Ethnographies of Encounter

Lieba Faier[1] and Lisa Rofel[2]

[1]Department of Geography, University of California, Los Angeles, California 90095-1524; email: lfaier@geog.ucla.edu

[2]Department of Anthropology, University of California, Santa Cruz, California 95064; email: lrofel@ucsc.edu

Annu. Rev. Anthropol. 2014. 43:363–77

The *Annual Review of Anthropology* is online at anthro.annualreviews.org

This article's doi: 10.1146/annurev-anthro-102313-030210

Keywords

decolonizing anthropology, capitalism, place, human-nonhuman relations

Abstract

Ethnographies of encounter are one response to calls to decolonize anthropology. These ethnographies explore how culture making occurs through unequal relationships involving two or more groups of people and things that appear to exist in culturally distinct worlds. The term encounter refers to everyday engagements across difference. Ethnographies of encounter focus on the cross-cultural and relational dynamics of these processes. They consider how such engagements bring discrepant stakes and histories together in ways that produce new cultural meanings, categories, objects, and identities. This article examines a transection of the discipline that shares this methodology. We focus on encounter approaches to (*a*) transnational capitalism, (*b*) space and place, and (*c*) human-nonhuman relations. Rather than taking capitalism, space and place, and humanness as contextual frameworks, these ethnographies demonstrate how encounter is the means by which these categories emerge.

INTRODUCTION

This article focuses on a cross section of texts that we call ethnographies of encounter. In recent decades, anthropologists have been challenged to move beyond understandings of culture as temporally fixed and spatially bounded (Bourdieu 1977, Clifford & Marcus 1986, Clifford 1997, Gupta & Ferguson 1997, Marcus & Fischer 1986). Rather than identifying and categorizing features of a culture, anthropologists now examine everyday practices to understand dynamic processes of cultural production and transformation. Ethnographies of encounter are part of this movement to understand how the cultural (i.e., cultural meanings, practices, objects, identities, and subjectivities) is made and remade in everyday life. However, whereas many recent studies focus on a single population or cultural group to understand such processes, ethnographies of encounter distinguish themselves by considering how culture making occurs through everyday encounters among members of two or more groups with different cultural backgrounds and unequally positioned stakes in their relationships. The term encounter refers to engagements across difference: a chance meeting, a sensory exchange, an extended confrontation, a passionate tryst. Encounters prompt unexpected responses and improvised actions, as well as long-term negotiations with unforeseen outcomes, including both violence and love. Ethnographies of encounter focus on the cross-cultural and relational dynamics of these processes. They highlight how meanings, identities, objects, and subjectivities emerge through unequal relationships involving people and things that may at first glance be understood as distinct.

Since the 1970s and 1980s, anthropologists have been called upon to decolonize the discipline by recognizing the colonial politics that underpin our theoretical categories and ethnographic practice (Asad 1973, Clifford & Marcus 1986, Deloria Jr. 1988 [1969], Deloria et al. 1999, Marcus & Fischer 1986). These efforts have taken a number of forms and have involved thinking deeply about the relationships between culture and power (Rosaldo 1993). The works of Michel Foucault (1977, 1978, 1984), Antonio Gramsci (1971), and others who offer tools for studying power have been widely cited by anthropologists engaged in this endeavor. Some scholars have examined colonial histories to highlight the imbrication of classical ethnography with colonialism (Asad 1973, Clifford & Marcus 1986, Cohn 1996, Deloria 1988 [1969], Dirks 2001, Rosaldo 1993). Others have experimented with narrative genre to move away from the objectifying voice of earlier ethnographic writing (Behar 1993, Dumont 1992, Stewart 1996, Tsing 1993, Visweswaran 1994). Still others have focused on the instabilities of colonial power and the metropoles' dependence on the colonies (Mintz 1986 [1985]; Stoler 1995, 2002). Finally, some have turned their gaze back on the West or traced genealogies of cultural categories to denaturalize them and highlight their internal heterogeneity (Asad 1993, Harding 2000).

Ethnographies of encounter contribute to these efforts by bringing attention to the interactive and unequal dynamics of power that shape culture making across relationships of difference. By examining how cultural meanings take shape through self-consciously cross-cultural engagements, these studies move beyond unidirectional models of power to demonstrate how relationships among unequally positioned groups shape cultural processes. At the same time, they retain a commitment to demonstrating how unequal cultural histories and forms of difference have material and political effects.

The texts we call ethnographies of encounter have thus far been treated as topically separate. They are found in subfields throughout cultural anthropology. This review in some sense constitutes this field. We group these studies together because they share a spirit of inquiry that works against colonial legacies in the discipline by placing relational approaches to power at the center of ethnographic analysis. We think of ethnographies of encounter as a transection of the discipline:

a shared set of questions that cut across different fields and subdisciplines.[1] Fields of study are created not only through their empirical content or the boundaries drawn around them, but also, as importantly, through the ways we imagine the conceptual threads pulling together different texts. Taken together, the texts we discuss below illuminate epistemic shifts across different subfields that suggest new encounter approaches for ethnographic theory and practice.

Owing to space limitations, we can begin to trace only some of the contours of scholarly work taking encounter approaches; our discussion is in no way meant to be exhaustive. To offer a sense of the range of topics that lend themselves to these approaches, and the ways that studies undertaken in different subfields can complement and engage each other, we limit our discussion to ethnographies of encounter focused on three themes: capitalism, space and place, and humanness. Concepts of capitalism, space and place, and humanness have long histories of being taken for granted as given within anthropology. Consequently, calls to decolonize the discipline pointed to them as important concepts to put into question. Scholars drew attention to the ways capitalism is taken for granted as homogenous and structurally self-reproducing (Donham 1999, Gibson-Graham 2006); they challenged classical anthropological approaches to space and place as bounded and fixed (Gupta & Ferguson 1997); and they questioned notions that humanity is essential, natural, or ontologically fixed (Haraway 1989). Because encounter approaches demonstrate the contingent, hybrid ways that cultural meanings are produced through relationships of difference, a critical mass of work adopting these methods has emerged to carry forward such projects. For the sake of clear examples, we have selected from this body of work studies that (*a*) explicitly and consistently move between the voices and perspectives of members of different groups of people or things and (*b*) demonstrate how new cultural meanings and worlds emerge through their encounter. Rather than taking capitalism, space and place, and humanness as the frameworks that contextualize relations of encounter, the ethnographies discussed below demonstrate how encounter is the means by which these categories emerge.

IMPRINTS OF COLONIAL ENCOUNTERS

If ethnographies of encounter are one response to calls to decolonize anthropology that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, then historical studies of colonial encounters written over the past several decades have provided insights into dynamics of power and cultural interaction on which ethnographies of encounter build. We trace connections among these literatures not through a single genealogy so much as through a set of influential texts from colonial and postcolonial studies that have created shared methodological strategies and theoretical stakes. Of course, colonial and postcolonial studies have inspired many scholars taking many different approaches. Ethnographies of encounter are one way they have left an imprint in the discipline.

Historical studies of colonialism inspired ethnographies of encounter because they were some of the first to take seriously questions of encounter and to examine how unequal relations of power shaped their everyday dynamics in colonial settings. Influenced by Foucault and Gramsci, among others, these studies have challenged top-down models of how power worked in colonialism and how the metropole was made (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991; Cohn 1986, 1996; Dirks 2001; Guha & Spivak 1988; Keane 2007; Pratt 1992; Rafael 1988; Stoler 1995, 2002; Taussig 1987; Thomas 1991; Uchida 2011; Wilder 2005). They offer new tools for thinking about power not as unidirectional but as involving processes of negotiation, resistance, awkward resonance, misunderstanding, and unexpected convergence. They demonstrate that culture and inequality are produced through

[1]We take inspiration here from Gammeltoft's (2008) notion of the transversal.

these processes rather than as uniform impositions. By focusing on relations of power, these studies draw attention to the links between cultural meaning, social inequality, and political experience.

Mary Louise Pratt (1992), for example, developed the concept of the "contact zone" to demarcate "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (Pratt 1992, p. 4). Contact zones show how the lives of people previously separated by geography and history are coconstituted through their relationships. Attention to these zones highlights the active role colonial subjects played in shaping metropolitan cultures and complicates unidirectional models of power. It also brought renewed attention to hybrid cultural forms that emerge in processes of "transculturation," a term Pratt borrowed from Fernando Ortiz (1995 [1947]) to refer to the creation of new cultural formations across geopolitical space through the merging and transformation of influences among two or more cultures.[2] Transculturation became a central concept for scholars writing about colonial encounters, complicating models of acculturation and drawing attention to the "impure" origins of contemporary cultural forms.

Other historical work on colonialism provided additional tools for thinking about the dynamics of engagements among unequally positioned groups. Richard White's (2011 [1991]) concept of the "middle ground" focuses on the development of shared standards of behavior, particularly around sex and violence, that arose between French traders and Algonquian nations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The middle ground is a useful concept for emphasizing the ongoing negotiations of cultural practices within unequal, but also unstable, relations of power. It brings to light the ways in which cultural actors justify their own actions in terms of the perceived (and misperceived) cultural premises of their interlocutors.

Other scholars have focused on how even violent encounters between colonizers and those colonized create both cultural innovations and dependencies. Michael Taussig (1987) drew attention to the "colonial mirror of production" to illustrate how practices of violence and healing became linked in early-nineteenth-century encounters between white European colonists in the rubber trade and indigenous peoples in the Colombian Putumayo region. He illustrated how white colonists' projections about natives' wild savagery prompted them to enact the very violence they imagined and then a century later, in an ironic twist, led colonialists to turn to native shamans for healing in which the healers acted on their perceptions of whites' perceptions of them. Conceptually, the "colonial mirror of production" highlights the ricocheting effects of mutual misperceptions based in colonial violence that lead to powerful and long-lasting mythologies. Marshall Sahlins (1985) similarly drew attention to the intimacies of violence and colonial mythologies in his discussion of Captain Cook's death and subsequent incorporation into native Hawai'ians' cosmology. He argued against the idea that non-Western cultures experienced change only when it was externally imposed by Western capitalist expansion [for a similar critique, see Wolf (1997 [1982]); for a critique of the literature on the gift, also see Thomas (1991)]. Some recent ethnographies have extended this insight by emphasizing how projects of indigenous sovereignty have entailed embodying elements of the foreign from colonial occupiers (Rutherford 2012).[3] Others

[2] In a comparative study of tobacco and sugar in Cuba (the former a product of indigenous agricultural, religious, and social life; the latter an imposition from European colonial merchants), Ortiz used the concept of transculturation to emphasize the importance of the material and cultural life of the Americas to the formation of Afro-Indian, Afro-Creole, and Euro-American creole cultures.

[3] Other related work considers the devastating effects on the colonized of seemingly benign forms of colonial rule, such as Bernard S. Cohn's (1986, 1996) discussion of the "investigative modalities" of colonialism—historiography, philology, law, museology, and enumeration. Still others focus on colonial medicine and colonial technologies of the body to draw attention to the heterogeneity of colonial populations (Anderson 2006, Ballantyne & Burton 2005, Hunt 1999, Vaughan 1991). For

have delineated how colonizers borrow cultural practices from the people they want to civilize to advance their cause, making sovereignty an open and porous matter (Grant 2009).

While Taussig, Sahlins, and others drew attention to the intimacies of colonial violence, Ann Laura Stoler (2002) emphasized the importance of sexual and domestic intimacies in colonial rule. Stoler focused on how gendered and racialized group boundaries and identities took shape as European colonial administrators policed domestic and sexual relations in the colonies. Stoler drew attention to the gap between prescription and practice for European men in the colonies (who regularly had relations with native women), and she illustrated how it created the need to constantly shore up the power of colonial normalization (also see Taylor 1984). She further demonstrated that domesticity and affective dispositions and sentiments were central to colonial rule.

These studies draw attention to the multiple, culturally productive means by which differently situated groups relate to each other. They introduce a range of concepts—transculturation, contact zone, middle ground, mirror of production, colonial intimacy—that paved the way for growing attention in anthropology to how contemporary cultural forms are the outcome of encounter. This literature also builds on studies of creoles and patois in linguistic anthropology, which examines how new hybrid languages emerge from the mixture of two or more other languages, often in colonial settings (Abrahams 1983, De Camp & Hancock 1974, Palmié 2006, Reisman 1989, Todd 1984). This focus on interdependencies and hybridity contributed to efforts to break down notions of essential ontologies and pure, bounded identities and cultural forms, while recognizing the material ways these unequally shape people's lives.

Alongside these trends in colonial and postcolonial studies, early work on encounters in anthropology tended to focus on the colonial politics of the ethnographic encounter and ethnographic categories. For instance, the contributors to *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (Asad 1973) paved the way for debates about not simply colonialism, but also anthropology's intimate relationship with colonial rule. Deloria (1988 [1969]; also see Deloria et al. 1999) demonstrated that anthropologists contributed to the invisibility of Native Americans by stereotyping them, while also furnishing the US government with information that supported their colonial policies. Nicholas B. Dirks (2001) has demonstrated how a key ethnographic category—caste—was reworked in the historical encounters among various Indian elites; intellectuals; and village, community, and political leaders with British colonial rule. The comparative study of the world history of race relations and of pan-Africanism (St. Clair Drake 1987) and attention to inequalities within cultures [or culture as a "busy intersection" (Rosaldo 1993, p. 20)] further contributed to the emergence of contemporary ethnographies of encounter by challenging the notion of culture as a power-neutral, synchronic, bounded whole. The scholars we discuss in the remainder of this article have taken these insights in new directions by focusing on not only encounters between anthropologists and their research subjects but also the everyday dynamics of encounter among all kinds of differently situated groups that participate in the production of cultural meanings. They ask how transnational capitalism, new geographies, and meanings of humanness emerge today through ongoing relationships among differently situated beings.

ENCOUNTERS IN THE MAKING OF TRANSNATIONAL CAPITALISM

Recent ethnographies of capitalism that take an encounter approach have built on studies of colonial encounters to make sense of the cultural dynamics of encounter that underpin political economic processes. They have responded to the call to decolonize anthropology by analyzing a wide

example, Nancy Rose Hunt (1999) illustrates the roles that Congolese evangelical teachers, male nurses, and female midwives played in translating and transcoding local bodily practices under colonialism in the Congo.

variety of negotiations about difference, inequality, exploitation, and exclusion. These studies link cross-cultural actors who otherwise consider themselves to be living in culturally distinct worlds. They draw on world systems theories' emphasis on the inequalities that emerge as different places are interconnected in a capitalist system (Mintz 1986 [1985]; Wallerstein 1974, 1980, 1989; Wolf 1997 [1982]).[4] Incorporating postcolonial approaches to capitalism (Chakrabarty 2000, Guha & Spivak 1988), encounter approaches bridge the division between structural histories of colonialism, production, and commerce; the meanings people give to their labor and the resources and objects they encounter and produce; and international policy and law. They emphasize contingency, unexpected outcomes, and articulations of multiple practices that make capitalism an ongoing process of creation and destruction rather than a singular, deterministic structure. Instead, they attend more closely to the dynamic production of inequality across space. These ethnographies also reach back historically to demonstrate that globalization has gone on for some time in different forms.

Friction by Anna Tsing (2005) offers a formative model of an "encounter ethnography" of global connections. *Friction* follows the lead of those who began to decolonize anthropology by tracing the traveling knowledge and imaginative projects that make environmental processes—resource extraction and the building of resource frontiers, botanical science and nature loving, global climate change models, and environmental movements—a matter of far-flung collaborations and interconnections. Rather than assume that mutual understanding or converging beliefs underpin interconnections, the notion of friction highlights how linkages can be produced through misperceptions and tensions in negotiations over cultural diversity. The concept of friction further leads us to examine how the specificities of global capitalism arise not from discrete capitalisms nor from an already formed external force, but from the necessity of bringing capitalist universals into practical action through worldly encounters. As these universals travel across difference, they are constantly reformulated. *Friction* thus demonstrates ethnographically how what gets called "global capitalism" is the product of local/global interactions.

In addition to Tsing's work, a growing number of ethnographies also trace how global commodity chains are shaped by encounters among managers, investors, producers, consumers, and various intermediaries (Bestor 2004, Choy et al. 2009a, Cook 2004, Fischer & Benson 2006, Foster 2008, Freidberg 2004, Hart 2002, Kapland 2007, Rofel & Yanagisako 2014). Here, the legacy of calls to decolonize anthropology is found in the emphasis on multiple forms of agency that nonetheless reflect colonial histories. For example, Susanne Freidberg (2004) demonstrates how complex food supply chains linking Europe and Africa owe their specificity to previous colonial histories in the way they enact novel forms of governance (e.g., "audit economies") and to differential cultural norms of food as safe, moral, aesthetic, and appetizing. Freidberg thus demonstrates how a transnational capitalist cultural economy becomes contingent on unequal negotiations among specific global north retailers, consumers, and regulators and global south producers, manufacturers, and a host of intermediaries.

Robert Foster (2008) continues this emphasis on the specificity of circulating objects in what he calls an "economy of qualities" that links transnational soft-drink company CEOs, marketers and advertisers, and consumers. He demonstrates how a multiplicity of investments, perspectives, and meanings shape multinational corporate business operations. His approach contributes to the ethnography of encounter by calling into question any story of an unfolding, unilinear global capitalism. Instead, Foster demonstrates how a moral geography of value creation can unexpectedly bring distantly located people into caring relationships with one another. This moral geography, he implies, can, to some extent, overcome the way capitalism has created neocolonial relationships.

[4]World systems theories are themselves efforts to bring colonial and capitalist histories together in one framework.

Other ethnographies that take an encounter approach to capitalism analyze how cultural diversity lies at the heart of capitalist processes and its attendant inequalities (Choy et al. 2009a,b; Faier 2011; Tsing 2014); the novel consumption practices in the global north that construct new social relationships of production in the global south (Chalfin 2004); how transnational elite capitalist managers do not construct unified interests, but instead create commodity chains from within rather than despite their differences (Hart 2002, Rofel & Yanagisako 2014); the instability of value and how it is established only through specific encounters and negotiations (Guyer 2004); how neoliberal capitalist investments can take advantage of war and instability as much as stability (Ferguson 2006); and how the temporalities of different markets can intersect to culturally shape the experiences of financiers (Miyazaki 2013). Taken together, these works eschew the idea that a unified system of capitalism influences peoples and cultures or that it exists as a sui generis phenomenon. They do not treat transnational or global capitalism as mere external context for local cultural transformations. Instead, they demonstrate that the systematicity of capitalism results from the historically specific, nondeterministic encounters that create it. They offer a means for systematically examining political economic processes by recognizing the forms of difference that constitute them.

ENCOUNTERS AND THE PRODUCTION OF PLACE

If encounter ethnographies of capitalism theorize the systematicity of capitalist relations by focusing on the cross-cultural relationships through which they emerge, other ethnographies of encounter denaturalize space and place by examining the engagements across difference that constitute these categories. Such ethnographies build on historical studies that explore how relationships between colonizers and those colonized created new geographies, such as contact zones (Pratt 1992), borderlands (Anzaldúa 1987), spaces of death (Taussig 1987), the national geobody (Winichakul 1994), diasporic routes (Brown 2005; Gilroy 1987, 1993), and oceanic worlds (Ho 2006). Rejecting the notion that colonial powers single-handedly dictated spatial relationships, earlier studies demonstrated the intimate and tense negotiations through which colonial worlds took shape. Ethnographies of encounter build on these studies to focus on place as "meeting place": "articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings" (Massey 1994, p. 154). Many of these studies examine postcolonial places or relationships. In them, the production of place and place-based identities are considered as ongoing social processes of cross-cultural encounters that are rooted in colonial legacies. These studies explore how social geographies (i.e., nation-states, localities, regions, the global, etc.) emerge through engagements among multiple, differently situated groups, and they consider how such groups are reproduced through these processes.

For example, *Labor's Lot* by Elizabeth Povinelli (1993) and *Do Glaciers Listen?: Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination* by Julie Cruikshank (2005) demonstrate that spatial knowledge and spatialized identities are negotiated and reworked through encounters among indigenous peoples and settler groups. Povinelli focused on struggles over land use in the Cox Peninsula in Australia. She compared Belyuen understandings of their labor action in relation to a sentient landscape with Euro-Australian settler discourses of land development and labor. Povinelli described conflicts between these divergent epistemologies (respectively, "The Dreaming" and "Development"), the sociolegal apparatuses that support them, and the different material realities they enable. Cruikshank juxtaposed Tlingit oral histories against French, US American, and British travelers' journals as well as research by US geophysical scientists to understand the production of knowledge about landscapes in the Pacific Northwest. She demonstrated that indigenous communities depicted glaciers' behaviors as situated within a moral universe where nature and culture could not be separated. By contrast, Europeans and US Americans, applying

Enlightenment categories and scientific instruments, wrote about glaciers as natural phenomena distinct from social ones.

Although both Cruikshank and Povinelli aim to contrast how indigenous people and settlers make sense of landscapes, they also go beyond a straightforward comparison of the groups they discuss. Povinelli (1993) focused on how "two power/knowledge regimes and the social institutions or 'apparata' that enforce these regimes" (p. 243) meet in contemporary land struggles between Belyuens and Euro-Australians. She showed that the forms of land use and understandings of place produced through these encounters are shaped by not only conflict and dependency, but also accommodation and negotiation.

Cruikshank (2005) explored how encounters among native populations and Euro-American travelers, settlers, and scientists in the Pacific Northwest shaped these groups' understandings of the natural-cultural landscape, and she considered how glaciers became players in their relationships. She illustrated how natural and cultural histories became intertwined in these engagements. In her text, encounters become historically embedded and agentive as they are interpreted and reinterpreted in the present. Both of these encounter approaches offer nuanced portrayals of colonial narratives and postcolonial experience that remain attentive to the ways indigenous peoples and settlers are unequally positioned within institutionalized relations of power in the present day.

Intimate Encounters: Filipina Women and the Remaking of Rural Japan by Lieba Faier (2009) turns to "cultural encounters" (p. 1) involving two marginalized groups whose lives are in different ways shaped by shared colonial histories. Rather than focus on how local/indigenous residents negotiate the impositions of settler populations, as Cruikshank and Povinelli did, Faier looks inversely to how entrenched local and national identities in rural Japan are reworked by recent Filipina migrants. She illuminates the linked political economic histories shaping the experiences of Filipina migrants and rural Japanese residents and the alignments and misalignments that develop between them. She concludes that the awkward resonances and misunderstandings that emerge in relationships among members of these groups have ironically been contributing to the reproduction and transformation of national and regional identities.

Mei Zhan (2009) similarly examines awkward resonances that produce translocal encounters, in this case the "worlding" of traditional Chinese medicine between Shanghai and the California Bay Area. Throughout the twentieth century, traditional Chinese medicine was refigured in relation to Western medicine. Yet, the most recent iteration highlights ironic dialogues between US practitioners who search for authenticity and doctors in China who emphasize the historical flexibility of traditional Chinese medicine. Zhan theoretically challenged what she calls "reductive globalism" (p. 6): the idea that globalization is an all-encompassing spatiotemporal context for so-called local knowledge production. In its place, she calls for ethnographic investigations of emergent socialities, dynamic imaginaries, and competing visions that make up the global.

Other ethnographies, such as *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment* by João Biehl (2005) and *Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail: Geographies of Race in Black Liverpool* by Jacqueline Nassy Brown (2005), illuminate how taken-for-granted spatialities are naturalized through ongoing engagements among different groups in postcolonial settings. These scholars illuminate how discrepant stakes, desires, and cultural understandings shape the spatial formations that emerge through these encounters. *Vita* focuses on the production of camps in contemporary Brazil where poor people with HIV, mental illness, and other incapacities are left to die. Biehl (2005) is interested in the social production of spaces of abandonment. Rather than looking to an all-powerful state to understand these processes, Biehl examined how the desires and agendas of differently situated groups and institutions—medical and psychiatric institutions, government officials, family members, and pharmaceutical industries—cut across, reinforce, and disrupt each other and how spaces of abandonment are created as people fall through the cracks between them.

Brown's (2005) book is about the making of Black Liverpool as a space of racialized localness. Her central question concerns the ways pride in, and identification with, Liverpool are implicated in the production of race and gender there. Brown explores how differently situated actors—African seamen, British shippers, White English and Irish women, Afro-Caribbean and West Indian migrants, and African American servicemen—figure in the making of Liverpool as a "local place." To understand this process, she looked to intimate relationships between White Liverpudlian women and Black seamen as well as those between Black Liverpudlian women and African American servicemen. She also examined tensions and engagements between Liverpool-born Blacks and West Indian migrants.

Although the spatialities examined in the above texts vary and power works differently in them, all aim to evoke the contradictions, complexity, and contingencies of place making by focusing on its cross-cultural dynamics. In juxtaposing different views, practices, and understandings of multiple groups, all of these studies engage some element of a comparative approach. However, they also move beyond a comparison to consider the new understandings of place, spatial identities, and land-use patterns that are produced in the engagements among differently situated groups. They also consider how the groups are reproduced through these processes. These studies join others such as Kamari Clarke's (2009) exploration of the unbridgeable gaps that emerge between understandings of justice articulated by the International Criminal Court and African groups and governments and Shiho Satsuka's (2014) study of how Japanese tourists participate in the making of Canadian nature in Banff, Canada. Together, these and other scholars identify different dynamics of encounter that create places and place-based identities in the world today: convergences and gaps (Biehl 2005), worlding (Zhan 2009), a politics of incommensurability (Clarke 2009, p. 32), dialogism and productive relation (Brown 2005, Faier 2009), and dialectic engagement (Povinelli 1993). In these texts, spatialities do not emerge through singular teleological, or even genealogical, processes. Rather, geographies are produced through uneven and unequal negotiations, breaches, resonances, and misunderstandings. Landscapes do not fit binaries of local/colonial or natural/cultural. They are always both at once. Furthermore, both knowledge about place and spatialized identities emerge as much through the processes and dynamics of encounter as through any single agenda or genealogy.

HUMANNESS IN HUMAN-NONHUMAN ENCOUNTERS

The final set of ethnographies of encounter we discuss moves beyond a focus on cross-cultural encounters among people to consider multispecies encounters involving human and nonhuman beings. This literature builds on Donna Haraway's insight that ontologies of humanness are ongoing social processes involving encounters with other beings, or as she puts it, "becoming is always becoming with" (Haraway 2008, p. 244; also see Kirksey & Helmreich 2010). Although not often discussed in such terms, Haraway's work directly extends insights from colonial and postcolonial studies to nonhuman worlds. *Primate Visions* (Haraway 1989) draws from Edward Said's (1979) text to argue that classical "primatology is simian Orientalism" (Haraway 1989, p. 10). Haraway demonstrated that a colonial form of binary thinking (us versus them) not only informed the racialization and sexualization of colonialized populations but also extended to the treatment of animals in the natural sciences. She drew attention to how classical primatology constructed human selves in opposition to animal Others, thus pushing scholars to break down this binary. Her other works offer the hybrid figures of the "cyborg" (Haraway 1991 [1987]) and "companion species" (Haraway 2003) to challenge these binary frameworks.

Ethnographies of human-nonhuman encounters, which are sometimes discussed as "multispecies ethnography" (Kirksey & Helmreich 2010) and the "anthropology of life" (Kohn 2007,

2013), build on Haraway to examine how both hybrid natural-cultural worlds and meanings of humanness are produced through multispecies engagements. Studies of multispecies encounters differ from earlier work in anthropology and political ecology that focused on human impacts on nonhuman worlds. These earlier studies treated only humans as agents in these processes. Instead, multispecies ethnography looks at mutual dependencies, influences, and hybrid ontologies involving human and nonhuman actors. Building on colonial and postcolonial studies, such work focuses on "middle grounds" (Kohn 2013, p. 148; from White 1991), "contact zones" (Pratt 1992), or "naturalcultural borderlands" (Kirksey & Helmreich 2010, p. 548) where lines between nature and culture are blurred to illuminate how human and nonhuman lives and worlds mutually emerge through multispecies relationships. At the same time, this literature is mindful of how meanings of humanness are produced through such engagements.

Consider *The Life of Cheese: Crafting Food and Value in America* by Heather Paxson (2012), which focuses on relationships among people dedicated to artisanal cheese making in the United States and the other nonhuman agencies involved (cows, sheep, goats, bacteria, etc.). Paxson (2012) is interested in how "humans and animals cultivate one another. . . within particular ecologies and economies of production" (p. 45). She approaches human-animal relations as a "mutual encounter" (p. 44), part of the "ecologies of production, an assemblage of organic, social, and symbolic forces put into productive play" (p. 31) through which artisanal cheese is made. These forces include multispecies activities on the farm and broader social, economic, and legal forces through which farm activity is organized (Paxson 2012, p. 32). For Paxson, cheese exemplifies how both hybrid natural-cultural forms and meanings of humanness are produced through a human-nonhuman encounter. By producing and consuming cheese (and often also raising the animals that produce the milk for them), artisan cheese makers craft lives and selves as human.

Whereas Paxson illustrates hybrid natural-cultural forms that emerge in human-nonhuman encounters, others have more closely examined a range of ways that multispecies encounters both inspire and create dependencies among those involved. In *Insectopedia*, Hugh Raffles (2010) explores the various species of insects with which humans coinhabit and make worlds. He asks: How do we live with them? How could we live with them differently? In 26 themed essays, one for each letter of the alphabet, Raffles demonstrates how humans live with insects, with enormous consequences for both, even when the relationship is unacknowledged. For example, one chapter, "On January 8, 2008, Abdou Mahamane Was Driving Through Niamey," describes how humans and locusts live together in Niger and the Sahel through food, famine, commerce, and violent conflict. Locusts can devastate crops, but humans also collect locusts joyously as a special snack food and to sell in the open markets. Raffles illuminates the complexities of relationships between humans and locusts, which are both antagonistic and mutually supportive, and are shaped by human conflict and nonhuman (albeit humanly influenced) forces such as drought and climate change.

Other scholars draw attention to the new semiotic forms that emerge in multispecies engagements. They consider how these communicative practices break down boundaries between humans and nonhumans at the same time as they enable the articulation of distinctively human identities. Eduardo Kohn, for instance, builds on work on creolization in linguistic anthropology to explore how Runa in Ecuador's Upper Amazon develop modes of "trans-species communication" (Kohn 2013, p. 132), such as "trans-species pidgin" (Kohn 2013, p. 144), to communicate with their dogs. This pidgin incorporates both human and animal communication modalities, at once blurring boundaries between different kinds of beings and instantiating differences among them. Kohn explains that Runa recognize the personhood of these animals, just as Runa derive part of their own selfhood and sense of humanness through their engagements with them. By turning to semiotic practices that all life shares (as opposed to what he identifies as the exclusively human realm of symbols), he illustrates how Runa relate to the animals with which they live in the forest.

The collaborative work of the Matsutake Worlds Research Group (Choy et al. 2009a,b; Faier 2011; Tsing 2014) similarly focuses on hybrid communicative practices among fungi, trees, climate, insects, scientists, pickers, and traders that are part of the lifeworlds of matsutake (literally "pine mushroom" when translated from the Japanese). Matsutake have chemical agency, emitting volatile chemicals to communicate with potential predators and collaborators. The group draws attention to how these emissions enable the formation of chemical bonds between the mushrooms and other human and nonhuman agents, for instance as humans smell and other beings variously react to them (Choy et al. 2009b). The fungus that produces matsutake grows symbiotically with the roots of certain trees, and this research group views the fungus as a collaborator in their research process, modeling its research practice on the fungus' complex, mycorrhizal practice. By attending to human-fungus-forest encounters in its research, the group tracks dependencies between different kinds of beings and landscapes in matsutake worlds and how human matsutake consumers craft lives and identities through their engagements with the mushroom.

Multispecies ethnography draws attention to humanness as an impure, synthetic cultural category. It considers how beings, species, and categories of nature/culture get made through multispecies engagements. Celia Lowe (2010), for instance, shows how human immune systems are shaped by, and understood in relation to, "multispecies clouds" that involve wild birds, domestic poultry, and the H5N1 influenza virus. Although Lowe's study and other multispecies ethnographies recognize, and rely on, categories of human and nonhuman beings, they do not take humanness for granted. Instead, they attend to how humanness is produced and transformed through multispecies relationships, and they consider the political effects of these processes (see also Choy 2011, Fuentes 2010, Hayward 2010, Helmreich 2009, Kosek 2010). Unique in their effort to look beyond the human for forms of social agency and engagement, these and other studies of human-nonhuman encounters are also part of a broader movement across the discipline to focus on dynamics and effects of encounter by taking this methodological focus on engagements across difference into new realms.

CONCLUSION

The critiques of anthropology that emerged in the 1980s center on questions of culture and power. They challenge dominant approaches that assume uniform and bounded cultures. In contrast, they insist that our cultural categories are produced through unequal relationships, and they explore how these categories unequally position people and other beings. These critiques emerged out of feminism (both second-wave feminism and third-wave critiques of it), poststructuralism (especially the work of Foucault and Jacques Derrida), critical race theory, and postcolonial studies. Ethnographies of encounter comprise one strategy that scholars have developed to incorporate these critiques into a new anthropology. This literature attempts to decolonialize ethnography not only by attending to the politics of ethnographic encounter, but also by bringing questions of encounter to the objects of their ethnographic analysis.

Encounter approaches join much recent work in anthropology that breaks down notions of essential categories and ontologies. However, they do so in a distinctive way: not by genealogically denaturalizing the categories but by considering how cultural categories are produced through relationships across difference. Although these approaches challenge the ontology of pure categories, they also recognize that worlds are built around these categories and that people's social and political economic investments in their integrity affect lives and, thus, must be acknowledged.

Encounter approaches have echoes in earlier anthropology. Franz Boas's theory of diffusion (Boas & Rohner 1969), by which he meant the geographical distribution of cultural traits among neighboring tribes, challenged both evolutionary theories of culture and universalizing arguments

about human psychology. Fredrik Barth's (1998 [1969]) theory of ethnicity began to break through the postwar national cultures approach by positing that the cultural boundaries of ethnic groups are always drawn—and transformed—in relation to one another rather than being based on cultural essences. Diffusionism was later marginalized by post–World War II anthropology, with its overwhelming emphasis on the distinctiveness of national cultures. Legacies of structural functionalism and innovations of symbolic anthropology similarly marginalized Barth in their focus on defining uniform features of a culture and their corresponding portrayal of culture as fixed, bounded, and internally consistent. However, in recent encounter approaches that emphasize emergent worlds, one can find threads of Boas and Barth.

As encounter approaches are developed across different subfields of anthropology, they carry forward these earlier challenges to the boundedness of culture. They also build on colonial and postcolonial studies' attention to the hybridity and complexity of colonial engagements and the political commitment to decolonize anthropology. These approaches place multiple relations of inequality at the center of ethnographic theory and practice. By taking a "processual approach" (Rosaldo 1993) and highlighting questions of difference, they remind us that history matters and can also be changed through the contingencies of encounter.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors are not aware of any affiliations, memberships, funding, or financial holdings that might be perceived as affecting the objectivity of this review.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to Hannah Landecker, Jessica Cattelino, Abigail Saguy, and Juliet Williams for comments on earlier drafts.

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