

**Han, Sallie; Betsinger, Tracy K.; Scott, Amy B. (eds.). 2017. *The Anthropology of the Fetus: Biology, Culture, and Society*. Berghahn Books. 316 pp. Hb.: \$120.00.
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Focusing on a subject both timeless and emergent, *The Anthropology of the Fetus* offers a much needed introduction to contemporary research focusing on this highly politicised entity in today's world. The fact that the foetus has been granted it's own edited volume, independent of other reproductive concerns, is in itself a milestone in the discipline on which future scholars can continue to build. This volume will be of interest to those working not only on reproductive concerns, but also scholars of personhood, subjectivity, kinship and the self, as the central themes and geographical span is vast. A four-field approach (minus linguistics) is used, with three parts subdivided into 3-4 chapters each under the headings 'Biosocial perspective', 'Archaeology and bioarchaeology', and 'Sociocultural anthropology'. Whilst the European anthropologist may find the archaeological chapters to be a somewhat jargon-laden, and perhaps even out-of-place in this volume, those more familiar with the Boas school of approach are likely to be more comfortable with the traverse across disciplines. That said, the varied approaches are successfully wielded to address and flesh out a running theme of the volume; time. As the editors state, the foetus inhabits and represents the past, present, and future. With this in mind, each subdiscipline is able to approach the subject from within a different observation of time, providing the reader with an understanding of the foetus that is not only inter-disciplinary but across points in time as well. This is well illustrated by Julienne Rutherford's biosocial chapter 'The Borderless Fetus: Temporal complexity of the lived fetal experience', in which she questions the linear timelines of foetal experience through addressing external factors that influence foetal development with a focus on epigenetics. It is argued that the foetus is a product of moments

of time beyond that of its own intrauterine development, or even that of its mother's, thus situating it within a web of experience that is profoundly connected to the past, and future, generations. Sally Han then successfully documents the crafting of the modern foetus as a social body in her chapter 'Pregnant with Ideas: Concepts of the Fetus in the Twenty-first-century United States'. The new ways of crafting the foetus in contemporary society, she argues, coincide with a shift in biomedical and social science's reworking of the foetal body, suggesting an emergent subject-foetus that is exemplified by the publication of this very book in its honour. However, this has not been globally uniform, as Sonja Luehrmann shows in her chapter on Russian Orthodox anti-abortion activism, 'Beyond Life Itself: The Embedded Fetuses of Russian Orthodox Anti-Abortion Activism'. In contrast to the North American anti-abortion constructs of the foetus as a vulnerable potential life that must be saved, the aborted Russian fetuses are understood as beings whose eternal soul's may carry more importance than worldly inhabitation, as well as being objects for the projection of personal feelings of loss, mourning regrets and doubts that might not otherwise find expression. Here one finds the discussion of foetal personhood, another significant theme that runs throughout the collected works in this volume, and across the disciplines. Looking at the deceased foetus from an entirely different perspective, Amy B. Scott and Tracy K. Betsinger's accessible archaeological chapter on postmediaeval Poland foetal remains, 'Excavating Identity: Burial Context and Fetal Identity in Postmedieval Poland', offers an alternative way to think about foetal personhood as expressed by practices from the past. Examining the distinctions in infant burial rites, the authors argue that concepts of identity and personhood are (were) created through differential burial treatment across the community, even in perinate categories. This suggests that the deceased fetuses of the past may have held more individual importance for communities than previously thought; an idea that questions quite how 'contemporary' foetal concerns really are.

Addressing multiple themes, geographical locations and disciplinary approaches, this volume offers a good interdisciplinary overview to the anthropology of the foetus and would satisfy the introductory scholar who would be advised to use this volume as a springboard into further research (for example, the work of Lynn Morgan, who is referenced frequently in the volume). Whilst it is not, nor could hope to be, a fully comprehensive documentation of the entire anthropology of the foetus, these works would act as a good starting point from which to delve deeper into the emerging scholarship on this increasingly important subject matter.

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