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Book Review: Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain

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in which different gypsy groups manage to deal with the host society. This essay stands as a methodological opposite to the researches applied by Acton and Weyrauch/Bell. Acton, Caffrey and Mundy's essay argues for a fragmentation of ethnographical material collected by field researchers failing to locate 'their' group in a broader historical and structural context (p. 89). Weyraugh and Bell employ the same method of synthesis of existing data (p. 27) although they are criticized by Acton, Caffrey and Mundy that they fail to present a whole analysis of Romany social controls. They are charged with restricting their examination to the *kris* of the Vlach Rom and not presenting other types of social control, such as the blood feud systems (which their essay attempts to undertake). The productive results of these controversies enable the reader of this volume to obtain a rich description of Romany legal traditions. Finally, the valuable contribution of the essay written by Hancock should be mentioned, which offers a glossary of Romany terms, many of them used throughout this volume.

In sum, this book offers a compelling and resourceful read for a wide range of scientists and professionals involved with matters of minorities culturally differentiated from broader society.

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Faye Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod and Brian Larkin (eds), *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002. 413 pp. ISBN 0–5202–2448–5 (hbk) £40.00; ISBN 0–5202–3231–3 (pbk) £17.95

This work is a collection of articles exhibiting new research in the area of media anthropology. With these essays, mostly new for this volume, the editors propose new ground for the ethnographic study of media and showcase the possibilities of thick description as a method of enquiry into the role and location of media within cultures, an approach of which the editors have long been vocal proponents. In pursuit of this aim, the volume's contributors trace the enmeshment of media consumption and production in other cultural practices, ethnic and national identities and discourses in an attempt to formulate accounts of media practice and understandings situated 'beyond the living room and studio'.

The framework that the editors have selected for this review is a political problematic which examines media as contested space in the formulation of identities, and it is this problematic which will doubtless make this volume of interest to readers of this journal. The essays themselves address five key areas in relation to this central problematic: cultural activism, representation, social engagement with media technologies,

nationalism and transnationalism in media spheres. In a work which presents such a diversity of rich evidence and thick description, it is clearly impossible to comment in detail on all of the essays in the volume. However, this journal's readers are likely to be particularly interested in the sections on cultural activism and native projects on the realization of cultural identity through local media production. On this theme, Ginsberg's essay on indigenous Australian and Inuit media production highlights the centrality of media activism to the creation and maintenance of indigenous identities, while the essays by Prins and Turner elaborate on the tensions and ambiguities inherent in such projects. McLagan's contribution to the volume resites these ambiguities at the level of representation in a delightful piece on the objectification of cultural identity through media spectacle, which also examines the political ends that these representations can be made to serve. Similarly, the role of media in the formation of diasporic identities is well considered in these essays. Schein's work on media production and consumption by Hmong refugees in the US will certainly provide food for thought in this context. Mayfair Yang's exploration of cultural (dis)embedding and the role of media in the separation of subjectivity and the state in contemporary China is an exemplar of the value of ethnographic interpretation.

Thus the strengths of ethnography as an approach to exploring media are well represented here. With such a rich, diverse and intelligently interpreted range of evidence on offer, it is apparent that any researcher working in the fields of media content, reception, technological reception and use, international communications and even media policy, cannot fail to find here things that are, to borrow a phrase, 'good to think'. The essays here ground abstractions, freshen stale debates with new evidence and perspectives and, considered as a whole, the volume acts as a powerful and timely foil to the overly simplistic consensus that has emerged around issues of globalization, media effects and identity politics in a mass-mediated age. However, this, of course, comes at a price. The concern with grounded perspectives characteristic of the Geertzian approach espoused by the editors does not encourage the production of an alternative coherent or comprehensive standpoint, and this inherent tendency in this approach is here exacerbated by the plenary format of the volume. Thus, while the volume acts as an insightful toolkit for critique, it does not itself constitute one. However, an excellent introductory essay by the editors more than compensates for this, setting the pieces in context and making explicit the links between these works and the overall trajectory of media ethnography and theory.

In conclusion, this volume will be of most use to cultural analysts with interests either in media and identity, or with media ethnography as a research method and will well reward the open-minded reader.

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