

als of particularity and philosophical generality to meet in “theoretically sound understandings of real human life?” “Ideally, philosophy could be prompted by the findings of anthropology to ask new questions, which would then be subjected to fieldwork by anthropologists” (275).

This volume is a serious, innovative, and patient attempt to meet disciplinary difference with candour, and to work beyond it; it is imbued with the sobriety and good faith of its contributors. It also upholds a kind of tradition in (what might now be termed) “thinking outside the box” that characterises, certainly on the anthropological side of the fence, the work of some of the most innovative and inspirational figures, including Gregory Bateson, Edmund Leach, Clifford Geertz, Ernest Gellner, George Devereux and Marilyn Strathern. Devereux (Ethnopsychanalysis. Berkeley 1978: 1–3) espoused what he called an “ergodic hypothesis” whereby a natural fact of human life would be approached from a number of different disciplinary directions the better to achieve an appreciation of the “prism-sightedness” of life and matter (the latter phrasing being from the novelist Lawrence Durrell [Justine. London 1980: 28]). The fact that a natural fact could be multiply approached – made sense of in many disciplinary ways – went to prove the facticity of the world, Devereux urged. Given this complexity in nature, was it not an intellectual duty to seek to know a thing from as many vantage-points as one could command (cf. Rapport, *Edifying Anthropology. Culture as Conversation: Representation as Conversation*. In: A. James, J. Hockey, and A. Dawson [eds.], *After Writing Culture. Epistemology and Praxis in Contemporary Anthropology*. London 1997: 177–193)?

Devereux’s ergodic hypothesis could also be said to speak to the mission statement of anthropology as an intellectual enterprise: a non-specialist “interdisciplinary discipline” (Bateson, *Anthropological Theories*. *Science* 129.1959: 294–298) that was “born omniform” (Geertz, *Local Knowledge*. New York 1983)? Has not anthropology long recognised that only through practising its “intellectual poaching license” (Kluckhohn, cited in Geertz 1983: 21) and making use of all manner of data (however seemingly amateurishly) could anthropology expect to tackle the vast intricacies of the worlds of human consciousness, experience and interaction? “Anthropology and Philosophy” takes its hopeful place in this cosmopolitan tradition of writing individual lives in the context of universal human capacities.

Nigel Rapport

**McKirdy, Carol:** *Practicing Oral History with Immigrant Narrators*. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2015. 177 pp. ISBN 978-1-62958-004-3. (Practicing Oral History Series, 3) Price: £ 17.99

“Practicing Oral History” is true to its title a how to do guide for apprentice oral historians or more experienced interviewers who would like to work with immigrant narrators. Hence it is a guidebook and concentrates on conveying information, reflections, and a plethora of practical advises on how to deal with interviewees who will have experiences of trauma, might have little or no knowledge of the new language, and might be suffering

from severe culture shock and homesickness. The book is written from an Australian perspective with some references to US American sources. The author lives in Sydney and practices as an adult educator, teaching English as a second language, and owns a consulting company called “History Herstory” (177).

If readers are looking for a theoretical or methodological reflection of oral history as a valid method in history or ethnography, they might need to look somewhere else. If they, however, are looking for a reader offering hands on project management, this book is a great place to start planning interviews and oral history and for training students. Immigrant narrators for McKirdy are assumed to be political refugees and she writes to prepare the reader for worst scenario cases. This is helpful as it encourages a high level of caution for the interviewer and most of all meticulous preparation.

McKirdy writes from a vast experience with oral history projects with immigrant communities and also projects with tangible outcomes such as podcasts, videos, exhibitions, and written material. She is focused on producing data and results that can be shared with these communities and ideally also have a potential to enhance tolerance and cultural communication in the new settlement areas of these migrants. The book is divided into nine chapters all of which give very useful introduction and additional literature on doing oral history research. Some of the advice can be found in any book on ethnographic fieldwork, but in the context of working with refugee communities or individuals such methodological guidance becomes more powerful and the advice to be prepared and informed about the culture you engage with develops a new urgency. Especially important are chapters 3 and 4 on “Trauma” and “Cultural Awareness.” McKirdy urges the reader to do their homework on the country of origin, to be familiar with the historical and political context and also possible migrant routes (borders, escape routes and refugee camps). She emphasizes the need to accept the narrator’s version of events, reminding the reader that so-called official sources of information likely are written by the very governments or regimes that forced the refugee to leave and caused trauma in the first place. “Terrible events the narrator remembers may have been officially justified, sanitised, or ‘forgotten’ in mainstream historical records” (55). Therefore, “what the community thinks is significant ... should be recorded” (22) and a “real understanding of the community is essential; otherwise the interviewer will not know what to ask” (21).

When dealing with trauma and, therefore, narratives of trauma and the performance, the actual telling of tragic and horrific events she rightly cautions the interviewer to be prepared that not just the narrator but also the interviewer might be negatively affected by the stories shared. As to the content emerging from transcriptions she prepares the reader that “[t]raumatic memories differ from normal memories that are articulated in predictable narrative structures. Traumatic memories are often disjointed ... and the memories may be fragmented” (51 f.).

The book ends with an example of a refugee story that was recorded and is now being used as a final step-by-

step guide on how to deal with language problems, how to ask good questions in simple English, how to learn about translation problems (here from Khmer language to English) to raise awareness what kind of English the narrator will speak, how to prepare and handle the interview process, how to factor in time and follow up interviews to clarify misunderstandings, and how to listen to a “Firsthand Account of Evil and Trauma.” This is all well structured, well written, and easy to follow.

Again, if you look for a practical yet deeply sensitive and empathetic guidebook on how to do research in refugee communities, this book will be a valuable source and handbook.

Brigitte Bönisch-Brednich

**Meredith, Sharon:** *Tuk Music Tradition in Barbados*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2015. 149 pp., CD-ROM. ISBN 978-1-4724-4027-3. Price: £ 48.00

Sharon Meredith’s “Tuk Music Tradition in Barbados” is an important contribution to academic knowledge about Barbados and about Barbadian music. Though the academic focus on Barbadian music is growing, it still remains quite small; many of the other territories of the region, particularly Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Cuba, Haiti but also Carriacou, the Dominican Republic, St. Lucia, Dominica, garnering more attention. If we accept, as Kenneth Bilby says, that the Caribbean is a “musical region,” then the more work that fleshes out the musical variety in the region the better. Meredith’s work does just that: providing a solid examination of the distinctive nature of tuk – a traditional Barbadian music form and practice involving bass drum, kittle (snare), flute (penny whistle), and steel (often a triangle). As I outline below, though the book makes a very important contribution to recording and highlighting the traditional music of Barbados, this text might have been further enhanced by a closer consideration of what it means to discuss cultural artifacts in a former colony.

After an introduction that maps out Meredith’s introduction to and fascination with tuk each chapter explores different aspects of the musical practice and its significance to Barbadian culture. Chapter 2 provides a history of Barbados that is designed to quickly orient the reader to the island. Chapter 3 delves into the history and development of tuk and its relation to other, similar forms of music. The references made to other, similar forms of music are useful and necessary. They are useful because they locate Barbadian musical practices within the larger sphere of African and African diasporic music and such a broad level focus is key to highlighting the continuities across the Black Atlantic. The references are also necessary because, as the writer points out, there is not a large amount of written work on tuk. Thus, along with her interviews, Meredith must build her narrative by referencing other musical practices for which there is already some historical record. As she suggests, this is one of the challenges with undertaking research in former colonies where the aesthetic practices of the majority of the population are deemed unworthy of notice by the colonial elites. The work that she does here, therefore, is vitally

important in providing a record of tuk for future scholars, musicians, and fans of the music. Chapter 4 is a close examination of the musical elements, instrumentation, and performance practices. It would have, perhaps been nice to hear even more information and even more directly from Wayne “Poonka” Willock, who, as Meredith points out, is generally accepted to be the leading contemporary advocate of tuk. Though he is an important source for the book, his voice remains somewhat muted. Chapter 5 lists spaces in which tuk has been, and/or continues to be, performed. Chapter 6 provides an introduction to the Landship, a unique feature of Barbadian culture that is both a savings society and an artistic practice – tuk serves as the musical “engine” for Landship performances and maneuvers. In Chapter 7 Meredith explores some of the changing meanings that have been articulated to tuk as Barbadians have sought to craft a post-independence national identity. Finally, Meredith has a concluding chapter that reiterates some of the key arguments made within the text.

From the above it should be apparent that this is a solid piece of research, that draws on multiple, important sources. Meredith points out that there is limited documentation on tuk, but this book draws together much of the writing that exists and fleshes it out with important analyses of performances, and with interviews of a variety of Barbadians and different performers of tuk. Nevertheless, there are a few moments in the text where the theoretical work in the book could have been stronger in permitting a more nuanced examination of the ways in which Barbadians think about and talk about tuk. Though she acknowledges that contemporary attitudes to tuk have changed somewhat as tuk has been made part of the nationalist project within the island, Meredith’s book makes a consistent argument that Barbadians are embarrassed and ashamed of tuk. She presents some evidence of this by referencing comments from *some* informants. Where this could have been made a little more nuanced, however, is in the theoretical work on what it means to be a colonial society and the impacts that a colonial past has on a postcolonial present. I am not suggesting that this is an easy matter to address. The ethnographic project must rely, as does this text, on the meaning-making practice of those who are part of the culture. Still, that attention to meaning-making must tussle with the question of layers of meaning.

Still, as I have already suggested, “Tuk Music Tradition in Barbados,” adds to the growing body of work on Barbadian music. Together with work by Curwen Best and other research on tuk that is on the horizon it looks like tuk is finally getting the academic attention that it deserves. Additionally, as a slim, clearly outlined, volume this book also has the advantage that it provides undergraduate and graduate students with a useful resource helping them explore some key practices of conducting ethnographic research. The book will be of particular interest to those in Caribbean studies, ethnomusicology, and anthropology.

Susan Harewood