

usage of its theoretical suggestions.

It is worth noting that the final section of the book includes a sophisticated bibliography with a full index of the subjects and names mentioned in the book, making it very easy to go back to certain points of interest and to use the book as a reference text. Furthermore, the work is filled with rich commented footnotes that provide the reader with more than just the usual side-notes to the main text and help illuminate further readings and sources that allow for the deepening of the reader's specific interests.

While the book's stated objective is to write from an anthropological viewpoint, at times there seem to be insufficient connections made with the contemporary scholarly literature on, for example, collective trauma and its consequences for societies. Moments of dialogue with other anthropologists working in the area of state violence and political anthropology – such as Marcelo Suárez-Orozco, Linda Green, or Antonius Robben (who provides a different viewpoint on social trauma and questions of moral universes entailed for victims and perpetrators of state violence) – are infrequent. This could provide a moment of disappointment to the reader looking for comparison or wider discussions on current debates.

All in all, *The Empire of Trauma*, engages with anthropological topics such as representation, narration, and the concept of Othering on a very high level. It provides deep insights into the moral economy of contemporary societies (especially when it comes to the topics of migration and asylum), as well as political and juridical processes at stake in our contemporary globalized society. Finally, it manages to connect these urgent questions with a constant focus on power relations and morality.

With *The Empire of Trauma*, Fassin and Rechtman provide a new and highly valuable perspective on the topic of trauma that contextualizes and critically examines trauma in its own socio-cultural, political, and economized settings. This excellent book makes a profound contribution to the anthropological scholarship and will soon become a standard text to this important area of research.

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**Mika Aaltola, 2009. *Western Spectacle of Governance and the Emergence of Humanitarian World Politics*. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 212.**

Anthropologists anxious for new thinking on problems of global governance today may find interest, and perhaps puzzlement, in this volume. Visiting many of the topics that grab today's headlines – the so-called

'global war on terror,' the movements and management of people across international borders, military humanitarianism, the powers of political emergencies – Aaltola invents a fresh, and idiosyncratic, interpretive language for discussing international affairs. If the substantive themes are ones social scientists everywhere are addressing, the figures in Aaltola's analysis are surprising visitors on a stage crowded by contemporary clichés. You won't find Agamben's bios (the way of life proper to an individual or group in a polity) and zoë ('bare life') under the proscenium of this spectacle (and you won't find Agamben or Foucault in the bibliography, let alone Max Weber or Karl Marx). The resulting readings are, then, fresh – if also sometimes fanciful.

Chapters ostensibly touch on specific topoi where emergent and shifting global hierarchies can be sensed. While one chapter contrasts border politics in an expanding EU, a politics of balanced diversity, to the surveillance of US borders, a surveillance signifying the cementing of a secure American identity that demands defending, another chapter finds the fate of empires evoked in the smells of airport lounges. (A substandard departure lounge apparently signifies imperial decline, making this reader wonder what in the world Aaltola would make of Dublin Airport.) The hub-and-spoke world of international air travel comprises for Aaltola an 'aviopolis' and he sees the airline network as an organic skein of relations exhibiting at a global level many of the anxieties shown at national border crossings – and of course, today many of those crossings are at airports. Building on the language of bodies and subtexts of immune function, Aaltola moves from the airport concourse to the medical clinic in a chapter on 'pandemic spectacle': reflexes of both fear and preparedness characterize response to SARS, mad cow disease, HIV/AIDS, and other epidemics. Like an international tourist tarrying for a while in the shopping area of Heathrow's Terminal 5, Aaltola freely samples events and images in compiling his story. He cites televisual broadcasts, paintings by Raphael, classical histories, rumors about George W. Bush, famous speeches about Finnish fortitude ... and the official statistics of the International Air Travel Association. Scanning along, Aaltola never ceases to risk surprising interpretations and juxtapositions. In a chapter ostensibly about border policy, several pages segue into intricate discussion of the image of a man falling from the burning World Trade Center.

All of this interpretive gusto is framed by an early engagement with Thucydides and the Hippocratic medico-political theories that influenced his historiography. Intending to yield a 'neoclassical' theory of political history, Aaltola finds in Thucydides ways for understanding the entanglements of global macro-politics with local micro-politics, as when a conflict in South Ossetia in 2008 melds into larger narratives of imperial (either Russian or US) 'submergence' (regression, decline). Justifications for contemporary wars and conflicts (like the 2008 Georgian/Russian conflict) frequently invoke a humanitarian rationale

and evoke sympathy for the suffering citizen or casualty. Aaltola therefore sees in global politics the swirling 'vortices' (his word) of affect – especially compassion. The book frequently refers to sentiments or 'political emotions', and sees these sentiments incited and sited in the figures that obsess political discourse today: the immigrant, the terrorist, the bureaucrat. Moreover, Aaltola suggests that contemporary war is a symptom of diseased political bodies. Community harmony or balance (Greek: *enkratia*) is threatened by unbalanced and dangerous sentiment (self-interest, greed, anger, temptation) called here, again after Thucydides and Hippocrates, *akrasia*. *Akrasia* may harden, may doxify so to speak, into a pathological stasis. Communities plagued by this condition, in Aaltola's neoclassical reading, act out – and act outward. Lack of internal harmony, balance, and prudence produces a state or political body which scowls and claws at others, in diversionary wars for example.

What kind of political theory moves from the father of political history to CNN Headline news? I was gladdened by Aaltola's ability to skip past the contemporary analytics of sovereignty currently filling-up thousands of pages in journals and books devoted to critical theory and its cousins, including anthropology as cultural critique. But the very ease with which Aaltola diagnoses political-emotional disorder at the root of contemporary conflagrations causes concern. Writing of the mass media imagery of a would-be migrant lost at sea, Aaltola tells us that "the body in pain is not that of the man himself (the migrant); it is actually felt to be that of Europe or of its individual member states." Here as elsewhere, Aaltola tells us what is 'actually felt', but by whom – and how does he know anyway? This book is comprised principally of readings of mass media images mixed with reference to his neoclassical model of degenerating political bodies that imploded (he refers to 'black holes' of international affairs) and that suck others into the resulting 'vortex.' Spectacle indeed. Aaltola's interpretive style is all image, affect, and zeitgeist (whose voice he assumes). The problem is that global politics seems to be for Aaltola only image and sensory response. While dissecting the visual rhetoric that obscures the victims of collateral damage in the war in Iraq, Aaltola never refers to the political economy of energy supplies. In discussing the hierarchical map of global air travel hubs, Aaltola does not refer to the actual business of air travel, nor to the technological facts (such as the relative ranges of an MD-11 versus a 777) that condition where hubs can be situated. And in criticizing what people putatively 'feel' when witnessing the suffering of a migrant lost at sea, Aaltola himself rushes right past the experience of the figure at the center of his anecdote: a nameless and voiceless man.

Aaltola nevertheless puts on an imaginative and captivating show. Ethnographers, thrilled by the pyrotechnics on display, will be eager to rush to the stage door to talk to the actors and stage-hands who

made it all happen.

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## Directors Nicky Gogan and Paul Rowley, 2008. *Seaview*. Dublin: Still Films.

The film *Seaview* is an essay in 'killing time', that is, time that is deadening, but that must also be deadened. A portrait of the remaindered lives of asylum-seekers 'warehoused' in a holiday camp, deadening time is visually realized in the sustained attention to mundane institutional space and discarded objects. It is also witnessed, continuously, in the narratives of inhabitants, from those that 'talk alone, in the walking way' to the reflective obsolescence of parents, forced to watch children watching parents do nothing. Being watched doing nothing is pregnant with future cost, and this is the additional toll of deadening dead time. Seeking asylum, in one resident's words, is 'waiting for the zero point', but this waiting is haunted; what if deadened time is not the antechamber to a new life? Hope, as Ghassan Hage writes in *Against Paranoid Nationalism* is '... the future that one can detect in the unfolding of the present' (2003: 10). On direct provision, however, it can't be assumed that the present unfolds.

Filmmakers Nicky Gogan and Paul Rowley spent three years, on and off, in the 're-purposed' Mosney Holiday Centre, getting to know, among others, the Congolese, Kurdish, Nigerian, Somali and Sri Lankan asylum-seekers enduring a post-Butlins experience. Their initial aim, according to one press release, was to do background research for a fictional exploration of the Irish government's plans in 2000-2001 to intern asylum-seekers in *flotels*. 'Our true intent is all for your delight'; who needs fiction when Mosney offers you the same pathological spatial fixation as a flotel, with a free upgrade to more allusive levels of leisured incarceration? What results from embracing this dark Celtic Tiger riff on the all-inclusive resort is an unsettling, lyrical documentary that develops a distinct aesthetic counterpoint to the violence of waiting – 'we lack words to express how we feel.'

In *Ship of Fools: How Stupidity and Corruption Sank the Celtic Tiger* (2009), Fintan O'Toole notes how corporate representations of social space in Ireland in the 2000s were invariably set under blue, cloudless skies. This odd, pathetic fallacy from a pathetic, fallacious era captures a political tendency to airbrush out evidence – and particularly, troubling human evidence – that the 'best of times' did not effect a magical dissolution of relations of power and inequality. Instead, as both Michael Cronin and Peadar Kirby argue in their respective contributions to the edited volume *Transforming*