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Review of Storytelling Globalization: From the Chaco and Beyond

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purportedly nonfiction. Chapter 4 explores the political capital that men garner through demonstrating kin ties with *cholas*, women who wear polleras and are understood to mediate access to traditional homes, farms, markets, *chicherías*, and fiestas, all spaces of cultural intimacy (p. 25). By claiming ancestry to these iconic women, men whose lives do not look “Indian” strive to legitimate their “humble” and indigenous backgrounds (p. 86). It is rewarding here to see gender and kinship analyzed via interactions, logical connections, and synergies among parts of a system, in contrast to a too-frequent focus on characterizing one part (i.e., women, lineage).

For many Andean men, identity is complicated not only by biological and cultural mixing but also by perpetual es-

trangement from the opportunity to claim an undisputed self-identity. Chapter 5, connecting practices and meanings of fatherhood, patronage, and cultural patrimony, is rich with descriptions of men’s strategies for negotiating highly gendered expectations and norms that encompass both intimacy and estrangement. A key phenomenon here is the penchant for cultural legitimation through negation: in all kinds of factional debates, people (and their friends, rivals, critics) advance public arguments about who they are via claims about who they are not. In sum, *Roosters at Midnight* makes a valuable contribution to evolving understandings of political agency and indigeneity, and its rich ethnographic material responds to urgent needs for sophisticated work on men and masculinities.

Storytelling Globalization: From the Chaco and Beyond

Mario Blaser. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010. 292 pp.

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Storytelling Globalization: From the Chaco and Beyond is a creative—and to some lengths courageous—attempt to demonstrate a different kind of ethnography. Blaser’s project is to narrate the transformations of modernity among the Yshiro people of the Paraguayan Chaco, and their struggle to bring into being different versions of globality not prefigured by Euro-modern tools of thinking and representation. The book’s central aim is to take Yshiro livelihoods and narratives seriously in a way that does not reduce them to the terms of exogenous analysis. Blaser proceeds from the assumption that, ontologically speaking, there is not one world of experience but, rather, many, and that ethnography offers a chance to explore the partial connections emergent between worlds. Among the worlds that are becoming entwined in the narrative are those of the Yshiro, the Paraguayan state, missionaries, indigenous activists, and the anthropologist–storyteller himself.

Based on over 17 years of study, including fieldwork, advocacy, and historical research, this study takes up two parallel tasks as it illuminates Yshiro social movements, encounters with governance schemes, and resurgent cultural forms such as stories centered on the *yrmo* (bush–cosmos), *debylylta* initiation rituals, and the concept of *wozosh* (the tension between being and indistinction). The first objective is to describe how Yshiro intellectuals and shamans contest “the passage from modernity to globality” by enacting their own forms of relation and ways of being (p. 34). The key difference between Yshiro ontologies and the modern ontology that would remake (and represent) them is the existence of nonhuman actors and forces. Beyond merely recognizing and cataloguing Yshiro difference, Blaser takes as his second task the work of enacting a story that takes

the Yshiro world seriously. The result is an ethnography that is neither disinterested analysis nor an “insider’s account” of Yshiro culture but, rather, something wholly different: a text that bursts through postmodern impassés to show how Yshiro peoples are undermining global forms of power/knowledge. The implications for the method and craft of ethnography are clear: “continued successful story-tellings” are needed to produce and sustain bridges across lines of ontological difference that do not reproduce the “impositions of the modern regime” (p. 20).

Blaser’s approach to Yshiro entanglements with the global sets out a position other than those dominant within academia, which he describes as being either “modernist” (that globalization is the unavoidable consequence of modernization) or “rupturist” (that rejects global boosterism to focus on sociocultural disruptions of an expanding world system). Rejecting these narrative glosses on globality, Blaser uses the form and content of Yshiro myth-history to frame his stories of Yshiro worldings. With its emphasis on corporeal transformations and networked relations that extend through space and time, Yshiro myth-history is a conceptual resource remarkably compatible with some of Blaser’s other points of theoretical inspiration, including actor network theory, modernity–coloniality and decolonial thinking, and feminist explorations of posthumanism. Proponents of these perspectives will find in *Storytelling Globalization* a very creative layering of theory to provoke an ethnography of the *yrmo*: Blaser’s innovation is not only to write a story of globalization from the Yshiro perspective but also to do so by adopting the narrative and ontological conventions of the Yshiro in his own account. The *yrmo*, *wozosh*, and pluri-verse are not set out for analytical deconstruction but serve, rather, as concepts carrying the analytical load of the book. It is a fearless mash-up of critical and narrative devices from different worlds.

The book is broken into three sections, each made up of two to four short chapters. The first section, “Puruhle/Genealogies,” describes the entangling of the Yshiro yrmo (cosmos) with the Paraguayan state, missionaries, and colonists in the 19th- and early 20th centuries. This era marks the deployment of three key modern figures that sought to reorganize the yrmo: Indians (needing to be civilized or protected from civilization), Nature (as a counterpoint to civilization expansion), and Progress (of reason, the state, the human condition). These three powerful figures effect an “invisibilizing of the yrmo” as Yshiro are nearly drawn into properly modern configurations of power (p. 42). The transformation of Indians into Indigenous Peoples, Nature into Environment, and Progress into Risk provides the historical background for section 2, “Porowo/Moralities.” Here the author’s focus is knowledge-making practices—storytellings—that circulate in the late 20th century and how Yshiro began to confront developmentalism with their own values and practices. Here we learn that the Yshiro have resuscitated forms of enacting the nonhuman and mythohistorical elements of their ontologies and how this can confound the designs of policy work on behalf of indigenous peoples.

Section 3, “Azle/Translations” holds that the transformation from modernity to globality is not a transformation that happens *to* the Yshiro or other Paraguayan indigenous groups but one in which they are actively producing situated narratives. For example, “the emergence of the Yshiro Nation” as a stabilized political actor through negotiations with the state and conservation projects was the result of a “long historical process” in which Yshiro rejected both assimilation and the noble savage caricature in favor of “performing themselves in ways that were conducive to collective action” (p. 206).

Besides for a few necessary passages, the book is largely free from references and explanatory notes, leaving the emphasis on the ethnographic narrative that Blaser builds in the model of Yshiro storytelling. One could fault the author for not including *more* stories from the Yshiro, but this can probably be explained by his reluctance to adopt classic ethnographic conventions (e.g., extended quotations). Blaser is attempting to tell stories of globalization from and with the Yshiro, and the result will prove an important model for practitioners interested in producing knowledge that in a nonreductive register.

A Return to Servitude: Maya Migration and the Tourist Trade in Cancún

M. Bianet Castellanos. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010. 259 pp.

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Tourism is full of paradoxes, as numerous studies have shown. Arguably the world’s leading industry, tourism provides employment to many and often underwrites struggling economies. Moreover, it brings attention to cultural heritage and can help stabilize nations following periods of conflict. Yet, as anthropologists have often argued, tourism can provide short-term gains at the expense of long-term and sustainable development, provide uneven benefits, and commodify indigenous identities in the name of representing other cultures.

Based on long-term field research, M. Bianet Castellanos’ *A Return to Servitude* presents a carefully drawn ethnography of migration among indigenous residents of a Maya Yucatec village in Mexico who travel in search of employment to the Caribbean tourist mecca of Cancún. Castellanos built intimacy and trust tacking back and forth between the community she calls Kuchmil and the coastal city of Cancún. Employing concepts from political economy and feminist theory including the gendered commodification of labor and social reproduction, she reveals the vitality of indigenous migrants in the city and lays to rest notions of “dead and disappearing Indians” (p. xliii).

The book is bracketed by opening chapters and an epilogue that highlight two local families that Castellanos came to know well, illuminating broader processes that have been at work in the region for several decades. In seven chapters, the author provides historical background to present-day migration, discussion of agrarian reform and cultural missions that aimed to educate and “civilize” Maya youth, and accounts of tourism’s labor process, cultivation of new consumer tastes, and narratives of progress. A concluding chapter examines the rebuilding of Cancún following the devastation of Hurricane Wilma in 2005, showing that while support poured in for hotel reconstruction, low-income migrant workers were dealt a serious blow as they awaited a return to wage work.

Castellanos is interested in the question of how migrants to Cancún navigate cultural difference and the meaning of being Maya as they learn to speak English and other languages, adopt western standards of hygiene, and embrace neoliberal notions of individualized work with the goal of successfully transitioning to employment in the city’s vast tourism sector. Drawn by economic opportunities that exceed those available in their agricultural community, they learn to desire consumer goods that signal their relative wealth and modernity as new citizen-subjects. They are expected to send remittances home to their families and to