

PETER GRAIF, *Being and hearing: making intelligible worlds in deaf Kathmandu*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 2018, 160 pp. ISBN: 9780999157039.

Being and hearing: making intelligible worlds in deaf Kathmandu does what excellent anthropological analysis should do – give us a window into a community and *make sense* of experiences that are typically obfuscated. Peter Graif’s analysis of the ontologies of deaf people in Nepal is simultaneously compelling, depressing and extremely heart-warming. Using a narrative structure heavily reminiscent of Geertzian thick description – which, incidentally, is an extremely helpful tool with which to discuss sensory experiences that exist beyond the visual – Graif expertly weaves a brilliant volume of ethnographic narrative and insightful analysis.

The book fits well into the recent sensorial turn in anthropological discourse. Theorists like Sarah Pink, David Howes and Tim Ingold have theoretically conceptualized ways of encountering sensorially different ontologies (see Pink, 2015; Howes 2003, 2005; Ingold 2000). What *Being and Hearing* brings to the discussion is an expert example of *how* to experience and write about these worlds and of what the repercussions may be of not understanding them. Graif’s ground-breaking method for doing ‘deaf ethnography’ combines visual imagery and written description to give readers both (1) a comprehensible concept of the *experience* of being deaf in Nepal and (2) an understanding of where this experience fits into the larger scale of ontologies. He explains a reality, a world that exists for the deaf community of Kathmandu that is experientially and sensorially unique. Furthermore, the wit and incredible intelligence of his informants highlights what many ethnographic narratives have striven to show – the inescapable irony that those in minority communities are often very much more perceptually aware than they are perceived to be.

Graif expertly unpacks the relationship between sensorial worlds and ‘making sense’ of things. His informants’ ethnographic narratives showcase how we can ‘not know’ about the people and things that surround us when we privilege the visual sense. One of the pivotal moments of the book occurs when Graif explains that the deaf (in Kathmandu, but presumably around the world, as deaf experiences are predicated on a phenomenological and sensory engagement) are constantly involved in a process of ‘being found’ and ‘not being found’ by the rest of the (hearing) world (74). Furthermore, he takes a reflexive stance to explain the relationship between this and anthropological discourse:

The classic anthropological ambition to make the foreign intelligible must thus grapple with the fact that deaf people dedicate a great deal of their social labor to making themselves intelligible or not. Engaging with anthropologists writing books, in other words, is a very deaf thing to do. In this regard, the deaf reveal an intrinsic tension between *being* and *perceiving*. They negotiate this tension as a political strategy, and they render the ostensible fact of presence and absence itself as a domain of critical social activity. (74-5)

In six chapters of the book, Graif covers a broad range of topics, from ‘the sense of things’ to politics and aesthetic linguistics (1). He carefully unpacks a range of deaf experiences, providing an amazingly rich and diverse ethnographic account of what may otherwise be seen as a homogenously ‘disabled’ community. Each chapter is carefully considered, following one or two main ‘protagonists,’ or ethnographic informants, whose stories Graif analyses as part of a larger sociopolitical narrative of navigating invisibility and intelligibility within a world dominated by sacred sound.

The opening chapter follows a man pseudonymously called Arjun, who is tragically misunderstood by his family. Able to communicate and read in a number of languages, Arjun is exceptionally intelligent and interacts marvellously with the guests at his family’s guest house – and yet his family always see him as stupid. They simply don’t see him because they have no reference points from which to engage his experience, and, although Graif (and likely the readers) may be perturbed by this, Arjun himself doesn’t seem to mind too much. This theme is picked up throughout the book, with many informants going out of their way to actively educate those around them about just how intelligent they actually are. This comes to a head with a description in the fourth chapter of two deaf activists travelling to the smaller towns outside Kathmandu to teach NSL (Nepali Sign Language). They announce that they will be hosting an event, and the gathering crowd becomes stunned when they begin speaking to each other in sign language. Rina, the focal point of this story, speaks entirely in sign language and uses bold clothing choices and an expressively charismatic personality to draw attention to herself, rather than her interpreter, as a way to be ‘heard’ by the hearing.

Graif’s description of these and many other ethnographic segments in the book are expertly crafted, and he always reminds the reader of the broader contexts in which these interactions are taking place. His analyses are ground-breaking in providing a new way of thinking about sensorial engagement that is both inclusive and empowering to the ‘disabled’ – a term Graif questions – whose voices are not always heard. In *Being and hearing*, Graif reminds us that we

cannot be complicit in our lack of understanding(s) and that ‘intelligibility’ is a worthy goal for all.

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JENNY MUNRO, *Dreams made small: the education of Papuan Highlanders in Indonesia*, New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books 2018, 206 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1-78533-684-3.

Dreams made small studies how the aspirations of students from the Papuan highlands who migrate for higher education to North Sulawesi are refashioned due to the racialized everyday violence of Indonesian rule over Papuans. Drawing on ethnographic observations among students from 2005, the aim of this book is to show how education is a privileged site where Papuans continue to experience racism and stigma, leaving students vulnerable to exploitation and dropping out. Munro convincingly demonstrates that violent racial, political, gendered and directly emotional dynamics shape the educational, political, social and personal dreams of Dani students from the Papuan highlands. She also succeeds in showing that education is a site of racialization, regulation and resilience that relies on the logic of Indonesian superiority. She demonstrates this by providing rich ethnographic evidence, sharing female and male students’ life-stories and offering insights into the lives of Papuan individuals from different generations, both at university and upon their return to the Papuan highlands.

One way in which Munro sets out to go beyond the existing literature is that – unlike some of her predecessors, who tackle Papuan nationalism by focusing on the government’s policies, historical events or human rights issues – she frames her account by using the daily experiences

and understandings that lead to the Papuan desire for a sovereign Papuan state (10). She also unravels in detail the way Papuans resist racist colonialism by relying on the politicization of 'black' as an identity (79). Thus, she successfully shows how more subtle forms of violence than those mentioned above reshape inner processes (178).

Readers are first briefly familiarized with the ways in which education became an early space of racialization in the context of the Dutch colonization up until Indonesia's rule over Papua today. Munro shows that, under the Dutch colonial administration of West Papua (the western half of the island of New Guinea), racialized inequalities were enabled between Indonesians and Papuans of Malay and Melanesian heritage respectively (12). While she explains that in recent years the definition of 'Indigenous Papuan' has led to affirmative action programmes aimed at empowerment, both Indonesians and Papuans nevertheless describe Papua as Indonesia's most underdeveloped province, with the poorest 'human resources' in the country, an expression recalling the dominant technical interpretations of development (102-3). In the view of Indonesians and Papuans, education is the key improving project that might close this wealth divide and, as some believe, allow Papua children to overcome their presumed ignorance and laziness (4).

Throughout the book, Munro convincingly articulates what she calls 'diminishment' as an analytical frame with which to explain the belittling of Papuans on several levels. The author explains that 'diminishment' describes their loss of power over population and territory, as they are treated with violence to such an extent that many fear they may become extinct (8). Their persona is also diminished through expressions of shyness and feeling inadequate in the company of Indonesians. As a result, educated Dani youth confronted with Indonesians' expectations of submissiveness limit their relationships with Indonesians. 'Stigma' is also explored, as highlanders have been stigmatized as drunken, primitive, violent and promiscuous for decades past (122). For example, students think that the penis gourd (*koteka*) is a strong symbol of alleged primitiveness that is unique to their region, and they express strong feelings of embarrassment concerning it (175). However, a revealing finding of Munro's is that students also see it as a way of making a statement about their cultural identity. Wearing it can demonstrate courage and commitment. The main worry of male students with regard to the *koteka* is how they are seen 'through the gaze of others' (175-6) and become a subject of mockery.

In Chapter 1, entitled ‘Ethno-Racial and Political Dreams of Education in Wamena’, Munro starts off in Wamena (the main city of West Papua from which students originate) to capture the social and political imaginaries that inspire the pursuit of education among parents, schoolchildren and local leaders, as illustrated in three ethnographic vignettes. For older Dani informants, formal education is associated with Dutch colonialism and Christianity, but for younger Dani it is linked to the Indonesian government and thus to Islamic schools. What matters it that education can lead one to do something in the community like build a church, which is aligned with both traditional forms of leadership and the process of ‘becoming modern to challenge Indonesians’ (42).

Chapter 2, entitled “‘Newcomers’ and ‘Masters of the Land’ in North Sulawesi’, and Chapter 3, ‘Stigma, Fear, and Shame: Dani Encounters with Racial and Political Formations in North Sulawesi’, take the reader to the university campus of the National University of Manado (the capital city of North Sulawesi), where the author and the Dani students among whom she lived are considered newcomers in relation to Indonesians. North Sulawesi is the province of eastern Indonesia that attracts the highest number of Papuan highlanders, numbering approximately three thousand. People from Manado are ninety per cent Christian and differentiate themselves from other Indonesians but they reproduce racial stigmas in the dominant language of the nation state. Munro observes the everyday ways in which students sustain themselves: living in dormitories, cooking Dani food in the forest, waiting for money from their relatives and sponsors, and embracing the Christian churches run by Indonesians (65). She concludes that hierarchies are revealed through Dani’s very way of living, that is, through their lived practices of cultural affiliation (65, 77). For example, in order to prepare their traditional pig feasts at the end of the semester, Dani students head off to the jungle carrying a dead pig and celebrate in culturally appropriate ways. However, this gives Indonesians an image of strange people heading off to the dirty jungle and causes them to look down on Papuan living conditions.

Chapter 4, “‘Discipline is Important’: Aspirations and Encounters on Campus’ and Chapter 5, ‘Belonging, Expertise and Conflict in Highlanders’ Social World Abroad’, investigate in more detail the many challenges Dani students face to avoid dropping out or being exploited in North Sulawesi. Their daily encounters with the university administration confirm their different treatment and Indonesians’ inability to recognize them as equal to themselves. According to

Munro, the aspiration for higher education among young Dani is linked to the desire to contribute to transformation back home (103). In the university, rather than gaining tangible skills and experiences, they learn to navigate the bureaucracy and academic authorities, which equips them for particular roles back home (121). Dani leaders and elders tend to expect young people to bridge the gap between the Dani and Indonesians officials and to help return indigenous people to power. What is significant is that this approach to education is shaped by a politics of racialization and differs from the usually declared aims and outcomes of higher education.

Chapter 5 highlights both the supportive environment and the internal divisions and stereotypes that are perpetuated among Dani students. For instance, Valley Dani are perceived as being ‘rough’ and as having issues in relation to alcohol. As a result, other Dani groups tend to exclude them from their activities (135). Munro reasons that these tensions are mainly due to Dani attempts to maintain ‘appropriate behaviour’ to counter Indonesians’ stigmatization of them (13).

While most of the chapters are focused on male students, Chapter 6, entitled “‘Study First’: Sexuality, Pregnancy, and Survival in the ‘City of Free Sex’”, shows that questions of education are deeply gendered. Given the nation-wide call for young people in Indonesia to develop themselves into ‘good quality human resources’ and therefore delay marriage (141), students are instructed to ‘study first’ and postpone family formation until graduation. In the perspective of Indonesians, Papuan’s alleged promiscuity is thus contrasted with the myth of Indonesian sexuality, which is seen as moral (142) and contributes to Papuans’ racialization. Indeed, women are stereotyped as having loose morals and being under the control of ‘shameful’ men (9). Yet Munro shows that many Dani students challenge this stereotype, as it goes against their knowledge that reproductive achievements, just like educational ones, are a political act of resistance against the destructive consequences of Indonesian colonization of Papuans, including genocide (142). In this sense, Munro shows that, even though opportunities for formal employment have increased for women, successful Dani womanhood still means marrying, producing children and being a housewife (164). In this context women’s strategies differ. Betty decides to avoid the shame of being pregnant and unmarried by leaving her studies and returning home. In contrast, Linda decides that the stigmatization of premarital sexuality can be mitigated by other achievements, leading her to give birth while studying and deciding to remain on

campus until she finishes her studies. To other students, her situation is acceptable by virtue of the fact that she has a husband in Wamena who sends her money and has acknowledged the baby.

In the last chapter, entitled 'Doing Good Things in a Dani Modernity', Munro moves on to explain how, in the relative absence of individual opportunities, Dani graduates aspire to acquire knowledge equipping them to contribute to development upon their return to the highlands. For Munro, the Dani gain some status with education, but not to the extent that it fundamentally alters their relations with Indonesians. After graduating, they tend to use their education to counter their diminishment and help others to avoid humiliating experiences (158). Munro thus concludes that Wamena people dream of a modernity that ensures their survival, which is not an effect commonly associated with education, urban mobility or migration. All in all, Dani elders tend to talk of political power in terms of independence or indigenous reclamation, while young Dani focus more on the task of changing everyday inequalities (174).

To summarize, Munro's book's main strength is its dense empirical basis, giving insights into the subtle ways in which racism and stigma are experienced by educated Dani. She convincingly shows how education consolidates Papuans' aspirations while creating new ones in the face of their racialization. Analytical depth is provided by the theorizations of diminishment, racialization, stigma and education (20-28), but one weakness of the book is that its theorization of modernity could have been taken further in order to provide a clearer epistemology of this critical term, which is covered a little too rapidly. At times modernity is understood as contemporariness or progress, as when Munro explains that the Dani view education as a way to 'catch up with cultural, racial and intellectual "moderns"' (4) and demonstrate 'modern commitments' (34), while at other times modernity is presented as a technique of administration or regulation that only exists in contact with Indonesians. For instance, 'Dani modernity', as expressed in the last chapter, is characterized by the Dani's desired levels of control over the conditions of their interaction with Indonesians (158): 'the modernity that Dani graduates express hopes for is one that shelters Wamena people, that ensures their survival and that allows them to determine how, when and for what purposes Dani interact with Indonesians' (174). However, it may have been the author's choice to limit theories in favour of in-depth ethnographic data.

This is nonetheless a minor remark on what overall is a richly detailed and comprehensive portrayal of Dani students. Jenny Munro's monograph is an important book to read for both students of Pacific anthropology and education as well as more generally.

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AURÉLIE NÉVOT, 2019. *Masters of psalmody (bimo): scriptural shamanism in southwestern China*. Leiden and Boston: Brill 2019, xxii, 263 pp. ISBN 978-90-04-41484-6 (e-book), 978-90-04-41483-9 (hardback). €143.00, US\$172.00.

Aurélie Névod's *Masters of Psalmody* is a recent entry in Brill's Religion in Chinese Societies Series. It is framed as an exploration of 'the religious, political and theoretical issues' that are integral to the ritual practices of *bimo* shamans among the Yi peoples of Yunnan, Sichuan, Guizhou and Guangxi provinces, though it does not offer an ethnographic account of *bimo* traditions as such (p. ix). Rather, Névod's latest work is largely composed of linguistic and philosophical reflections on the written language of Yi shamans, which are interspersed with ethnographic commentaries. At its high points, the monograph commands considerable disciplinary authority as the summation of nearly two decades of fieldwork in southwestern China and provides a theoretical bookend to the author's more methodologically grounded French-language publications. There are a number of low points as well, foremost among which are, in my mind, the author's overwrought forays into the philosophy of language, which detract significantly from the volume's otherwise expert discussion of textually based forms of shamanism. I will return to this issue below.

The core of *Masters of Psalmody* orbits around the concept of *se*, a graphic sign that, in the language of Yi shamans, means both 'writing' and 'blood'. In large part, Névod adopts two theoretical tentpoles that structure her representation of indigenous perceptions of *se*. The first, which is pronounced in both the author's prose and her textual exegesis, approaches the dual meaning of *se* from the standpoint of Derridean linguistic analysis. As Névod makes clear in the introduction, one of the volume's primary theoretical goals is to extend the Derridean critique of 'phonocentrism' to area studies and regional sub-disciplinary research on scriptural shamanism in southwestern China (14). The second, which is evidenced in the author's extensive discussion of the indigenous metaphysics of language, is Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's *Métaphysiques Cannibales*. Given the prevalence of this theoretical orientation in

Névot's writing, the volume may be considered a contribution to the metaphysical turn in the human sciences, as it represents an effort to integrate both continental textual criticism and postmodern critiques of metaphysics into the analysis of ethnographic data. The author's success in this regard varies considerably from chapter to chapter.

With regard to the volume's structure, *Masters of Psalmody* is organized into seven short chapters, which ostensibly mirror seven different 'reflexive [research] axes' that are promoted by the author (21). The first and second chapters focus on the transcription and performative recitation of Yi writing (彝文), which is used by *bimo* shamans. The third and fourth chapters then move on to assess the physicality of Yi ritual materials, offering a metaphysical commentary on the use of *bimo* manuscripts as 'an interface between the world of humans and the world of spirits' (24). In contrast to the theoretical tone of the first four chapters, Chapter 5 offers a meta-ethnographic critique of 'a series of sacrificial acts common to all... *bimo* cults' (139). The sixth chapter then offers a brief theoretical exegesis of a particular *bimo* manuscript, the performative dimensions of which deviate from the forms of textual recitation outlined in the first five chapters. Finally, Chapter 7, which is arguably the strongest in Névot's monograph, explores the effects of globalization and the Chinese government's efforts to homogenize Yi languages in their oral and written forms.

With a general social-science audience in mind, the fifth and seventh chapters are, without a doubt, the most engaging in *Masters of Psalmody*, as they succeed in integrating qualitative data into the author's theoretical discourses on metaphysics and the philosophy of language. Additionally, aspects of *bimo* shamanistic practice are undergoing a rapid cultural transformation due in part to the proliferation of mobile technologies and the Chinese government's efforts to create a homogenous Yi nationality. This gives the fifth and seventh chapters the quality of a salvage ethnography, the respective value of which, in this case, Névot does very well to articulate and defend against potential criticism. Unfortunately, however, throughout the rest of the volume, there is very little for the reader to contemplate by way of grounded qualitative research or analysis. This constitutes my main criticism of *Masters of Psalmody* and raises questions regarding the volume's intended audience.

Throughout the majority of the publication, the reader sees so little of the actual ethnographic situation of Névot's fieldwork that one would be forgiven for thinking that the work is a contribution to theoretical linguistics rather than the religions of contemporary Chinese societies. In the first four chapters in particular, it is as if *bimo* rituals take place in a culturally sanitized vacuum, shorn of any economic, social, ideological or material context. As a consequence, despite the volume's exhaustive theoretical exploration of the language, writing and utterances of *bimo*, the reader is left with no feeling for the rites themselves, nor the individuals who perform them. Ironically, there is very little of the ethnographic in Névot's ethnography. Although we are compelled to praise the author's general cultural

awareness and her time spent in the field, the absence of both qualitative and quantitative data largely prevents her from communicating her undeniably extensive disciplinary expertise to the reader. In a sense, this makes the work difficult to recommend on its own merits, though considered in relation to Névot's French-language publications, *Masters of Psalmody* takes on a different dimension entirely. Presented as the culmination of two decades of fieldwork in southwestern China and as the summation of the author's two previous French-language monographs on Yi shamanism, *Masters of Psalmody* provides readers versed in Névot's œuvre with a thoughtful, philosophical bookend to a rich body of research.

In conclusion, *Masters of Psalmody* is less a contribution to the anthropology of Chinese religions than an effort to breach the walls of the philosophy of language using Yi shamanism as a cultural backdrop. The closer the author sticks to her ethnographic source material, the stronger the monograph reads. The fifth and seventh chapters are, in particular, excellent in this regard and constitute valuable disciplinary contributions. However, the further the author drifts into philosophical anecdotes and efforts to expand upon Derridean conceptualizations of language, the more it feels as if the book has been cast adrift without an intellectual historical rudder. I would recommend *Masters of Psalmody* to general readers with an interest in the anthropology of language, students of transcultural shamanism and regional specialists well-versed in the cultures of southwestern China. Nevertheless, it is perhaps advisable to engage with the author's French-language works before digging too deeply into Névot's first English-language monograph.

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LOUISE STEEL and **LUCI ATTALA** (eds.), *Body matters: exploring the materiality of the human body*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2019, 240 pp., ISBN 978-1-78683-415-7.

This edited text feeds into the branch of post-humanist literature that views the ontology of 'being' in the world as one co-constituted by humans and non-humans and their ongoing interactions. The book is innovative in that all the authors view the body itself – with its fleshiness, excretions and even decay – as the site where new discursive productions can take place, dispossessing the construction of 'being' in the world from its stubborn Western humanist and Cartesian foundations. The editors use the term 'New Materialities', which contributes to the field of New Materialism by moving past the latter's third-way feminist commitment to the production of scholarship on embodiment and the politics of gender and draws in material that

has always been considered extra-discursive. This includes residue, dust, decay and all the other ‘things’ that come from delineating boundaries between what is human and non-human. Translating this approach into a variety of different disciplines, the final product is a foundation (and inspiration) for future scholarship to work with and through the human body as a material in a theoretically informed way.

The book starts with an essay by the editors that introduces the scholarship on the ‘New Materialities’ as a tool with which to approach studies of the body. It then moves on to nine chapters that draw in a plurality of disciplines, namely archaeology, medieval history and anthropology. The chapters are in conversation throughout the book, but the reader pulls out certain themes that group specific chapters together.

Thus, Eloise Govier’s and Ros Coard’s chapters engage with the process of transformation from what are deemed insignificant substances to materials that are imbued with social, cultural or economic value. In her work on the residues found in human remains in her archaeological field-site at Çatalhöyük and her reading of a performance artist’s production of artwork by engaging with her own ‘matter’, Govier looks at how elements such as carbon or cinnabar, or human matter such as nails and shed skin, have their own capacities to affect form through their interactions with humans. By doing so, she shows how material is transformed through interaction and interrelation with other agential beings. Similarly, Ros Coard challenges a-theoretical conceptualizations of small, dead matter that does not hold value, showing instead how it becomes the dust that constitutes our environment. Through inhalation and other interactions that come from extended dwelling and growth within a place, dust, in its turn, feeds into our own bodies, which are constantly ‘becoming’. Her strongest point is that this process of becoming does not involve an accumulation of self, but rather the disintegration of the self into one’s environment, thus allowing for a continuous, cyclical way of being in the world.

Another theme is the development of dependent relationships between human bodies and ingestible or applied natural products and, through that, the sedimentation of moral, cultural and medical practices over time. Luci Atalla discusses obtaining corporeal knowledge by ingesting a plant which has hallucinogenic properties and is also used in ayahuasca. To her, food is not an unproductive material only consumed or experienced by the human, as both humans and plants generate a space for new ontologies through eating – and hallucinating. She writes of the plant-person, a combined state of mind and stage of ingestion that allows the user to communicate with

the plant and acquire knowledge of medical cures and practices corporeally. Elizabeth Rahmen's work on the Xie community in north-west Amazonia shows how socially desired values are shaped through water and tobacco's penetration of human flesh, starting in infancy. Her work highlights how the porosity of the human body is accommodating of the formation of the ethical self by allowing materials to cohere gradually through repetitive tasks that revolve around the river, such as bathing, handling and hammocking, among others. Kate Nialla Fayers-Kerr's work on the body painting practices of the Mun in south-western Ethiopia privileges discussion of the interaction between materials such as clay and the body, instead of its aesthetic and symbolic value that 'says something' about the Mun's social structures. Writing against the conceptualization of skin as a finite entity where social values are performed, she renders the processes of handling and experimenting with earthly materials as locations where knowledge of the 'community of substances' is formed.

A third theme is the inquiry into the enactment of the spiritual and religious on the body as material. Looking into funerary practices in the Neolithic and Bronze ages, Louise Steel demonstrates the material formations of ancestry by showing how living humans were instrumental in their creation by handling and transporting bodies at different stages of decay. Challenging the dichotomous separation of the individual from the collective and the evasiveness and non-materiality of ancestors from the living, she shows how, long after death, bodies begin a process of collective personhood by melting into a collective of ancestry. Harriet Webster's work on miracles in medieval Europe also looks at bodies between moments of death and resurrection as sites where the spiritual and immaterial became tangible and visible exceptions. The body becomes the intellectual place where a miracle is measured, enacted and performed in order to validate the separation between the material and immaterial realms. Also working on the medieval period, Janet Burton looks at how holiness is socially constructed using the bodies of saints, which were manipulated and transformed into relics that held enormous spiritual power. This manipulation was instigated by humans, who stole, bit off and dismembered the dead bodies of saints in order to feel closer, more at one with higher beings. She demonstrates how body parts gained symbolic power after death by such interferences, being restituted and preserved as holy materials in the form of relics.

Under the last theme of material tactile 'usage', Carl Walsh looks at the construction of elite culture in Middle Bronze Age Kerma in Egypt through the interaction of humans with ceramic

drinking cups during certain courtly and funerary practices. Walsh's interesting methodology involves handling the cup and measuring its weight and volume as a way of generating corporeal knowledge about a civilization that has no textual or iconographic records. His research questions and methodology both go beyond the study of the material to include its usage and interaction in co-creating elite social norms.

In conclusion, this book is an eclectic collection of work which generates several conceptual openings to understanding the body as matter in the post-humanist turn in the social sciences. In doing so, it succeeds in putting forward a new ontological approach which is worth engaging in a variety of disciplines. On the other hand, for non-specialists the text lacks a thematic flow, making it difficult to overcome disciplinary idiosyncrasies, especially given its variety of ethnographic, historical and archaeological research methods. However, overall the text provides a good foundation for scholarship wanting to engage with human body 'parts' in any academic conversation.

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