

*The Politics of the Book: A Study on the Materiality of Ideas*, by **Filipe Carreira da Silva** and **Mónica Brito Vieira**. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019. 257 pp. \$89.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780271083421.

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In *The Politics of the Book: A Study on the Materiality of Ideas*, Filipe Carreira da Silva and Mónica Brito Vieira reexamine the classics of sociology. Using a broad definition of materiality that is inclusive of all agents that interact with the creation of the text as well as the meanings derived by later scholars in their interpretations of them, the authors argue that to understand the classics, we need much more than the raw texts themselves. In fact, through various acts of translation, repackaging, framing, and reframing in the forewords of different editions, and appropriation by later scholars with their own agendas, even the commonly understood texts of the classics are unstable.

Impressively, across six substantive chapters, the authors trace backward into production and forward into reception six classic works: Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*; Mead's *Mind, Self, and Society*; Marx's *1844 Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*; Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*; Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*; and Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. As the authors argue in the conclusion, each chapter is a "case study in how books can be made and unmade, produced and reworked, in their many physical and literary permutations" (p. 202).

As explained in Chapter Two, after a cacophony of Durkheims and the discarding of Durkheim, Jeffrey Alexander was the intellectual entrepreneur who elevated the "Cultural Durkheim" of *Elementary Forms* into the dominant interpretation of Durkheim that is popular today. Key to this transition to the "Cultural Durkheim" was an updating from Joseph Ward Swain's translation of *Elementary Forms* (Swain was an American student of Durkheim's and worked closely with him on the translation)

to Karen E. Fields's 1995 translation for the Free Press. Fields expressly positioned her translation against Swain's staid version and gave *Elementary Forms*, as noted by Philip Smith and Jeffrey Alexander, a "Geertzian tenor" that facilitated a reading of Durkheim as "the virtuoso interpreter of cultural life."

While the backstory of Mead's *Mind, Self, and Society* is well known, relying in part on the extensive research that went into the 102-page story of the book's production in the appendix of the University of Chicago's 2015 "definitive" edition, *Mind, Self, and Society* is in some ways a more accurate representation of Mead's own words than is commonly recognized (in addition to the notes from Mead's students, there was also a hired stenographer in his course), and in some ways less so (the editor, Charles Morris, had a substantial hand in creating terminology and reworking the text). From this story of production, Silva and Brito Vieira then look to the book's reception, noting how Herbert Blumer and then Jürgen Habermas repurposed *Mind, Self, and Society* to serve their own purposes. While *The Politics of the Book* is essentially about the collaborative creative production of ideas beyond just the author as a god-like figure, for the authors this can apparently go too far, as they conclude that anyone who wants to know the "real" Mead should ignore *Mind, Self, and Society* entirely. They even go so far as to warn that if scholars *don't* ignore the text, Mead's reputation will decline in the discipline (p. 59). While Silva and Brito Vieira have more skin in the game for this claim than I do (Silva is an accomplished Mead scholar, and this chapter is adapted from their 2011 article in *Journal of Classical Sociology*, which begot *The Politics of the Book*), I found the claim to be a bit too all-knowingly predictive and the shift to repudiation throughout the end of the chapter to be tonally misaligned with most of the rest of the book.

While it is beyond the scope of this review to summarize every chapter, *The Politics of the Book* is impressively researched and engaging throughout. From Margaret Fay piecing together her take on Marxist alienation from scraps, to the diffusion of Du Bois's *Souls* across disciplines and eventually back

to sociology and a deep dive into Parsons's work on Weber's *Protestant Ethic*, Silva and Brito Vieira move briskly and have a knack for engaging storytelling.

Although the authors frame their research through its contribution to materiality, I was less convinced on these points, and sometimes frustratingly so. Instead, I chose to read *The Politics of the Book* for its contribution to the sociology of knowledge; and through that lens, I found it to be both deeply informative and atypically enjoyable to read. While there are debates about how to best teach classical theory—how much biography is too much and whether any is needed at all—*The Politics of the Book* makes a fine contribution to classical theory courses. Or, if you'd prefer to get more meta, by the time you get to Berger and Luckmann you can use the book to expose your students to the social construction of the classics they have read. *The Politics of the Book* is appropriate both for graduate course adoption and for sociologists more broadly who want to know the backstories on these last few shreds of common theoretical reference points that we share.

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*From Anthropology to Social Theory: Rethinking the Social Sciences*, by **Arpad Szakolczai** and **Bjørn Thomassen**. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2019. 289 pp. \$25.99 paper. ISBN: 9781108438384.

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*From Anthropology to Social Theory: Rethinking the Social Sciences*, by Arpad Szakolczai and Bjørn Thomassen, can serve two main purposes. First, it can be used as an original textbook for an undergraduate or even graduate class in social theory, as it reviews the lives and works of classical as well as what the authors call “maverick” nineteenth- and twentieth-century anthropologists and ethnologists. Among these authors, we find French anthropologists from the Durkheimian, or rather, neo-Durkheimian school, like Marcel Mauss of course, but also his

former student and quasi-contemporary Arnold van Gennep, or one of Durkheim's contemporaries, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl; as well as scholars who have worked outside the Durkheimian canon, and in disciplines other than ethnology, like Gabriel Tarde or René Girard. We also find authors trained in the Anglo-American academic context like Colin Turnbull, Paul Radin, Gregory Bateson, and Victor Turner, to cite just a few. For each of these either classical or forgotten figures forming what Szakolczai and Thomassen call the “maverick” tradition in ethnology, they select a few concepts, like that of “rituals” and “liminality” (van Gennep), “mystique” and “participation” (Lévy-Bruhl), “gift-giving” (Mauss), or “trickster” (Radin), around which each chapter after the introduction and before the two concluding chapters are organized.

The chapters generally start with little-known and relevant biographical elements that allow the reader to not only situate the author, but also understand how the key concepts under review were received and used by their contemporaries, either sociologists or ethnologists, and how these concepts have been recycled or simply abandoned afterward as a result of institutional transformations in the academic fields in which these (mostly) men worked—the latter are the object of analysis in the two last chapters. For our colleagues who want to teach a “social theory” class, this book will therefore clearly serve a useful purpose: its list of elegant and erudite intellectual portraits will help bridge the divide between social and anthropological theory, which, as Szakolczai and Thomassen demonstrate, was less meaningful at the time of the founding of ethnology and sociology than it has (unfortunately) become today, especially in the U.S. academic context.

But this book also pursues a second, and higher, ambition, which is to use these authors and their works to criticize what Szakolczai and Thomassen call the “modernocentrism” (p. 18) of contemporary social theory, which consists in privileging the study of contemporary societies (European or not), considered in isolation, never seriously considering that they might present characteristics similar to non-modern ones. For them, the intellectual and methodological