– BOOK REVIEW –

MATERIALITY

Edited by Daniel Miller

Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005. 304pp. RRP $23.95 USD,
ISBN 978–0-82233–530–6.

Reviewed by
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THINGS THAT GO BUMP

You bump into the single-word title of this collection like a brick wall. Ouch! You might even think the title had agency, but whose? The abducted agency of an absent subject, in the phraseology of Alfred Gell (1998), or the agency of a network of publishers, computers, anthropologists, support staff and other humans and non-humans, as Bruno Latour (1999) might have it? These questions would not be out of place in this collection, as the authors, all anthropologists, present recent approaches to materiality, and engage primarily, though not exclusively, with the work of these two theorists.

But what is materiality? Not, Daniel Miller is at pains to point out in his introduction, simply things, stuff, artifacts, as a vulgar materialist might suggest. It can include images, dreams, software, financial derivatives. Miller's detailed introduction, worth the price of admission in itself, argues for a theory of materiality drawn from Hegel and Marx, which hopes to upset any distinction between subject and object and replace it with a dialectic of 'objectification' in which we create 'things that in turn create us: 'In objectification all we have is a process in time by which the very act of creating form creates consciousness… and thereby transforms both form and the self-consciousness of that which has consciousness…' (p. 9). Thus rather than seeing material culture as the projection of symbolic or social relations (as in symbolic or Durkheimian anthropology), Miller argues that we see humans and the environment as mutually constituted and constituting. Thankfully, after laying out this argument, Miller points out that as anthropologists we live in a world where our ethnographic subjects may actually think of themselves as 'people' using 'objects'. So, while we keep in mind the ways that we may be tempted by the illusion of subjects

and objects, Miller suggests that ethnographically we examine projects of materiality and immateriality. 'Immateriality' being the treatment of the world of things as an illusion that hides a greater truth, religious or otherwise. Projects of 'materiality' being ones which see human happiness measured in the greater amount of stuff that we surround ourselves with. Ironically, the impossibility of transcending the material – get rid of objects and you get rid of subjects as well – leads attempts in this direction to founder on the problem that the 'idea' of immateriality must still express itself through material forms. Protestants, for example, may reject many of the trappings of the church, but that leads the 'good book' to acquire a fetish-like status.

The chapters in this volume explore such projects from different perspectives, united by an interest in the work of Gell and Latour. Topics range from Egyptian pyramids and mummies (Lynn Meskell) to financial derivatives (Hirokazu Miyazaki, Bill Maurer), 'intelligent clothing' (Suzanne Küchler), photographic archives (Christopher Pinney), and computer and other screens (Nigel Thrift). Some are explicitly ethnographic, while others attempt to add to Miller's critique of the reduction of material objects to containers of symbols or of social relations. Some of these chapters are not easy reading if you don't already have a good grasp of concepts like 'arbitrage' and 'securitization'. In the brief space of this review I will look at three illustrative chapters that suggest what seem to me to be the most productive of approaches to doing ethnography that reflects these concerns.

Fred Myers presents several Turnerian social dramas or 'scandals', focusing on the production and exchange of Aboriginal art in Australia as a way to address the different 'regimes of materiality' of art dealers and patrons, the Australian government and the artists themselves. He counter-poses the standard Western view that art reflects the creativity of an individual artist with that of the Aboriginals who see it as 'something objectified in revelation or transmission [of the Dreaming] rather than created de novo' (p. 95). These different views imply different, though not always opposed, reactions to changes in markets and technology that allow for the mass production of art, or to challenges such as non-Aboriginals who paint in the style characteristic of Aboriginal art. Myers investigates a variety of 'scandals' in which these regimes come into conflict, as when paintings by Aboriginal 'artists' turn out to be not the creation of the one individual who signed his name to the painting, but rather executed by relatives who were 'authorised' to paint the picture according to traditional practice (pp. 102–105). One of the real strengths of Myers analysis is that it shows the ways that these different 'regimes' are also internally contradictory, allowing for struggles and change: 'Each [regime of value/materiality] perme-

ates and leaks into the other, subverting its internal integrity…' (p. 106). Thus struggles over objects become struggles over identity, inflected by power, but the outcome of which is never determined in advance.

Matthew Engelke provides a striking ethnographic example of a project of immateriality in his study of healing practices among Masowe weChisanu apostolic Christian practitioners in Zimbabwe. This church differentiates itself from other Christian denominations in its rejection of the materiality of the Bible's mediation of God: 'Faith must be "live and direct," constituted by its immateriality' (p. 123). But they also are keen to distinguish themselves from non-Christian local healers and their 'witchcraft medicines' (p. 126). Engelke goes on to describe how practitioners square their faith with the role of three different kinds of objects in weChisanu healing practices: pebbles, water and honey. Pebbles can be used for a wide variety of problems, and are distributed by elders with specific instructions: placed in a wallet, they can get you a job, placed in water they can make instant holy water. Engelke notes their useful material properties: they are portable and durable, 'if you drop a pebble you can pick it up. If you drop a cup of holy water, it might be gone forever…' (p. 130). But he also argues that their material properties add to their symbolic value, rejecting materiality, the weChisanu have chosen an object with no value to objectify their faith: 'What better way to undercut the importance of material culture than to hold up as its archetype something you find in the dirt?' (p. 131). Engelke contrasts pebbles with honey, an object with more obviously useful inherent properties, as well as associations with non-Christian traditional healers. Honey, then, becomes a 'sticky subject' (p. 120), a test of faith that weChisanu must carefully treat as a holy medicine rather than a tasty treat, showing by contrast that 'materiality [and immateriality] is a matter of degree and kind' (p. 136).

Webb Keane applies an approach that combines Engelke's concern with material properties and Myers focus on shifting regimes of value. He uses C.S. Pierce's (1958) ideas about iconicity and indexicality to stress the fact that clothing is, in fact, made of material, and is not simply another text to be read for its meanings, or as a simple expression of identity. Instead he suggests that iconicity and indexicality imply a fundamental openness of things to different uses and interpretations based on their material qualities and the ways these qualities may suggest different future possibilities (a notion here very similar to Tim Ingold's (2000) development of the concept of 'affordances'). 'New clothing makes possible or inhibits new practices, habits, and intentions; it invites new projects' (p.193). The material properties of objects are also subject to 'bundling' whereby different qualities, by their shared proximity in a particular

object, may become associated: certain colours and certain temperatures or textures for example. This gives the possibility of future stabilization of meanings into ideologies (Myers' regimes of materiality). But by the same token, these regimes may seem fixed for a moment (by forces of power, colonial governments, etc.) but are actually always 'vulnerable' to the openness of things, to future possibilities and associations. What is interesting here is that Keane seems to be close to Marshall Sahlins' (1985) idea that symbolic categories are risked in practice. But Keane has shown how a Sahlins' approach can be freed from its mentalist/structuralist underpinnings and applied to anthropology's recent concern with materiality. He has, in a sense, wedded Sahlins and Tim Ingold (2000), without actually discussing either.

This is a stimulating collection, which will reward scholars and post-graduate students with some of the most recent anthropological thinking on how to approach ethnography both theoretically-informed and still open to its empirical qualities. I would therefore think twice before venturing away from the ideas in this book without a torch or some guiding light.

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– BOOK REVIEW –

UNDERSTANDING MATERIAL CULTURE.
by Ian Woodward
London, Sage, 2007. 191pp. RRP $49.99 ISBN 978–0-7619–4226–9.

Reviewed by
Dr Diana Young, University of Queensland

Material culture is appearing in Australia not as part of social anthropology, where it is considered still as synonymous only with things in museums, but in cultural studies and sociology departments and in art schools. This book is an introduction to material culture studies aimed at beginners. It is clearly and accessibly written with box headings containing précis of each chapter and concluding remarks that provide ample pointers for teaching.

The author ranges over a large body of texts from sociology, environmental psychology, cultural studies, psycho-analytic theory and anthropology. The main theoretical thrust of the book is material culture as consumption studies. To this end he draws heavily and enthusiastically on the work of anthropologist Daniel Miller who is a member of the material culture group at University College London in the Dept. of Anthropology. Miller's work on mass consumption practices has come to be the most well known part of British material culture in Australia so much so that Woodward believes him to be 'a one person industry in material culture' (p.25). Miller is wonderfully prolific and influential in his writings on consumption but there are also many other aspects to material culture in anthropology and outside it that take in diverse aspects of archaeology, anthropology of art, studies of technology, museums and collecting and so on and Woodward does add a brief caveat to this effect in the final pages of his book. He swiftly passes material culture in museums contexts also but points the reader towards the work of Susan Pearce.

Woodward draws mostly on Miller's early work from the late 1980s and 90s and also focuses heavily on both Kopytoff and Appadurai. These latter theorists promulgated the idea that commodities have a biography just as persons do (Kopytoff 1986) and that things also have a 'social life' (Appadurai 1986). Both these approaches are admirable and long standing ones and useful in

material culture analyses and have also been central to Miller's early work as Woodward points out. But they also render things as context dependant, as 'within' networks of relations even while such networks are dynamic as are the objects moving through them (p. 16). This means that the more recent emphasis on things as themselves able to redefine contexts and culture, as having agency, is marginal in this volume except perhaps latently in the chapter on taste.

Woodward starts at the beginning. He explains what the terms 'things', 'objects', 'artefacts', 'goods' and 'commodities' mean. He plumps for the term object throughout this volume, because "thing' suggests an inanimate or inert quality, requiring that actors bring to life through imagination or physical activity' (p. 15). It is true that there is a culture in Australia of using the word object and not thing but one of the reasons that recent material culture in British anthropology uses 'thing' is that 'object' already contains the idea that there is a subject who objectifies, rather than a more dynamic state where things and persons swing in and out of foregrounding one another (this reviewer will now annoyingly switch between the two terms 'object' and 'thing' for the sake of variety but Woodward sticks to 'object' throughout). Woodward defines reification on the same page as 'imagining that objects are simply there for human actors to engage with or use up, as though they existed apart from cultural and social history' (p.15).

Woodward discusses what he terms the two approaches to consumption. The first, 'it's a bad thing' ranges from the condemnatory Adam Smith (commodities as moral corruption), Marx on commodities as manifestations of labour emptied out of their materiality, to Simmel's insight that fashion and style were modernity's propulsion. The second post modern approach that consumption is a good thing, relies on it being something expressive, playful and creative, less to do with utility, more with shaping identity through aesthetic choices.

Woodward though wishes to emulate Miller's (1987) original work on material culture and mass consumption where he defines consumption as work that transforms an object from alienable to inalienable (p. 55). Later in the book Woodward sketches Miller's important and touching research into London council tenants' kitchens and the ways in which women, or the agency of women, customised the standard issue fittings in order to remake it as site of social relations, of affectionate ties.

In section two the author dives into semiotics and symbolism, the object as communication, introducing Saussure, Barthes, Baudrillard and Lévi-Strauss

and in a further chapter he explores what he terms the cultural bit of material culture and the emotive capacities things offer. To this end he summarises Mauss, Durkheim, Mary Douglas and Miller. He also summarises many other relevant case studies.

In part three of the book 'Objects in action' which is more about what objects do to people Woodward turns to Bourdieu's theory of taste, 'distinction' and Veblen and then moves on to Simmel in discussing ideas about taste and aesthetics grounded in Kantian ideas. In the subject of how fashion in clothing is constructed, he highlights the inadequacies of Bourdieu's theory of taste by using critiques such as Bulmer's 1960s research on the fashion industry in Paris where a collective aesthetics driving public taste was evident, not simply one that emulated social superiors.

Woodward is also passionate in his defence of material culture studies that focus on identity (that include his own research) arguing that such emphasis has not yet run its course. This is indicative of the struggle for competing identities and cultural groups that characterise both the migrant experience and a colonised Indigenous culture in Australia resulting in a demand for identity analyses.

The book is insightful and fluently explores the parameters that it sets out to roam. It is a book clearly aiming to provide a foundational text to studies of mass consumption in cultural studies and sociology. At the end of each chapter are bullet points that answer the questions that might arise from a reading of the preceding material. Here he also picks out suggestions for further reading that are usually, in the first part of the book, classics such as Barthes' *Mythologies* (1957). In later chapters, however, his suggestions are very recent essays or a mixture of both such as Winnicott's *Play and Reality* (1982) and the *Journal of Consumer Research* at the end of the chapter concerning things as constructive of identity. Classic references also include Douglas and Isherwood, Marx, Lukacs and Simmel, Hebdige on cultural sub-groups, actant network theory and Woodward's own work on domestic material culture and identity construction through personal narratives. There is also mention of the Body Shop and the work of designer Philippe Stark that might entice undergraduates into seeing relevance in the subject for their own lives, should such inducements be needed.

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– BOOK REVIEW –

LOOKING FLASH: CLOTHING IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Edited by Bronwyn Labrum, Fiona McKergow & Stephanie Gibson
Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2007.
288pp. RRP $49.99 ISBN: 978–1-86940–397–3

Reviewed by
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Over the last decade or so, there has been a proliferation of studies from within the social sciences that explore the materiality of cloth and clothing. Clothing is now the leading concern of a host of interdisciplinary studies whose theoretical scope and justification was marked by the appearance of the work of Jane Schneider and Annette Weiner in 1989. The significance of their work lies in the fact that it drew attention to the seriousness of clothing as a material expression of genealogy, history and social memory, finally laying to rest the idea that clothing could be treated as some sort of trivial expression of social relations. This volume takes inspiration from this, and in so doing, presents a weighty contribution to the study of cloth and clothing in society from the regional perspective of Aotearoa New Zealand.

The book consists of fourteen chapters from different authors, all featuring many fascinating and compelling photographs. Given the richness of the material, it is difficult to summarise each paper in any depth. However, any reader will notice a strong focus of the volume is the study of museum collections of clothing and their histories as well as the social context for key clothing styles that have helped shape settler society and Maori culture in New Zealand. The diverse content of the paper contributions weaves together a textured understanding of Aotearoa New Zealand as it is fabricated in narratives of Maori skills, marine history, Scottish settlement and military waistcoats and so forth.

As way of a summary, the volume sets off with Labrum's paper – an orientation, situating the overall study within the context of interdisciplinary studies of clothing, pointing out its transition away from dress or costume history towards material culture studies. Te Arapo Wallace examines a range of clothing worn by Maori, made from dog-skin and flax, demonstrating some of the

technical skills of Maori weavers. This paper tries to unpick the western term 'fashion' and provides some concepts behind Maori clothing style through oral histories. Livingstone and Carson examine some eighteenth century dresses brought to New Zealand as heirlooms by families travelling from England. The paper explores the significance of these treasures – made from beautifully patterned silks–and the possible reasons why people packed them in their luggage. The association between kilt wearing, authority and tradition is the subject of Pickles's paper. She traces out how kilts first appeared in eighteenth century New Zealand worn by Anglo-Celtic New Zealanders from the time of colonisation, and worn for martial activities. This paper reveals some interesting historical points about the Scottish diaspora, the kilt industry, as well as the emergence of identities carried with the wearing of tartan especially amongst schoolchildren and the gay and lesbian communities.

Butts' paper takes us on a journey through the clothing collections of the Hawke's Bay Art Gallery and Museum in Napier. The author underlines the importance of clothing collections in provincial museums in New Zealand by picking off the rack some treasures in the collection including an eighteenth century Royal Irish Regiment officer's tunic, an embroidered waistcoat once worn by a Scottish civil servant, a christening gown made of Indian muslin, and a Maori waistcoat woven from plain and purple dyed flax.

One of the most novel contributions features an analysis of the clothing of castaways – marooned or shipwrecked mariners – who are often mistaken for 'wild men' because of their inadequate or improvised clothing. Quérée's highly original contribution charts the stories of shipwreck survivors in the Auckland Islands and how, once being rescued, their lives are normalised through the act of dressing. The chapter includes some wonderful historical photographs of such survivors wearing sealskin jackets, skirts, hats, and moccasins as well as sewing needles made from the bones of birds.

Tamarapa tells the story of rare type of dog hair cloak held in the Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand. She uncovers the cloak's history, documents its social significance and its technical construction, as well as its collection history using archival material and oral histories. Labrum's contribution explores the culture of second-hand clothing, examining the nature of hand-me-downs and thrift beginning in the nineteenth century. She explains how newly arrived immigrants had trouble in obtaining clothing as they had to rely on imported goods and how the manual work many undertook led to novel ways of maintaining and repairing their own clothes. In a similar way to Quérée's study of castaway clothing, this paper reveals innovative clothing practices

amongst groups in society that are seldom represented. Indeed, Labrum's paper ends with an examination of clothing in asylums, refuges and orphanages into the 1950s and 60s.

The next two chapters examine consumption and the retail clothing industry, integrating with good effect advertisements, photographs of shop fronts and cartoons. McKergow examines the experience of shopping in Palmerston North in the late nineteenth century by paying attention to shop window displays, sales techniques and promotional material. Daley is concerned with the beach and the story of shrinking swimwear. The advent of new fabrics allowed for lighter and tighter swimming outfits and this is traced alongside the changing moral economy of the twentieth century, which inevitably led to confrontations with New Zealand's authorities.

Military uniforms weave together the theme of the following two papers. Montgomerie's contribution explores the clothing fashions of women in the Second World War; and we learn how advertisements encouraged women to maintain interest in fashion and make-up despite shortages. Macdonald examines the clothing fashions of female marching teams and their connection to Scottish emblems – kilts, naming and accessories – as well as American service uniforms such as hats worn by marines.

Another contribution that stands out is the chapter on the social history of the black singlet. Gibson traces out its role in New Zealand rural identity, particularly its association to hard work and masculinity, and the transformations it has undertaken. She asserts that the singlet is iconic of twentieth century New Zealand culture and can be traced through a number of visual representations from stamps, cartoons, advertising and art. The final chapter explores the Eden Hore Collection of fashion. Malthus relates how Hore – a farmer and avid collector from Central Otago – allowed his housekeeper to wear items from his collection at local events. His collection is testament to some key fashion influences of the 1960s onwards with some extravagant items from famous designers.

This incredible range of paper contributions will provide those interested in material culture, fashion and textiles with an important insight into the history of clothing styles in New Zealand. The authors are drawn from a range of backgrounds, and include museum curators, conservators, textiles historians and experts in museum studies and Pacific studies. Readers will be treated to outstanding photographic imagery: there are fifteen colour plates which complement some of the papers together with historical photographs that

are rarely seen. These images – such as that of Mr and Mrs Imrie posing with their prized possessions, including a sewing machine (in Labrum's chapter), evoke for the reader some sense of the spirit of settler society in the nineteenth century. One quibble would be that while the editors bring together a diverse range of innovative case studies, my feeling is a better organisation of the chapters may have strengthened the key themes coming out of the volume. As a result, readers may find that they move erratically through a succession of chapters, jumping from one set of issues to another without any real reflection. Nevertheless, this volume is a welcome addition to the material culture of clothing and comes especially recommended for those with an interest in colonial clothing styles.

– BOOK REVIEW –

STONE WORLDS: NARRATIVE AND REFLEXIVITY IN LANDSCAPE ARCHAEOLOGY.

by Barbara Bender, Sue Hamilton and Christopher Tilley.
Walnut Creek, CA, Left Coast Press, 2008.
464pp. RRP $39.95 USD, ISBN 978–1-59874–219–0

Reviewed by
Dr Timothy Webmoor, Stanford University

This is an innovative and creative book. These are its best qualities. The book is also ambitious, the authors setting themselves the task of both complying with the 'archaeological morality (p. 269) of publishing the results of field investigations, and conveying the experience of working at Leskernick on Bodmin Moor, Cornwall. To do this, the authors have experimented with form and content. And while their citational circle does not extend to media studies (where, I would suggest, they would find inspiration and edification), the book exemplifies Marshall McLuhan's famous adage: the medium is the message. Reviewing experimental work, criticism rather than accolade comes easier, partly because the novelty excludes easy comparative evaluation. So I think it important to underscore that being innovative and taking risks, even though you may be safely tenured scholars, should be commended. It creates discussion, fosters debate, stirs emotion, and motivates colleagues to work harder. It disrupts our insulated routines of scholarly production. It is, unfortunately, all too rare.

The collaborative effort of the Leskernick project, steered by Barbara Bender, Sue Hamilton and Christopher Tilley, bends the parameters of analogue publication to transcend traditional site reports. The reader will not find neat topical divisions, no 'introduction', 'background' (limited to environmental characteristics and a few weather stats), 'results', 'discussion' or 'significance', followed by add on (and on and on) appendices. And with few exceptions, it does not resemble any other field project's publication in archaeology.

There is a structure, however, with the book divided into four parts. Part One somewhat approximates a conventional 'introducing the site'. Goals for the

project are laid out, the setting and unique 'awe and mystery' of the rocky hill where Leskernick is situated are conveyed, and the authors quickly dispel any notion that this will be a conventional report focused upon an archaeological site. By the time they conclude Chapter 1 stating that 'we stand with the Leskernick people at the centre of their world' (p. 35), the reader can expect to share an intimacy that will bring her to the edge of being an 'insider' of the project (cf. 266). We then receive an orienting tour of the site, followed by Chapter 3's methodology. Part Two encompasses the 'real' archaeological information. If one were after conventional details, Chapters 4–7 are were we glean the details about Bronze Age Leskernick gathered through the excavation of 400 square meters of area, and the survey of every house and field enclosure on Leskernick Hill. A rough chronology, pegged to the radiocarbon dates in Table 4.1 (pp. 88–89), develops. Initially there were the earliest stone rows and circles, with the most spectacular 'Propped Stone" and its summer solstice alignment dating to as early as the Neolithic. Then, in the hill's clitter of stones, a growing population of 100–200 people, or eight to sixteen families, built their houses and field enclosures during the Middle Bronze Age and supported a pastoral economy (p. 138). There is disagreement about whether these people inhabited Leskernick year round or only seasonally, though the directors favor the former scenario. Then there is a decrease in the number of families, leaving the hill with perhaps only 60 inhabitants. Then a gradual abandonment of the dwellings and the hill until much later medieval visitation and re-use. It is the narrative of part of the life-cycle of a landscape.

The book could have ended here with the conclusion of Chapter 7. But this book is not really about archaeological information. The remaining Parts Three and Four use the archaeological endeavor as more of a backdrop for what seems to particularly interest the project directors (or at least two of the three). This is the experience of Leskernick in the present. It is this emphasis, which makes the book stand out. It also draws the reader in – initially. What rapidly occurs, though, is an overabundance of information; sometimes repackaged for different chapters, or indeed blatantly repeated (compare diary entries of 53 with 255). There is simply too much detail. They are concerned not to 'close off alternative interpretations' (p. 86), to let 'the voices proliferate' (438, note 1.3), to avoid 'a rhetoric of authority in which closure is created and debate shut-down' (pp. 27–28). But what happens is a numbing effect. So that rather than precise details concerning Leskernick, the reader comes away with a series of theses. Which is too bad as the following chapters, though somewhat disjointed, present a range of interesting 'case studies' that span anthropology and cognate fields and which dissolve disciplinarian distinctions. The phenomenological treatment of the 'processional way' of the site (pp. 184–190)

and 'photo essay' of the neighboring ridge of Brown Willy (pp. 231–236), the artistic interventions of Chapter 13, the frank discussions of political economy in Chapter 11, and of running a public outreach exhibition in Chapter 14, as well as the visual and material culture analyses packed into Chapter 12 are examples of what's on offer. While these extra-disciplinarian studies could have been better merged with the more traditional archaeological reporting, casting the net wider like this worked well in conveying the experiential side of Leskernick.

Indeed, I wish I had been present at the 'pissing on Bourdieu's book'/burying of the excavator's trowel incident (pp. 273–274). Now that doesn't happen often! Or does it? This is another major point of the book. The 'background noise' (p. 281) or the 'back regions' (p. 298) edited out of traditional reports for being superfluous and irrelevant to the project's findings are, in fact, integral to its operation from the ground up. A reflexive acknowledgement in anthropological and archaeological fieldwork that being human, caught up in fields of relations while 'in the field', cannot and should not be bracketed off from being a 'scientist'. This is the book's 'sociology of the discipline' thesis: archaeology is a social practice in the present that makes it impossible to sieve out subjectivity from archaeological interpretations. Steeped in postprocessual and interpretive archaeology, the book holds true to the 'principle of honesty'. It is well taken, and the authors do a good job of opening up the process of how consensus in interpretation is reached by presenting discussions and diary entries where alternate views are expressed. The discussion with the geomorphologists (Chapter 9) was the best example of this.

As a corollary to this social activity thesis, in Chapter 11 the book expands upon the experience of fieldwork as initiation into craft, of apprenticeship. Archaeology is a field of relations that bind participants together as a seasonal community undergoing Van Gennepian rites of passage. While most archaeologists are highly aware of these initiatory rites, and are often drawn to doing fieldwork because of the comradeship, no other book has treated it with such serious attention.

But the book attempts to do too much with too much 'data'. Presenting these 'back stories' as well as the 'front stories' of survey and excavation, contributes to the continued inundation of the reader with repetition and innocuous details – exactly what is intervisible and from which stone? Who's trowel had more rust? Why were Danner boots better than steel Doc Martins? Just what did that post-it comment from the Altarnun exhibition say?

A postmodern paralysis. Rather than sieving all potential information through experts' experience and judgment, we have the opposite. Document it all as anything may be relevant. This forensic 'thesis' relates to the 'crisis of representation' and the claim that all statements about the past are subjective interpretations. Since statements cannot be definitively adjudicated based upon accepted criteria, and so cannot be objectively 'true', the emphasis shifts to a 'shotgun effect' approach. Put enough (multiple) interpretations out there so that amongst them all we are sure to hit upon something important. As seasoned scholars, this manic desire to document, as well as the 'concern with the manner in which the past is *written* and *presented*' (p. 27, emphasis original) is not simply experimentation for the sake of satisfying rebellious impulses and postmodern anxiety. It is backed-up by a body of theory that spans the social sciences. Yet only this exact combination – established scholars, theoretical depth and experimentation – legitimizes the book's excesses. Indeed, I suspect if any of these three ingredients were absent, the book would not have worked – literally, as I doubt very much that an established press would have published it.

Wedded to eschewing any general criteria for obtaining objectivity, opting to (over)document the rich and subjective experience of doing archaeology in the present, is another inter-related thesis. A theory of ontology, of Being-in-the-world: making places makes people. With two of the three project directors coming from Material Culture Studies at University College London, we are given the group's dictum of dialects over and over again. A statistical study could be done to present how often the phrases 'mutual engagement', 'a dialectical relationship', 'in making things we make ourselves', and so forth crop up with mantra-like consistency. The corollary is that since being is embodied, to understand this dialectical process of mutual engagement we need to attend to the sensuous and physical. This again sets themselves the most difficult task of overcoming problems of their own making, as 'neither word nor image can be substituted for being bodily in place' (p. 339). How can the book succeed, then?

Despite the explicit attempt to 'create a dialogic relationship between images and words' (p. 335), they doom themselves to failure because of the fundamental assumption that textual communication of experience is fundamental to visual forms of expression: 'photographs are typically invaded by language from the very moment we start to look at them' (p. 335). Images are inadequate by themselves as 'they remain radically underdetermined as to be incapable of constituting a narrative form' (p. 335). This allegiance to constructing narratives, of the importance of rendering the fieldwork of Leskernick in text, runs contrary to their other primary thesis: that conventional archaeological narratives inadequately convey the messiness, subjectivity and sensuous

qualities of working at archaeology. The book's priority of text over the visual ought to be denounced. The visual would seem to be *more* capable of evoking, with less 'philosophical-linguistic closure', the experience of Leskernick. I am surprised that there were not more experiments in video documentation and diaries. And while an analysis of the website is outside this review, the project would have certainly benefited from integrating new media into the project from the outset.

In the end, 'we are left with more questions than we started out with' (p. 412). This, both as a reader and as an archaeologist, disappoints me. There may have been rhetorical force behind such a pithy postmodern conclusion. Say in the mid-1990s while the project was conducted. Since this time such statements have become tiresome, part of reflexivity's redux. We cannot abdicate our anthropological and archaeological authority. We are specialists, trained in a particular practice. We have expertise and so should be able to say something a bit more definitive than this. Indeed, this is borne out of the book's sociological analyses (Chapters 11–12). While well intentioned and despite efforts at implementing 'an egalitarian and nonhierarchical vision of fieldwork organization' (p. 249), flat hierarchies are flawed. Competence, background knowledge and experience, and interests vary amongst practitioners. We tend to sort ourselves out. 'We're trapped in the hierarchy of knowledge: however much we try to democratize . . . there is an inequality' (p. 250). Steeped in Leskernick for five field seasons, I think the authors should proffer expert opinion.

Had it been published just after the conclusion of the project in 1999, the book would have been groundbreaking. Both in terms of representational form and as a capstone to the content of the theses concerning social practice, reflexivity, dialectical relationships with material culture, and even archaeological art. While admirably drawing attention to the political economy of doing archaeology at the academy and in the field, an equally uncompromising look at the economy driving publication – where the (textual) wheels meet the road, so to speak–of archaeological work would have aided in explaining the (apparent) delay of the book and pushed the book's arguments for reflexive attention to the process of fieldwork even further. In 2008, that would have been radical. But then, how long would that book have to be?

– BOOK REVIEW –

THE CARVER AND THE ARTIST: MAORI ART IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

by Damian Skinner

Auckland, Auckland University Press, 2008.
232pp. RRP $89.99 ISBN: 978–1-86940–373–7.

Reviewed by
Associate Professor Ross Hemera, Massey University

E nga mana
E nga waka
Nga Hau e wha
Kia ora koutou katoa
Nga mihinui ki a koutou
No reira
Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa

In January 1973, as a shy young man from the small North Otago high country village of Omarama, I arrived at Epsom Secondary Teachers College, Auckland. With not much more than artistic passion I was completely anonymous in the big city. Although of Ngai Tahu decent I was culturally naïve, with little understanding of Maori language. I thought that Maori art was photographs of carvings in history books.

Not long after arriving I came to the notice of two leaders in the field. As a young secondary school art teacher trainee Dame Georgina Kirby took me under her wing and Arnold Wilson became my mentor. They introduced me to a Maori arts impetus bursting with creative energy and enthusiastic people. I later learned that this creative community had gained its momentum as a result of the inaugural gathering of the New Zealand Maori Artists and Writers Society at Te Kaha in 1973. Becoming part if this extended Maori art family had a major impact on me and although my art continued to follow references to cubism and expressionism, I soon became familiar with Maori cultural values. I began to realise the importance of identifying as Maori and the significance of networking concepts like whanui (community) and whanaungatanga (kinship).

By 1975 I was a regular member at gatherings of the Auckland Branch of the Maori Artist and Writers Society and in 1976 attended the annual hui at Taurua Marae in Rotoiti. From this point on I found myself totally immersed in a Maori art renaissance, a phenomenon that helped define the shape of Maori art as we know it today. I am referring to the organisation of Maori artists that extended right throughout New Zealand during the 1970s, 80s and 90s known as Nga Puna Waihanga. As a consequence of the kotahitanga (unity) inherent in this community, I began my engagement with Maori culture, started my awareness in te reo and embarked on developing a practice in Maori focused creative arts.

I consider myself uniquely privileged to have developed a personal kaupapa (methodology) alongside so many inspirational and talented people. The Nga Puna Waihanga community advocated 'unity in the arts', 'understanding in and through the arts' and 'fellowship of artists' (Nga Puna Waihanga 1993: 3). The Nga Puna Waihanga legacy is that it did not discriminate between traditional or contemporary art. This theme is referred to throughout the Society's publication, '*Maori Artists of the South Pacific*'. The book includes traditional whakairo carvers Tuti Tukaokao and Pakariki Harrison, traditional weavers such as Rangimarie Hetet and Digger Te Kanawa side by side with contemporary artists such as Paratene Matchitt, Ralph Hotere and Buck Nin. It was also this legacy that assisted in paving the way for the creation of Ihenga, the whare whakairo at Waiariki Institute of Technology (previously Waiariki Polytechnic) carved by Lyonel Grant in 1996.

As Head of Visual Arts at Waiariki Polytechnic between 1983 and 1994 I was responsible for developing a Maori focused programme. Much of the philosophical basis for this programme came straight from the Nga Puna Waihanga '*handbook*', as it were. As a graduate of the New Zealand Maori Arts and Crafts Institute, Lyonel Grant was appointed to lead teaching in the wood studio. His appointment reinforced a community based kaupapa (plan) and creative fellowship in the arts.

More recently I have continued to develop a deeper appreciation of the context and complexity of Maori visual and material culture and where my own creative practice fits within it. Although no longer operative, the Nga Puna Waihanga kaupapa about collective aspirations still rings true. Consequently, when thinking about Maori art, mine is a view from within and, in the main, is felt rather than studied–experienced rather than theorised.

Against this background I am intrigued with an entirely different perspective

regarding Maori art. While his credentials are impeccable and his investigation entirely credible, it is from the 'outside' that Damian Skinner examines Maori art. He is, after all, an art historian not a practitioner, using a pakeha view to describe Maori art.

In *The Carver and the Artist: Maori Art in the Twentieth Century* Skinner introduces novel perspectives on how Maori art may be appreciated. The book concentrates on the period from Aprirana Ngata's leadership direction, for meeting house construction in the 1920s through to Lyonel Grant's creative work in Ihenga meeting house at Wairiki Polytechnic in 1996. Skinner uses an art historian orientated construction as a means of describing and categorising different aspects in this history.

The book sets out to examine and clarify the differences indicated in the title. The inference is that two divergent practices operate within the ambit of 20th century Maori Art. Skinner lays out his framework over the top of this period, introducing us to the Maoritanga carver and the Maori modernist artist. While Skinner publishes against a somewhat scant literary background, we must remember that a *'grassroots'* vocabulary, used by the Maori artists' community, has long been considered an appropriate way to describe these differences. Over the last 35 years or so Maori practitioners have commonly referred to these differences by the use of the term 'traditional' and its inferred opposite 'contemporary'. The term traditional is employed frequently in the book *Maori Artists of the South Pacific*. For instance, 'Pakariki Harrison claims to be a traditional carver…' (Mataira 1984: 31) and Tuti Tukaokao '…is required to work within the confines of the traditional mode…' (Mataira 1984: 39). In the booklet 'Te Moana', produced by Nga Puna Waihanga, a succinct use of these terms provides a further example. The second kaupapa (principle) objective reads, 'To evaluate the contemporary artists' movements against the solid background of cultural traditions and heritage' (Nga Puna Waihanga 1993: 2).

Latterly, however, a groundswell of debate would ensue at the mere mention of these terms. This may have been the catalyst for further refinement of these initial descriptions. For instance, Maori artist Professor Robert Jahnke (2006: 41) uses the term 'customary' as a way to describe Maori art practice. The term 'customary practice' is then used in conjunction with the arts of the meeting house (Jahnke 2006: 48). Moreover, Jahnke suggests that the Kimiora mural by senior artist Para Matchitt is an example of 'Trans-customary practice' (Jahnke 2006: 48). Professor Jahnke also defines a younger generation of Maori, whose art emanates from 'mainstream institutions' as 'non-customary art' (Jahnke 2006: 41)

In contrast to both the community vernacular and the introduction of the 'customary' suite of terms, Skinner presents a new spectrum of Maori art descriptors. Against a background of social, political and economical contexts, the works of carvers aligned with Ngata's meetinghouse programme are referred to as Maoritanga whereas at the opposite end of the spectrum, artists aligning with the Tovey era are described as Maori Modernists.

Maoritanga is introduced in connection with the carving expert Tuti Tukaokao. Skinner takes care in describing the rationale for the use of this term and links it to Tukaokao's practice. In doing so, however, he prepares the way with reference to ideas about tradition and custom. At the core of his construction he probes into the expectations placed on, and accepted by the carver, by his people. Skinner thus suggests that 'social conscience' is a key characteristic of the identity of the carver (p. 39).

Skinner embarks on an historical survey starting with the Maoritanga associated with Sir Apirana Ngata's revivalist aspirations for Maori arts and crafts commencing in the 1920s. The journey includes the initiative for the restoration of Maori carving with the opening of the Rotorua School of Maori Arts and Crafts in 1927. Next the intricacies related to balancing between adaptations of pakeha culture and Maori identity are thoroughly examined. Maoritanga is explained in relation to Ngata's 'monument' (p. 31) model for the whare whakairo. It is also in this context that Ngata's definition for the term Maoritanga is dealt with. The book examines Maori 'individuality' (p. 29) (uniqueness and identity) which is perhaps best expressed as a national style. A significant example of this is Te Tiriti o Waitangi Whare Runanga. This national style originates from Rahruhi Rukupo's, Te Hau Ki Turanga as the 'right style' (p. 37)

In 1966 the New Zealand Maori Arts and Crafts Institute opened in Rotorua and is synonymous with the master carver Hone Tiapa. We are given a full explanation of why Hone Taiapa is considered to be the leading figure in whakairo in the 20th century. Skinner draws our attention to the complexities surrounding the Maoritanga practice of Taiapa. It was in the 1950s and '60s that the staunch follower of the Ngata Maori model came face to face with Maoritanga's antithesis, Maori Modernism. Skinner does not shy away from covering the accusations levelled at the institute about 'copying' and the carving of 'souvenirs' at the expense of innovation (p. 61). Skinner opens the lid on the ambiguity surrounding individual and collective aspirations and of a culture resurrecting whilst simultaneously redefining itself. Resurrection particularly arises in the face of the lingering colonial oppression and redefinition is by way of the adaptation to, and adoption of a Western world.

In the penultimate chapter Skinner finds a champion capable of synthesising this complexity by bringing the two opposites, the carver and the artist, together into a unified whole. In the whare whakairo, Ihenga, Lyonell Grant is both the carver and the artist combing convention with creativity. The importance of Ihenga is that Grant has reconnected customary Maori carving with 'whakapapa' (genealogy) and returns them both back into the whare whakairo (p. 184). The pivotal point being that Skinner believes, Grant who is institute trained, would not have been able to achieve this without the advent of Maori modernism and contemporary Maori Art.

The book moves on to Maori Modernism, which began in the 1950s. Much of the credit for its development is attributed to Gordon Tovey. As the Department of Education's national supervisor for arts and crafts he introduced a group of Maori trainee teachers to modernist art practices. While these early artist explored mainstream aesthetics, like pakeha artists free from customary culture, their art was not yet identified as contemporary Maori art. Skinner takes us through the 1950s and '60s examining the creative practice of artists such as Pauline Yearbury, Selwyn Muru and Paratene Matchitt. It is not until the 1970s and '80s that we are introduced to Contemporary Maori Art. We are taken inside Tukaki meeting house at Te Kaha for the inaugural meeting of the New Zealand Maori Artists and Writers Society in 1973. Later renamed as Nga Puna Waihanga, this artist centred organization promoted the amalgamation of the 'genius' of the ancient past and a return to the Marae (p. 127). The single enigma being that Ralph Hotere's refusal to comment about his work places him on the margins resisting the lure of the contemporary Maori art title.

The Carver and The Artist is a bold attempt to address the gap between traditional and contemporary, between customary and non-customary, between Maoritanga and Maori modernism. Even bolder perhaps is the introduction of a European classification system to achieve this. The final section offers a revealing conclusion including a 'glossary' of art historical terms. However, just when we have become comfortable with the term modernist as a label attached to an artist such as Arnold Wilson, a trilogy of analytical terms rings out right back to the Maoritanga of Tuti Tukaotao. A resounding crescendo is reached with the terms modernism, modernity and modernisation, used to summarise the critical themes in the book; 'cultural expression', 'modes of experiences', and 'technological and social processes' (p. 204). While drawing together a succinct description of the characteristics of Maori art in the 20th century, the essence is nevertheless to provide us with a guideline on how this episode of Maori history fits into a pakeha model.

I enjoyed *The Carver and The Artist*. From my position on the inside, I am richer for the insight. A different way of understanding our history is appreciated. I predict that future discourse about Maori art will inevitably refer to the new terminology offered by Skinner. The publication includes a collection of 142 photographs, many of which are rare. In themselves they offer exceptional richness and a visual reality to this history. Along with the text, the publication becomes a treasure at the forefront of recent publications about Maori art.

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– BOOK REVIEW –

MATERIAL CULTURE AND TECHNOLOGY IN EVERYDAY LIFE: ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACHES.

Edited by Phillip Vannini.

New York: Peter Lang, 2009. 256 pp. RRP $32.95 USD, ISBN 978–1-4331–0301–8

Reviewed by
Ian Wedde

HOW DOES IT MATTER?

One way to write a review of this collection of essays is to treat it as a material object suitable for ethnographic study within the social field of Material Culture and Technology Studies in Everyday Life – where, for our convenience, 'everyday life' here encompasses the daily practices of those whose profession is the academic study of material culture and technology.

THE REVIEW AS ETHNOGRAPHY

The tautological and even solipsistic implications of such an approach are not resisted by the compilation itself. If anything it invites this approach, and its compliance provides the ethnographic reviewer with a place to start. This might be the following question: What is it about this object that so comprehensively *situates* (a signature term in the volume) it in the ethnographic field of academic material culture and technology studies?

This comprehensive question can be broken down into four parts: What is the collection's escutcheon – how does it proclaim its identity and allegiance? Behind the escutcheon, what is its discourse model – how does its organisation reveal its hegemonic aspect? And within that discourse model, what are the *emergent* qualities or *entelechy* implied by the book's semiotic consistency, its concordance of terminologies – its dialect, if you like? And finally, what signs of power, ideology and management are visible within that concordance?

Such an approach provides a way in to the issue of reflexivity in academic

publication, and not just in the disciplines associated with sociology. The likelihood that a publication like this might be effecting positive feedback to its own causes (or intentions) deserves the kind of critical attention empirical ethnography – surely an inherently sceptical practice – is well suited to provide.

THE ESCUTCHEON

The volume is published by Peter Lang Publishing Group, specialists in the production and distribution of academic texts, from published PhD theses to substantial scholarly works, some of which are by individual writers, others (as here) edited as compilations of chapters by various hands. The publisher's economy is one where products circulate within their professional user communities of interest. The publications represent (in several senses) those communities; they are the social constructs of those communities whose relationships they also perform as agents.

The publisher's aspirations are represented on-line by images of antique art paper with deckle edges and an early twentieth century typewriter keyboard. Immediately behind these symbols of historical scholarly depth the user will find a suite of practical on-line forms with which to submit proposals. The implication of the forms is that the Peter Lang Group does not commission books; rather, it assesses proposals and subsequently processes manuscripts. Sales and distribution take place on-line with print runs tailored to demand.

THE DISCOURSE MODEL

Often, the task of academic publishers such as Peter Lang is to put into circulation texts whose contributions to scholarly discussion (in the case of book-length compilations of chapters) may have begun as conference papers. In this, the book's nearest relative is the peer-reviewed scholarly journal, or even more modest compilations of un-refereed poster papers, rather than university press book titles competing for prestige (and prestigious authors) in wider markets. The publisher's imprint, then, provides an early general marker of the ethnographic meaning and *entelechy* (another signature term) of books such as this.

THE CONCORDANCE

Theorists who might be cited in an ethnography of the object (or, indeed, *technic*) *Material Culture and Technology in Everyday Life* will be found in the volume itself on a stretch between neo-Hegelians identifying effects of objectification, Durkheimian sociologists focused on social facts and the totemising of

objects, and Bourdieusian analysts of social distinction and taste; and a second loosely-coupled group whose *performance* implies varying kinds and degrees of critique of the broad confederation of materialists – chief among these are the proponents of what has become the intellectual *entrepôt* Actor Network Theory (ANT) whose chief albeit sometimes unwilling administrator is the sociologist Bruno Latour. Also in the second group are social scientists who look at the politics of choice within the frameworks of SCOT (The Social Construction of Technology), in particular Latour again, but also Pinch (included in this volume) and others; and a third component whose focus is narrative and the ways in which objects 'make meaning' or contribute to interactions through which meanings are made, including what is commonly known as 'self-knowledge'. Though his shadow falls lightly on many parts of this book, it is in the context of narrative and meaning-making that Barthes appears most cogently, and Woodward's chapter in this book is grounded lucidly in the consequences of Barthesian semiotics. Other *éminences grises* include pragmatists and instrumentalists loosely associated with the Chicago Group, especially (in this volume) the symbolic interactionist George Herbert Mead in the early part of the twentieth century.

SIGNS OF POWER, IDEOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT

The collection's citation span is wide but coherent and, in some respects, culturally managed; and includes all the above and many more contemporary extrapolators, whom the volume therefore constitutes as its networked society (and, in publisher's terms, its target market). One of the key cultural narratives enacted by the compilation is, therefore, the networked nature of this society. Another way in which the book is both narrated and enacts a cultural narrative, has to do with its clear theoretical agenda. This agenda – or thesis – involves urging the study of material culture in the direction of empirical ethnography, ethnography in the direction of objectification, and materialist approaches in the direction of the kinds of symbolic interactivity that have come to coalesce around ANT. Implied within this urging is an issue of agency: who is doing the polemic (and faintly ideological) urging, and why?

'FOR US, WHAT THAT MEANS IS ETHNOGRAPHY.'

Staying with the issue of power and management, but moving in closer under the canopy of our overarching question ('What is it about this object that so comprehensively *situates* it in the ethnographic field of academic material culture and technology studies?') we find a further cascade of sub-questions. These include the standard SCOT question about the collection's politics: What

choices does it enact and offer? Or, in ANT terms: how does it *translate* the agenda (or thesis, or urging) that has been generated within the network it performs?

Some hints are available in the book's overall plan and organisation. Its title already announces ethnographic approaches to the established disciplinary field of Material Culture studies. The implied question in this sub-title ('*What* ethnographic approaches?') is moved into view by Halton's excellent, succinct Preface in which he unpacks an ethnographic encounter with a Chicago high-rise apartment-dweller's collection of 300 flowering houseplants. Next, the book's editor, Vannini, lays out in his Introduction what is in effect a literature review which, we will find, describes the book's tool-kit at the same time as it declares its polemic:

If bringing together the tradition of material culture studies and technology studies is a key concern of this book, so is achieving that goal through methodological and epistemological means that expose the meaningfulness and polysemy of materiality, and the potential of technological relations for shaping culture (and being shaped by it). For *us* [my emphasis] what that means is ethnography ... (p. 3)

The contents then proceed to advance *our* cause in three sections: the first ('Ways of Knowing the Material World') consists of five chapters summarising theoretical approaches to the topic, most of which have been foreshadowed in Vannini's Introduction; the second ('Ethnographic Strategies of Representing the Material World') has six chapters which describe ethnographic methodologies derived or devolved from field work informed by the kinds of theory adumbrated in the first section and, again, summarised in Vannini's introductory literature review; and the third and final section ('Ethnographic Studies') consists of four examples of ethnographic field work in which the thesis, agenda, or polemic of Vannini's Introduction and literature review, theoretical approaches of Part 1, and ethnographic methodologies of Part 2, are deployed in – converge and conclude at – actual ethnographic field work case studies in material culture and technology in everyday life. This, then, in its overall structure, is a very carefully designed and managed – orchestrated – object. For the ethnographic reviewer, its design raises interesting questions about agency and power in respect of the ways the compilation has been coached in its performance.

DISCURSIVE LINKAGE AND MOMENTUM

Within each section the chapters are discrete but also discursively linked in several ways. Vannini, for example, reiterates the polemic drive of his Introduction in his Chapter 5 by concluding that interactionist approaches to material technoculture have 'the obvious potential of changing ethnography as a strategy of data collection, analysis, and representation' (p. 83). Another kind of linkage is provided by internal finger-post citations (see Vannini Chap. 5). Chapters are, for the most part, organised in consistent formats with propositions, summaries of methodological and theoretical frameworks, thematic sub-headings, conclusions or summaries, notes, and lists of references. In this, the volume resembles a practical handbook for students; indeed, it often reads like a compilation of the results of such a handbook.

Within the framework of the volume's overall structure and its managed advance from theory to praxis, an underlying discursive momentum is sustained through the repetitions of key or signature terminologies (the concordance), as well as citations and references that frequently refer back to the Introduction's literature review. There are thematic links – for example considerations of what we mean by 'creativity' in both Merrill's ethnography of home music recordists and Tilley's of home gardeners. However, the book's most persistent iterative device returns the ethnographic reviewer to considerations of how the compilation has been coached (or *carved*, perhaps) in its performance – and, of course, to what end. There are frequent signs of editorial interpolation throughout the book, of which the most conspicuous are the internal, finger-post citations mentioned above; of these the majority are to the editor's own chapters or publications.

ETHNOGRAPHIC CONCLUSION

In summary, on the strength of obvious as well as internal evidence, an ethnographic review of this collection of essays must note its highly reflexive nature; and the marked extent to which its reflexivity provides positive feedback to its managing principal or editor, and his principles or editorial authority. The degree to which this is typical of publications produced within the academic economy represented by the Peter Lang imprint would require a wider, comparative study.

THE REVIEW AS CRITIQUE

Now to some matters of judgement that have no place in a review as eth-

nography. One of the opportunities afforded by the study of material culture in everyday life is its recovery from a focus on institutions, for example the institution of professional music recording, as noted by Merrill; and a consequent opportunity to look at the effects of interaction between professional and everyday practices. This is, indeed, a rich ethnographic field, from which this book draws much of its interest. However there is also a downside, which is the risk of remaining trapped in the banality of the everyday; or of failing to accomplish what Barthes did, to (so to speak) make something of banality. Some of the writers here don't cross this bar; these are often also the most dutiful in their adherence to the approved forms of the chapters, and to the most ubiquitous terminologies, references, and citations; we might say they are the most reflexively inclined.

Almost conspicuous by its absence is a perfunctory Index. I, for one, have to wonder why more editorial attention wasn't paid to such useful work. The Index is, almost blatantly and certainly reflexively, a concordance of the volume's iconic and therefore ideological terms. More attention, too, could have gone to sourcing and incorporating texts that did justice to de Certeau's challenge to make something of the everyday.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEBATE

That said, Vannini's own Introduction and two chapters contribute substantially to the book, and while we may tire of his fingerprints we can't deny the firmness of their grip. I am puzzled – but also intrigued and encouraged – by two issues in Vannini's Chap. 5, his exploration of culture and technoculture as interaction. In downplaying 'the importance of cognitive cultural dimensions such as values, beliefs, codes and ideas' while emphasising 'the materiality of the world of interaction' (p. 73), Vannini gets to the heart of the collection's thesis. But he also opens up the possibility of a dichotomous distinction between actions and ideas and, by implication, the kind of modernist distinction between mind and body he is elsewhere at pains to refute. This would seem to be a fertile opportunity for discussion.

A second opportunity, also located in a paradox, arises from Vannini's discussion of diffused agency, not only a dynamic and useful concept in its own right but also central to the project's overall drive and focus. Warning against the danger of reintroducing elements of determinism or even animism to the discussion of materiality and agency, he suggests that 'the true characteristic of materiality is not its essence, but instead its consequentiality, thus its agency' (p. 78). One would have to wonder, here, about the possibility of slippage be-

tween 'determinism' and 'consequentiality' – a critical discussion that took Vannini's emphatic distinction as its starting point might also prove fruitful.

SOME HIGHLIGHTS

Kien's chapter on ANT is a thorough if compacted account of this somewhat heterogeneous tool-kit. It provides the collection with a number of steering devices, and at times resembles what film production managers would call a 'bible' – but it does so without losing its capacity for internal critical scrutiny. It also gets the term and concept of *entelechy* into circulation (the term subsequently encounters Vannini's distinction between determinism and consequentiality). Pinch's chapter on SCOT is also significant to the book's overall momentum, and provides some degree of critical tension with ANT, especially in respect of the possibility of 'symmetry between humans and nonhumans' (p. 51). Kien also warns against the potential for triviality in ANT-style analysis, not without reason.

Woodward's chapter on narrative begins with what may be the volume's most succinct and coherent paragraphs, and one of its most lucid opening statements: '... material things are one part of culture and they do cultural work. Being good to think with, objects are cultural categories materialised' (p. 59). So much for any overcooked distinction between actions and ideas. Further along, in the second section sampling methodologies, Woodward's pragmatism is rewarded in Richardson's and Third's chapter on cultural phenomenology (despite what looks like some editorial carelessness in mis-locating an opening statement some three pages into the text). Introducing Merleau-Ponty's useful concept of 'corporeal schema', the authors suggest that, 'movement, mobility, motility and gesture are fundamental to our somatic involvement with the world, and integral to visual perception' (p. 146). It is fruitful to think about narrative in the context of such statements, as indeed in relation to 'a regime of visibility that entails not just seeing with the eyes but with the whole body' (p. 153).

I enjoyed Tilley's chapter in the ethnographic studies section not so much for its sensible conclusions about private gardens, but because he broke step with the book's prevailing style guide and wrote engagingly, without jargon, and with warmth and appreciation for his interviewees. 'A gardener dwells ... inside the garden that he or she has created ... Thus in a metaphoric sense the gardener is inside himself or herself, in a garden body, underneath a garden skin' (p.178). In addition, Tilley worked from a substantial interview sample of sixty-five, and paid that collective the respect of reproducing verbatim some of

their own thoughts and statements about their gardens. One important effect of his approach – and, one might add, its slightly unfashionable humanism – was to open the window of his research to a wider world than the reflexively academic one by which this book is largely confined. Without wanting to ignite a pointless argument about alleged distinctions between 'pure' and 'applied' research, I have the sense that Tilley's research *matters* and might make a difference in the world through that window: that it might inform town-planning policy, guide social development and therapeutic practices, enhance empathetic understandings of identity formation, and even the political economics of domestic ecologies.

The same can be said of Laviolette's chapter on Telecare, which could be paraphrased as 'taking the clinic home'. This has involved substantial, professional and carefully designed research, in contrast to the slapdash models used by some others in this book. Looking back at Foucault for a place to launch a discussion of the clinic, and to Heidegger for some epistemological stretch, Laviolette's chapter builds a broader and better informed philosophical platform than most other contributors. Well versed in the book's concordance, he writes without jargon, and, to the relief of this reader, with humour. Like Tilley's, Laviolette's chapter clearly *matters* – it breaks the reflexive academic cycle of internalised positive feedback. 'From this empirical study [of Telecare], I would appeal for the provision of a comprehensive overview of the use of interactive assistive technologies to support the intimate act of domestic medical care' (p. 223). Such a statement has gone to work in the world first, and been reproduced in this book second. That makes it a refreshing and even salutary encounter here.

CONCLUSION: ETHNOGRAPHY AS CRITIQUE

An ethnographic reading of this volume has identified its reflexive tendency to editorially managed positive feedback. A critical reading may judge such reflexivity, both in itself and for the effects it has on the contents of the publication. I for one have no problem with the collection's overall polemic drive, which is what gives it intellectual energy and coherence: it presents a case to answer. However I would also argue that the book's reflexive introspection, highlighted by exceptions such as the chapters discussed above, inverts its advocacy for an ethnographic approach to the study of material culture and technology in everyday life.