



Japan. Any reader will sympathise with the concerned citizens' daily struggles in post-Fukushima Japan, fighting the pressure to return to normalcy.

## References

- Kimura, Aya Hirata. 2016. *Radiation Brain Moms and Citizen Scientists: The Gender Politics of Food Contamination After Fukushima*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
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**Multiple nature-cultures, diverse anthropologies**, edited by Casper Bruun Jensen and Atsuro Morita, New York, Berghahn Books, August 2019, 158 pp., \$27.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-78920-539-8, \$105.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-78920-538-1

The nature-culture dichotomy has long been subject to anthropological examination. With varying degrees of contrast, the contributors to this volume coincide in that they all continue that tradition of inquiry, predominantly from a position at the interface of anthropology and STS. The result is a book suitable both to readers who are interested in a set of creative takes on the nature-culture dichotomy, and to those seeking input into what recent turns to ontology might add to these discussions.

In response to 'the long shadow cast by the Western nature-culture distinction' (p. 1) Jensen and Morita propose that we do not bridge the duality but, rather, that we renegotiate its terms by taking the practices and cosmologies of people as conceptual starting points. Bridging overlooks the fact that the nature-culture distinction is problematic even in the West. Not necessarily because it imposes a false division, but instead because it is 'no longer clear that there is "one" of either' (p. 9). In the introduction the editors thus argue that nature-cultures are subject to continuous multiplication, and with reference to Japan they further illustrate that this amounts to the diversification of anthropology itself. Swanson's contribution (Chapter 5) encourages us to further this diversification by imagining new, minor anthropologies through the practices of non-humans. Without disregarding situatedness, she suggests that we produce 'sophisticated conjunctions' by seeking inspiration from the natural sciences. While the questions posed by natural scientists might not be aligned with those of anthropologists, their methods nonetheless help with 'situating non-human encounters within larger

webs of multispecies relations' (p. 91). By showing what salmon ear bones can reveal about the life history of fish, Swanson challenges nature-culture splits that disciplinary boundaries themselves are founded upon.

M. Strathern's contribution (Chapter 1) recounts how Euro-American conceptualisations of kinship relate to distinctions between nature and culture. With the emergence of the naturalist concept of identity, kin relations came to be 'a matter of "external" linkage', outside of a person's 'essential nature' (p. 21). However, moments in which external relations have been reformulated as internal highlight possibilities of difference that come not from without but from within, a notion illustrated by Kasuga (Chapter 2). Through a comparison between perceptions of time in modern physics and among native activists in Fiji, Kasuga demonstrates how modern physics exploits observable results, albeit only by maintaining at its core a primordial and often unacknowledged unobservability. Conversely, the retrodictive ability behind the Fijian Viti Kabani leader's predictions do not generate any substantial results, but are authenticated precisely by their unobservability. The contrast between Fijian activists and physics suggests that the latter embodies a contradiction, which can be traced to the impossibility of observing time variations in terms of the movement of elementary particles. Physicists refer to this as 'quantum vagueness', and consider it to be a matter of interpretation. Accordingly, this destabilises the qualia-quanta separation claimed by modern physics and, as such, undermines the nature-culture dichotomy as well.

Contingencies are highlighted also by Walford in her work on environmental scientists in Brazil (Chapter 4). Raw data, inherently uncertain, contains the potential to be always and already other than what it is – either data or error. The making of the relation between the latter two renders possible the difference between facts and relations. Analogously, nature and culture too can be differently related, a point exemplified by Skrydstrup (Chapter 3). Despite operating within a modernist boundary between the ice they engage and their epistemic object of climate, his climate scientist interlocutors self-consciously enact many natures. Holding both these observations within view serves to show how nature-culture is maintained and reconfigured at the same time. Such ontological multiplicities are at play also in the editors' own case study (Chapter 7). They write about two contrasting ontologies in Thailand's Chao Praya Delta; one terrestrial, shaped by colonial irrigation endeavours, and one amphibious, associated with Southeast Asian 'galactic polities'. These are shown to form a 'palimpsest' where they run in parallel. What's more, contemporary flooding events effect comparisons whereby the resilience of amphibious infrastructures become visible. This upsets any attempt to envision the delta as entirely nature or culture, and instead hints at the myriad agencies at play.

The question of what ontological framework might possibly contain all these multiplicities is addressed in Chapter 8. For Pickering, this must be a non-dualist ontology 'of a multiplicity of reciprocally coupled emergent agents, human and non-human' (p. 137). Taking multiplicities seriously requires a performative idiom as opposed to a representational one, for in the latter nature remains singular notwithstanding the number of cultural interpretations. Different worlds are instead posited as different 'islands of stability'; different performative 'grips' on reality. Another attempt to

formulate an overarching framework is found in Sugawara's contribution (Chapter 6), where the author uses examples from G|ui Hunter-Gatherers to argue for an approach to human-animal relationships 'based on worldly corporeal existence' (p. 100). Like Pickering, Sugawara sets out to undermine nature-culture dichotomies by suggesting a nature radically distinct from that presupposed by naturalism.

While Pickering's and Sugawara's non-dualist ontologies will direct some readers to variants of the ontological turn that, at least in theory, are more open-ended (e.g. Holbraad and Pedersen 2017), the rather eclectic collection of anthropologies hosted by this volume nevertheless promises inspiration for anyone seeking alternative ways of renegotiating nature-culture.

## Reference

Holbraad, Martin & Morten Axel Pedersen. 2017. *The Ontological Turn: An Anthropological Exposition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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**Love's Betrayal. The Decline of Catholicism and Rise of New Religions in Ireland**, by Mulholland, P., Oxford, Peter Lang, 2019, 362 pp., €74.10 (hardback), £60.00 (hardback), ISBN: 978-1-78874-432-4

Until quite recently, several sociological indexes of popular religiosity in Ireland, such as levels of mass attendance or explicit adherence to a religious creed, were unusually high by Western European standards. However, the exceptionalism of Ireland came suddenly to a halt in the mid-1990s. The very same sociological indexes that had been so persistently showing the apparent strength of popular religiosity began to move, quite suddenly, in the opposite direction. The conventional explanation for this rather abrupt change looked at the so-called 'sex scandals' of the clergy as a determining factor. Denunciations of abusive sexual behaviour perpetrated by members of the clergy, especially against children, highly magnified by the press and social media, undermined the power and credibility of the, until then, almighty Irish Catholic Church. Clearly, this conventional explanation has more than a grain of truth. But it also raises important questions about the nature of popular religiosity in general, and about Irish society and culture in particular: how could the Catholic Church hold such a firm grip on Irish minds and for so long? Why did this change so abruptly?