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intimacy, while viewing and interpreting a film *The Twin Bracelets*. In Chapter Nine, Heather Dell focuses on an award-winning documentary, *Born into Brothels*, about how a white woman 'rescued' Indian children from their prostitute mothers. Dell criticises its neo-imperial iteration of racialised motherhood, and offers a counter-narrative of sex-worker rights held mainly by Indian activists. The last chapter, by Anne Allison, analyses the popularity of a work of fiction, *Memoirs of a Geisha*, in the United States. It deconstructs the dynamic of an Orientalist fantasy which serves as exotic escapism and which is distanced from an overt or immediate imperialist military or political-economic agenda.

Each chapter is fascinating in its own right and would be of interest to readers from a variety of disciplines, as they cover a wide geographic range and draw on multiple methods and approaches from anthropology, media studies, film theory and cultural studies. Looked at collectively, the following themes emerge: the ways in which erotic desires are ignited and sustained by media in conjunction with other social institutions, which are either at a subnational, national or transitional level; different effects various genres or forms of media have; the ways erotic desires articulate with the desire for commodities, nostalgia for the homeland or longings for modernity; and the methodological quandaries one may face while 'doing' erotics. I personally found Chapter Five, by Zhang, and Chapter Six, by Mankekar, especially enlightening.

Why the editors organised the chapters as they have is unclear. Considering the substantial size of the volume, I cannot help thinking it would have been useful to group the essays according to themes. Moreover, what could make an interesting addition to the volume is some research on the Adult Video making industry in Japan and the extensive consumption of it within and beyond Asia. Despite this, this book will be a useful point of reference, both theoretically and methodologically, for a broad audience, from those with particular interests in sexuality, gender, media and translocality in Asia, to those with a general interest in the anthropology of gender and/or cultural studies in Asia.

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Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism

ELIZABETH A. POVINELLI

Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2011

Economies of Abandonment is a critical examination of the governance of social difference within contemporary political economy in Australia and the United States. Aligning the book with the general project of immanent critique, Elizabeth Povinelli examines a number of cases to reveal the logic of a liberal governmentality

that impinges on alternative social projects and on the lives of project participants. Late liberalism is used to refer to the governance of social difference 'in the wake of anticolonial, new social movements, and new Islamic movements' that have emerged since the 1950s (25). For Povinelli, the response of liberal states has been to institute policies that recognise cultural difference only to the extent that it does not disturb core Western liberal principles. This politics of recognition is entwined with the economics of neoliberalism that limits the recognition of value to that determined by pure market logic. Social movements are subsequently abandoned by the state and left or made to die if they fail to produce market value or present a risk to the security of modern individual freedom by way of anti-, non- or pre-modern social constraints.

Povinelli's fundamental argument is that figurations of tense, eventfulness and ethical substance are key means whereby late liberalism aggregates social worlds and distributes life and death. Late liberalism is characterised by a consequentialist ethic that justifies state-distributed suffering and dying in the present on the basis of future ends. This ethic is underpinned by notions of empathy and sacrifice that are constrained by a politics of recognition that relegates radical social difference to the past.

Two works of philosophical fiction are woven into the book to help frame discussions of ethics and endurance in late liberalism. Ursula Le Guin's short story *The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas* is used to challenge late liberalism's limited empathy. Le Guin's story highlights the socially co-substantial and temporally non-transferable nature of life in liberal societies in which most citizens' wellbeing is inseparable from the suffering endured by others. Scenes described from Charles Burnett's film *Killer of Sheep* highlight 'the violence of enervation' under late liberalism, which is more a matter of 'the weakening of the will rather than the killing of life' (132). The film's main character, a slaughterhouse worker, displays a will to endure as he persists in a seemingly Sisyphean struggle. Both works focus attention on those less visible, uneventful forms of suffering and dying—the 'ordinary, chronic, and cruddy rather than catastrophic, crisis-laden, and sublime' (13)—that Povinelli sees as part and parcel of late liberalism.

Fictional vignettes run in the background as the reader encounters real-life cases of uneventful suffering, dying and endurance. This is done to greatest effect in Chapter Three, *Road Kill*, where ethnographic and statistical accounts are provided of the lives and deaths of the author's Indigenous Australian friends and their relatives. In contrast to spectacular state responses to terrorism, Povinelli captures the 'cruddy, cumulative, and chronic lethality' (146) experienced by those whose political recognition is anchored to a past that has no part in their economic future under the combined logic of late liberalism and neoliberalism. We are provided with a grim tally of illness and death among her Indigenous colleagues' families before joining the surviving members on a journey across the mouth of the Daly River in a ten-foot tin dinghy. As their bodies and boat are battered by the sea, people and vessel alike are worn down (if not out) as the state allows them to exhaust themselves against the current of late liberalism and slowly drift towards death. Neither defeated nor successful in their efforts to live

otherwise within capitalism's seams, they persevere within an informal economy of hunting and gleaning alongside welfare and wage labour while applying for state funding and private financing that demand a market outcome.

In the Preface, Povinelli notes that this book is not a work of thick ethnographic description. We are told that one reader had described it as 'austere ethnography' while the author adopts the term 'sociography'—'a way of writing the social from the point of view of social projects' (x). The ethnography is thinly though deftly delivered, while the critical theory is dense and far from plain or simple. The lengthy introduction sets out key themes and concepts, both drawing on and adding to the vocabulary of critical theory. Povinelli provides 'an alternative glossary that seeks to illuminate ways that alternative social projects aggregate life diagonal to hegemonic ways of life' (29–30). There is a risk that what is intended as a language of illumination may be perversely experienced as obfuscation and alienation, with the writer abandoning the reader or vice versa.

Economies of Abandonment is extremely thought provoking, insightful and rich in ideas. It rewards, if not demands, re-reading. Throughout the book, knots are a recurring motif along with related metaphors of entanglement, entwinement and weaving. Povinelli displays great ambition and erudition in attempting to untangle the dense knot of late liberalism. The book evokes a powerful image of alternative social projects as loose strands left dangling from this knot. A part of but apart from late liberal society, these strands are either cut off or left to fray unless they can somehow weave between spaces where they can conceal themselves and perhaps even transform the knot from within. Alongside negative critique, Povinelli argues for positive sociographies of how late liberalism creates such spaces of potentiality within which social difference endures and from which new forms of social life emerge. This is where the thread of the book ends. The book's thread is at times disjointed or tortuously tangled as it weaves between numerous concepts and contexts, but Povinelli is not afraid to knot this and that in order to unravel, critique and reveal otherwise.

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The Interview: An Ethnographic Approach

JONATHAN SKINNER (Ed)

London and New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013

The Interview is an edited volume inspired by Charles Briggs's calls for anthropologists to make interviews a central object of inquiry. Editor Jonathan Skinner and his contributors critically reflect upon, and discuss, the ways in which interviews are conducted, interpreted and represented in various ethnographic settings.