Swancutt, Katherine and Mireille Mazard (eds). *Animism Beyond the Soul: Ontology, reflexivity, and the making of anthropological knowledge.* New York, Oxford: Berghahn. 2018. Pp. 160. ISBN 978-1-78533-865-6 (hardback); ISBN 978-1-78533-866-3 (paperback); eISBN 978-1-78533-867-0 (eBook).

*A*nimism Beyond the Soul: Ontology, Reflexivity, and the Making of Anthropological Knowledge is a promising volume that contributes to new ways of approaching ethnographic methodology to better envision animism. Going beyond the assumptions that animism only exists in small-scale societies and anthropological theory is constructed on, rather than with, people, each chapter in this volume considers how animism gets 'co-authored' through the interactions between researchers and their interlocutors.

The edited book begins with Rane Willerslev's foreword, 'The Anthropology of Ontology Meets the Writing Culture Debate—Is reconciliation possible?' with a detailed and promising overview of the volume as a whole. Willersley draws on the ambiguous and blurry differentiation between the anthropologist and the native that each chapter attempts to resolve. Katherine Swancutt and Mireille Mazard expand on these ambiguities in their Introduction, 'Anthropological Knowledge Making, the Reflexive Feedback Loop, and Conceptualisations of the Soul'. They consider the ambiguities as gaps in contemporary anthropology thought and instead encourage anthropologists to consider the circulation of ideas that form open-ended dialogues, or a 'reflexive feedback loop', to reconsider how ideas are always shaped through the encounters and discussions anthropologists have on the people they study. The 'reflexive feedback loop' is achieved through what Swancutt and Mazard call a 'hyper-reflexive' methodology.

'Hyper-reflexivity', they point out, cannot be accounted for through cultural relativism but requires an account of native ontologies.

Swancutt and Mazard's introduction is followed by six chapters that each consider animistic practices in various contexts and geographical regions. Each chapter shares the commitment to further animistic discussions related to personhood and body and soul. The volume starts with Mazard's chapter and her research amongst the Nusu people of Southwest China. Diverging from Strathern's work on the relational dividual, Mazard argues that individuals are made up of ontologically different persons that diverge into one. A form of Nusu animism, she refers to this as an individual's algebra of souls, which are made up of fractions, doubles, and latent possibilities. She outlines the powerful ideologies of socialism and Christianity that are ontologically separate from the Nusu people and the interactions that occur across these divides through metamorphosis and the reworkings of the algebra of souls.

Mazard's chapter is followed by Diana Espírito Santo's, which is framed by broader understandings on the boundaries of cosmological exchange and renewal. Espírito Santo more directly refers to the introduction of this volume and the relevance this collection of essays holds in the field of hyper-reflexivity studying non-human shapeshifters, or tricksters, in Cuba and Brazilian spirit mediumship practices. Rather than referring to ontological absolutes, Espírito Santo argues that Afro-Brazilian religious spheres are a continuum

comprised of multiple spiritual bodies and personas, not pre-formed substances. Occurring in the interactions between religious practitioners and spirit companions, the animate becomes multiple and always unfolding.

Olga Ulturgasheva's chapter refers to temporality, spirits, and personhood among Siberian Eveny reindeer herders and hunters. Her chapter provides keen insight on the relevance of *djuluchen,* 'a spirit that travels ahead' (p. 56) and the role it plays in the lives of Eveny adolescents. Returning to her field-site six years after she first gathered material asking the adolescents of Eveny people to describe their future narratives, Ulturgasheva learns that most narratives have become a reality. She explains this cause and effect to be understood by the 'outwardly directed illuctionary acts that triggered the movement of their *djuluchen*' (p. 63). Highlighting the hyper-reflexive role she was placed into as an anthropologist, Ulturgasheva considers the narratives that adolescents shared with her were like prayers that her interviews actualised.

Following Ulturgasheva is Katherine Swancutt's chapter on the art of soul capturing amongst the Nuosu ethnic minority group in Southwest China. The writing in the chapter is sophisticated, with detailed ethnographic dialogue documenting her conversations with a Nuosu ethnologist and a Nuosu anthropologist on the historical interpretations of soul-calling ceremonies. Swancutt's paper provides a keen lens to consider her reflexive role as an anthropologist and how it continuously modifies the conceptions of animistic theory amongst her interloctors to highlight the hazy and incomplete historical understandings of Nuosu animism that are continuously being redefined.

Chapter five is written by Vanessa Elisa Grotti and Marc Brightman on autobiography,

kinship, and alterity in Native Amazonia. Grotti and Brightman look at the rituals of autobiography in Native Amazonia that combine mythic narratives and stories of personal experience in dreams and visions. With detailed descriptions of these autobiographies, Grotti and Brightman's paper is open-ended, letting the material speak for itself. Digressing from 'hyper reflexivity', which they consider to be a more global phenomenon tied with anthropological discourse, they argue for a 'double reflexivity' grounded in native Amazonian that situate Amazonian autobiographies in relation with non-Amerindians, such as the anthropologist and the missionary.

The final chapter is on technological animism written by Kathleen Richardson. In her chapter she unpacks 'the personhood of machines' (p. 110) to challenge the view of animism as something that is associated with indigenous cosmologies, and instead to situate it within discussions of personhood that go beyond the human and 'natural'. Richardson argues that robots need to be understood as cultural beings that have their own subjectivity and agency 'invit[ing] us to reframe the discussion of animism as a form of human consciousness that is transcultural' (p. 124). This is a fascinating chapter that contributes to the conversations that this volume pushes towards focusing on non-human forms with animism at its core.

The volume concludes with a postscript by Edith Turner on anthropologists and healers as radical empiricists. After a deeply moving and articulated description of her encounters working with a healer in Northern Alaska, Turner concludes the paper calling out to researchers, who need to have eyes to accept what they are researching. 'Subjects' for a researcher become 'co-members' and 'co-researchers' (p. 138). The postscript nicely draws together

this series of papers that promises to explore how animistic practices are co-authored.

Overall Swancutt and Mazard's edited volume is a vital contribution to discussions on animism and ethnographic methodology. It is a timely reminder summoning anthropologists to re-examine and redefine their subjects to bring forth and acknowledge their role in transforming and shaping anthropological theory. However, there are numerous gaps that this edited volume overlooks or only lightly draws on, such as the role of politics and the economy that motivate the actions of people's everyday lives. This is an ongoing challenge in ethnographies that expand on views of animism that too often refer to the people they study as timeless and secluded.

Another limitation this edited volume faces is its commitment to hyper-reflexivity. Although the volume starts off with a promising note, as the chapters unfold it appears the application of hyper-reflexivity is yet to be fully exercised. Regardless of the amount of ink spilt on reflexivity, this neglect sheds light on the shaky grounds that reflexivity has come to stand on, and the ambiguities concerning what it even means in current anthropology. Rather than merely summoning the reader to be more reflexive, a job already done in great detail by *The Ontological Turn* (2017), this volume could have benefited by taking further steps and providing a much more elaborate justification of hyper-reflexivity in each chapter, followed by the tools that the authors used to achieve in this.

REFERENCES

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