

Editorial Foreword

GREETINGS I would like to thank Thomas Trautmann for graciously welcoming me to the editorship of *CSSH*. In my six years at the journal, I have had the privilege of seeing Trautmann at work, and familiarity with his way of doing things has been my best preparation for this position. Trautmann produced thirty-five issues of *CSSH*. He read nearly every paper submitted to the journal during the last nine years, and his ability to single out the truly innovative essays – when so many were excellent – was a delight to behold. Meetings of the editorial committee were, on Trautmann’s watch, miniature seminars in which new manuscripts were assessed in a shared critical language shaped by his erudition and gentle wit. In accepting Trautmann’s invitation to follow him at *CSSH*, I decided that the sense of intellectual possibility generated in these meetings would be well worth the labors of editorship, as would be the chance to sample and support the best work now being done across the social sciences and humanities. Trautmann has left me a talented pool of reviewers (the unseen, largely unsung heroes of *CSSH*), a superb editorial committee, and the administrative savvy of David Akin, our managing editor, whose appointment was one of Trautmann’s best decisions. I am happy to say that Raymond Grew and Thomas Trautmann remain actively engaged in the running of *CSSH*. I intend to make ample use of their institutional wisdom – together, their editorships account for thirty-three of *CSSH*’s forty-eight years – and I hope the energy and imagination they have lavished on the journal will be sustained in my work.

VEXED AFFINITIES More curious than the enduring appeal of “affinities” to social science research is the problematic nature of almost any affinity that matters. Noticing a relationship between, say, Protestants and capitalism, or civil society and the bourgeoisie, or (later in this issue) between Nigeria and “corruption” usually brings with it a complex variety of moral concerns. Is the affinity real? Does it obscure other relationships? Is it ideologically motivated? Who perceives it, and why? When affinities come in the form of attraction to Others across lines of cultural difference, they trigger similar concerns. These attractions are not always mutual, and the identities (or, just as likely, the objects of identification) they produce are often criticized as ill-formed and inauthentic.

Liliana Riga explores the vexed affinity between Jews and Bolshevism, a relationship that has proved difficult to explain; for those alert to its anti-Semitic uses, the affinity is difficult even to admit. Setting the lives of

several prominent Jewish Bolsheviks against the backdrop of *fin de siècle* Tsarist Russia, Riga argues that assimilation and marginality made Bolshevism attractive to certain Jews and that their Jewish identity itself, not merely a desire to escape Jewish identity by embracing a universalist political ideology, was central to this affinity.

H. Glenn Penny takes up the special relationship between Germans and (American) Indians, tracing its fixations and dominant tropes over the last two centuries. Central to this relationship is “stereotype busting” and the relentless quest for “real” Indians. Penny tries to make sense of the German desire to identify with authentic Indians, an impulse that is now being transformed (and might well be extinguished) by new kinds of essentialism: namely, those associated with American models of race, which make the affinity Germans feel for Indians harder to justify and, for Native Americans, harder to reciprocate.

BODY BORDERS The naturalized identity between persons and their physical bodies is now widely understood to be culturally peculiar, and technological innovations are selectively reinforcing and transforming the notions of human agency that accompany this (purportedly Western, apparently modern) image of embodied personhood. The most influential innovations seem to be those that shift the border between the body and its surroundings or that reconfigure the interface of (once) separate bodies, their constituent parts, and their associated persons.

Joy Parr examines new understandings of the body that have emerged in Canada’s nuclear power plants. Here, workers protect themselves from insensible, potentially lethal hazards by extending the capacity of their physical bodies to detect and deflect radiation using an elaborate toolkit of sensors, mathematical calculations, color-coding, clothing, shields, awareness of movement, and enhanced modes of “somatic attention.” Parr argues that even when enveloped in plastic body suits, workers in Canadian plants still rely on an ethos of individual responsibility for the body and its extensions as a defense against threats the body cannot perceive.

Stephan Palmié considers bodies that are combinations of other bodies, or body materials, and how these beings challenge Enlightenment notions of “skin-bound” individuality. His analysis begins with the *nganga*, a device practitioners of *palo monte* and other Afro-Cuban religious traditions use to hold and manipulate a spirit. Composed of body parts (animal and human), soil, metal, plants, and other materials, the *nganga* houses a creature that resembles both a plantation slave and, Palmié argues, the new life forms made possible by advances in medical technology: neomorts whose organs await harvesting, living persons composed of parts from several dead or living bodies, and cell lines propagated against the will of individuals whose bodies originally produced them.

MORALIZING STATE FORMATIONS The need for the definite article in discussions of “the” state – not to mention a capital “S” – is proof that a moral field has been successfully established. Legitimacy can be bitterly contested within this field, but its definite existence is an effect that makes other state effects possible. The stakes are plainly visible in situations where “the” state cannot quite convince insiders or outsiders that “it” has a definite, normative, or even viable existence. In these cases, which are a telling mix of exception and rule, the urge to moralize (about) the state, to find ethical grounds for its effective operation, is unusually strong.

Steven Pierce, in his study of “corruption” in Nigeria, suggests that a specific legacy of colonial statecraft has produced a situation in which Nigeria’s governing arrangements merely “look” like a state. The rhetoric of “corruption” is produced by a category error, an expectation that the Nigerian state will operate in ways it cannot. Alongside these ramifications of indirect rule, Pierce examines an alternative morality of *zalunci*, or “oppression,” which is seen by many Nigerians as a quality of government that can be manipulated, unlike “corruption,” which is taken as evidence – especially by those who would like to control state resources – that “the” state has failed.

Douglas Rogers addresses similar problems of state formation. His analysis of the moral and ethical dimensions of post-Soviet Russian politics shows how thoroughly the exercise of power is structured by (changing) notions of the *khozyain*, the “master,” “boss,” and “man of the house.” A person, a set of expectations, a central figure in a network of debt and mutual obligation – the *khozyain* stands for all these things. He is also, Rogers insists, a popular model of authority against which post-socialist governance can be negotiated and the efficacy of “the” Russian state can be judged in moments of transition.

CSSH DISCUSSION In an essay charting new developments in scholarship on China, **Vanessa Fong** reviews three books that explore themes of individual subjectivity, consumerism, and lifestyle diversity in the People’s Republic. Fong is encouraged by what she sees as a necessary corrective to the traditional focus on collectivism and top-down approaches to political economy. The new fascination with subjectivities, Fong argues, is carefully balanced in these works by a continuing awareness of state power in China and constraints imposed by the global economy.