of each context and case. Finally, the author engages a broad scope of research from the fields of anthropology, feminist scholarship and ethics, comparing and contrasting her findings and analyses with those of classic and recent research to highlight the fundamental importance of context in the understanding of surrogacy practices.

Stockey-Bridge articulates the analysis around the concepts of hope and the gift, in the Maussian sense. These concepts, while present throughout the book, are brought to the fore in the final chapters. Hope is, in this analysis, a motivation shared by surrogates and intending parents, although its meanings differ. The Indian surrogates hope, by making themselves bioavailable for this way of forming families, to achieve better opportunities and a better life for themselves and, particularly, for their children. The Australian intending parents hope to form their families – overcoming a multitude of difficulties, disappointments and even tragic disasters – through perseverance and the services of clinics and surrogates. And so, actions that could be seen, one-dimensionally, as solely economic transactions, become multi-dimensional when seen through this lens of hope. The discussion of Mauss’ concept of the gift is thoughtful, underlining the basic relational nature of the gift. Once again, the author shows us that economics is only one part of the picture, as she contrasts the discomfort of intending parents and the lack of satisfaction of surrogates when the indisputable relationship created through surrogacy is denied, with the gratitude of the intending parents and the satisfaction of the surrogates when the relationship is acknowledged in one way or another, beyond economic compensation. The book can be read in two ways: as an ethnography of surrogacy practices, interpreted using the concepts of hope and the gift, or as an ethnography of hope and the gift, through the window provided by surrogacy practices.

The lure of hope demonstrates the richness that well-done ethnographic fieldwork and careful analysis can offer. A multitude of aspects, illustrated by people’s explanations of their surrogacy journeys, are brought into focus, encouraging the reader to rethink previous assumptions. The importance of ethnography is that it provides nuance; it is this nuance – rather than simplification – that generates new understandings of complex phenomena such as the one studied here. My only wish for this text would be for there to be more of it; I would have liked it to be a bit less streamlined, to be able to luxuriate in even more detail and examples. Specialists in the field will find this book suggestive and thought-provoking, while students will discover both exciting research and a road map for how to do and how to write ethnography.

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Thelen, Tatjana, Larissa Vetter and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann (eds.) 2017. Stategraphy: toward a relational anthropology of the state. Oxford: Berghahn Books. 163 pp. Pb.: £19.00. ISBN: 9781785337000.

Thelen, Vetter and Benda-Beckmann attempt to do two things with this book. First, they offer us a new vantage point from which to investigate the state. Second, they offer case studies that showcase their theoretical focus. In this review, I start by explaining their argument. I then use some examples from the chapters in the book to demonstrate how their approach succeeds, and where they left me wanting more.
The editors argue that anthropology’s ‘cultural turn’ led to a preponderance of work on representations of the state. Anthropologists following Gupta (1995) addressed this discursive construction of the state through the everyday practices of the people being studied. Thus a dichotomy was opened up between state images and practices.

To bridge this gap the editors suggest a focus on relations between social actors. They follow Gluckman in arguing that the stability of political systems has to be worked at, through the establishment and re-establishment of ties between people. It is through a focus on these ties, on what happens between people, that state images, practices and formations can be brought into view.

The introduction succeeds in establishing their theoretical contribution and its usefulness for understanding the state. I have two quibbles. First, they mention Veena Das, without mentioning that her theoretical focus actually shares some similarities with theirs. That is, she investigates the state by focusing on how its representations emerge within concrete social relations. That said, the existence of another researcher with a similar mindset does not negate the value of their approach, even if it does take some shine off its novelty.

My second quibble is with the name they give to their theoretical approach: ‘stategraphy’. They do not explain the neologism. Since the suffix ‘graphy’ refers to writing, I understood stategraphy to mean something like ‘writing the state’, which perhaps would have been a more appropriate way to categorise the kind of anthropology that they are trying to move beyond, that is, an anthropology that focuses on representations at the expense of other foci of attention.

The case studies all focus on welfare services, and are all based in Europe, but spread over what they call ‘post-socialist and post-welfare states’ (p. 2). The editors and authors have clearly worked cooperatively with one another, as evidenced by interesting comparisons between chapters. For example, Dubois’s chapter describes how French bureaucrats enact state welfare policies. Dubois’s investigation of the uneasy relations between bureaucrats and citizens teases out how the bureaucrats’ moral judgements play a role in the citizens’ experiences of state policies. Forbes and James’s chapter – based in the UK – then focuses on the ‘givers of advice’ who ‘have become increasingly essential to help people … interpret, mediate, or challenge the often inappropriate decisions made by the kinds of bureaucrats Dubois describes’ (p. 74). The comparison between different relations in different states thus helps in building a larger picture of how social actors understand and make states work.

Most chapters construct their arguments by layering intricately detailed ethnographic material with a wealth of contextual and historical information. This combination allows the authors to succeed in the editors’ stated aim of investigating how actors maintain images of state coherence by drawing on and reproducing old discourses, even as they transform them. Read thus gives fascinating new insights to how the boundaries between state and civil society are (re)produced in hospitals in the Czech Republic. Thelen, Thiemann and Roth do the same with state and kin in elder care in Serbia.

The pattern of investigating how actors put work into maintaining the stability of the state within the images they use in their relationships is replicated in all of the chapters. This replication, the shared focus of attention on welfare services, and the similarities of the arguments of the chapters contribute to the coherence of the volume. However, I wonder if the consistency
of the contributors’ arguments has come at the expense of some ethnographic diversity. Perhaps the relational approach could also have revealed examples of social actors putting effort into maintaining an image of the state as dynamic or incoherent, rather than stable or coherent.

Finally, I must comment on the prose, which is at times dense, replete with floating nouns and pronouns that hinder intelligibility. This will make the introduction and some chapters somewhat inaccessible to undergraduate or lay readers. However, the persistent reader will be rewarded with a fresh theoretical approach to the state and, most importantly, richly detailed ethnographic case studies.

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Reference
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Theodossopoulos, Dimitrios. 2016. Exoticisation undressed: ethnographic nostalgia and authenticity in Emberá clothes. 240 pp. Hb.: £80.00. Manchester: Manchester University Press. ISBN: 9781526100832.

A tourist walks into an Amazonian village and looks for authenticity. What does an anthropologist look for? As Dimitrios Theodossopoulos muses in Exoticisation undressed, anthropologists enter the field with a gaze at least partly shaped by other ethnographies. Because these portray the way things were, he argues, we inevitably catch a dose of ‘ethnographic nostalgia’.

Much has been written on anthropologists’ foibles as knowledge producers. While Theodossopoulos joins a critical crowd, he does so through an intriguing case study: clothing. What others wear is often taken to index their tradition or modernity. Across nine digestibly detailed chapters, Exoticisation undressed troubles the conflation of unsullied culture with exotic costume. And, like Renato Rosaldo (‘Imperialist nostalgia’, p. 2), Theodossopoulos reflexively admits his own disappointment over ‘others’ in t-shirts.

For the Emberá of Panama, the book’s subjects, clothing is the stuff of performance and identity, fashion and comfort, choice and change. Clothing surely is for us all, but as indigenous people in a region associated with nature and cultural otherness, the Emberá offer a rich example for Theodossopoulos’ deconstructive approach.

Chapters 1 and 2 introduce the Emberá in – and out of – their traditional attire: men’s andeá loincloth and amburá bead belt, and women’s paruma wrapped skirt. Emberá dress traditionally to greet tourists (and anthropologists). They dress in shorts, t-shirts and other modern attire to visit the city or work at home. They also conveniently combine both traditional and modern clothes. What Emberá wear, when and why tells of changing indigenous identities (Chapter 3), developing tourism and ‘representational self-awareness’ (Chapter 6), fashions and global textiles (Chapter 8), and of everyday ordinariness (Chapter 7).

The message behind these chapters – that the Emberá do not always dress traditionally, and that this represents neither