state. Clémence Jullien's work contributes significantly to a subtler understanding of the interpersonal dynamics at play among pregnant women and their family members, health workers and development workers regarding their access to and use of state provisions. In doing so, this monograph also accounts for each group's understanding of the rationale behind state policies, as well as the motivations underlying their actions. The reader is left with the impression of being provided with as full a picture as one could get of such a complex topic.

*Tara Bate, University of Zurich,  
tara.bate@uzh.ch*