

Croatian refugees from Central Bosnia and Croats from Croatia, good and bad Croats. At the same time, resistances to the ethnicisation of space can take an essentialist twist, for example when the category of 'decent people' is advocated for Muslims only. The presence – or absence – of counter-discourse is thus contingent and ambivalent: '[b]lame and exclusion of the ethnic factor exist simultaneously with a desire for ethnic coexistence and dissociation from the exclusiveness of nationalist politics and rhetoric. [...] people may act and appear in self-contradictory ways, not because they are schizophrenic, but because the social situation is' (p. 184). In the third part of the book Kolind examines processes of Muslim self-identification, contributing to the debates on Bosnian Muslim identities. Before the war, religion was a marker of identity among others, and a 'domain of loose moral imperatives – hospitality, cleanliness, generosity, honesty, kindness, courtesy, industry and so on' as Sorabji argued (1996: 54); this changed after war events, as people were targeted as 'Muslim', often despite their widespread secular attitude towards Islam. Bosnian Muslims in Stolac perceive themselves as survivors of extermination, who had no better state to turn to than Bosnia. The ambivalent identification with the Bosnian state is accompanied by a nostalgic identification with pre-war values of ethnic coexistence, which have been betrayed and literally wiped out through urban destruction and physical violence. The reference to the pre-war era constitutes an important source of legitimation when advocating a rightful belonging to the city in present times; moreover, the self-identification as main victims of the war permits to claim moral righteousness and decency. Another section deals with Stolac Muslims' ambivalent self-positioning within 'Europe' and/or within 'the Balkans'. The author acknowledges his main bias, i.e. having interviewed primarily Muslims in Stolac; however, he could have explored his informants' life stories in greater detail, stressing further the intersubjective character

of the research. Moreover, the author does not provide a full intersectional analysis of intra-Muslim differentiations along axes of power other than ethnicity, such as education, class, age and gender. As the book deals with the disruption of everyday normality and morality, its gendered aspects would have deserved more attention. Kolind's work remains nevertheless an original and remarkable contribution to ongoing scholarly debates.

## References

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**Rabinow, Paul. 2008. *Marking time: on the anthropology of the contemporary*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press. xiv+149pp. Pb.: \$11.95. ISBN: 978 0 691 13363 8.**

*Marking time* is a short, readable, and very exciting book, that presents both a continuation and an expansion of Rabinow's work over the last two decades. Its key issue is the relevance of anthropology in the contemporary world, and the case that he presents for its relevance is as forceful as it is elegant. The title of the book sums up a perspective of 'an anthropologist of the contemporary', trying to combine 'a treading between goal-directed actions' and a variety of performative meanings, 'adding an active practice of inquiry of a distinctive sort' (p. vii).

'The contemporary', of course, has been the object of interest for philosophers and scientists alike. In recent anthropological literature, there is, of course, Marc Augé's *Pour une anthropologie des mondes*

*contemporains* (Paris: Aubier, 1994), also a little gem of anthropological literature, but that volume is concerned more with specific *theoretical* issues (like the place or role of so-called 'postmodernity'). In the book reviewed here, 'the contemporary' is taken to be 'a moving ratio of modernity, moving through the recent past and near future in a (nonlinear) space that gauges modernity as an ethos already becoming historical' (p. 2). Hence, 'observers as well as the practitioners of the contemporary are not principally concerned with "the new" or with distinguishing themselves from tradition' (p. 3). Rabinow calls this attitude the 'secessionist' one – contrasting it to 'avant-garde' or 'neoconservative' attitudes. 'Secession marks, observes and stylizes in a recursive manner' (p. 3). His interest is in understanding 'emerging forms', as opposed to previous anthropological insistence on understanding their 'reproduction'. Following up on his previous work (especially *Anthropos today: reflections on modern equipment*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), Rabinow considers 'the object of anthropological science (*Wissenschaft*) to be the dynamic and mutually constitutive, if partial and dynamic, connections between figures of *anthropos* and the diverse, and at times inconsistent, branches of knowledge available during a period of time; that claim authority about the truth of the matter; and whose legitimacy to make such claims is accepted as plausible by other such claimants; as well as the power relations within which and through which those claims are produced, established, contested, defeated, affirmed, and disseminated' (p. 4).

This ambitious task is performed in the course of the Introduction and five major parts of the book ('The legitimacy of the contemporary', 'Adjacency', 'Observation', 'Vehement contemporaries', and 'Marking time: Gerhard Richter'). Rabinow manages to combine his interest in genome studies with various philosophers and theorists' attempts to situate contemporaneity. Here one finds insights into Dewey's pragmatism ('He writes despite himself as if his objects were

atemporal', p. 7), via Habermas' technophobia ('a lightly modified version of the nineteenth-century understanding, widespread in German philosophical circles, that technology and nature are ontologically separate realms that must be kept epistemologically and morally distinct', p. 21), Canguilhem's acerbic wit (when he noted that we 'denaturalize' nature at the very moment we begin interacting with it), and Luhmann's brilliance (when he discussed 'risk' – a notion very close to one of the key terms of our world, 'security'). The ways in which knowledge is constructed can sometimes tell us more about the intentions of its creators, than even they are aware of.

However, being aware of issues (genes, biotechnologies, security risks) also depends on the place of the observer. Sometimes the examples provided are both insightful and entertaining, like Rabinow's position when trying to explain to one of his non-anthropological colleagues the meaninglessness of the concept of 'race'. In an elegant twist, we then learn that, even though 'races' do not exist, candidates for a junior anthropology positions at the University of California deemed to be 'white' were immediately eliminated from consideration (pp. 43–44).

How does one select her/his object of study? Starting from the critical remarks that Clifford Geertz directed at Lawrence Rosen and him, as they embarked on the fieldwork in Morocco in 1968, and from his immediate scepticism about the idea that they should study 'the mainstream' (Moroccan Islamic) segments of society, Rabinow, drawing up on Luhmann's *Observations of modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), sees the position of an anthropologist in the field as some kind of a 'modest witness' – following Donna Haraway (p. 34).

The book presents ideas of and bits of intellectual exchanges with some remarkable scholars – from Thucydides and his *The Peloponnesian war* (who did not write 'history,' but actually 'wrote war'), through Hegel's *Introduction to the philosophy of history* (with his admiration for 'original

history', highly relevant for the project of the anthropology of the contemporary), Max Weber's insistence that science cannot provide any definitive answers, to Rabinow's own contemporaries, like George Marcus (with his warning about the profession of anthropology – Rabinow quotes his uneasiness about a 'hyper-desire to be relevant'), and finally Gerhard Richter, a contemporary German painter, whose work and ideas resonate with contemporaneity. The phrase 'marking time' was also used to characterise Richter's work, so even the title of this book presents a nice homage to the relevance and multiplicity of emerging 'life worlds' or 'life forms'. With all of its apparent complexity, this book is elegantly simple, intelligent, and a rich overview of some of the exciting scientific discoveries in the last twenty years, combined with philosophical insights, and presenting an idea of anthropology as a critical (Rabinow would prefer: secessionist) practice that is highly relevant for the world we live in.

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**Wedeen, Lisa. 2008. *Peripheral visions: publics, power, and performance in Yemen*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. xv + 300pp. Pb.: \$20.00./£10.50. ISBN: 978 0 226 87791 4. Hb.: \$65.00./£34.00. ISBN: 978 0 226 87791 4.**

*Peripheral visions: publics, power, and performance in Yemen* is first of all a book about Yemen, and one of the most detailed recent accounts about this country at that. The author, Lisa Wedeen, takes us along an intricate and detailed journey into the intersection between political reality and everyday life in Yemen, against the background of its history. Through democratic practices and political discourses, dimensions emphasised in this book, Yemen becomes a strong case for theorizing nationhood, as national identity is built without previous models of citizenship. Seen as an experiment in state formation,

accompanied by a transition towards democracy, Wedeen finds it interesting to look at how important is national loyalty for the political order and how claims of national belonging are articulated along other dimensions of loyalty, such as religious belonging. These questions provide the red thread of the nuanced narrative of this book, as the author takes us along different discursive, institutional and individual expressions of national, democratic and pious affiliation. These different but sometimes converging forms of identification are observed through their impact on the political order, practices of activism, and modes of compliance with the dominant discourse.

Theoretically following the direction of interpretative social science, this innovative book proposes a theory of politics as performative. Its argument is that in a situation of weak state institutions, without being able to control violence and without being able to control the distribution of goods and services, national attachment is attained through the individual performance of certain forms of actions. Based on observation of multiple informal discussions during qat chews, Wedeen sees deliberation as being the dimension through which individuals act as citizens and thus embody collective nationhood. Democratic practices, she points out, may exist in a non-democratic regime and may or may not be linked to liberal values. As a sidetrack to the main argument, these findings permit her to question the theoretical link made between nationalism and secularism, as much as between democracy and liberal values. Qat chews allow Wedeen to theorise 'the work performative practices *do*' (p. 145), instead of focusing attention on the values embraced by individuals.

According to the author, the political domain is articulated by individual performances of citizenship. Individuals have different levels of attachment towards the nation state, and this attachment is often paralleled by other loyalties, which can change over time as well as form or disappear suddenly. These several dimensions of solidarity, different but maybe overlapping