In the last part of the book, Hillis explores how gay men use webcams to engage with the paradoxes created by fetishism coupled with widespread homophobia. Why gay men? Both privileged as men and stigmatized as queer, gay men were early adaptors of a technology that allowed them to be, in their own minds, both public and private about their sexuality and have a modicum of control over their fetishization. He points out how economically difficult being an early adaptor (and, thus, early adapter) of webcams turns out to be. This was a serious, and often unsustainable, financial commitment as well as an aesthetic commitment on the part of these gay men. In addition, Hillis suggests that gay men have parts of their own ambivalent social status confirmed by the mechanics of virtual presence spatially. Virtually, as Hillis argues at numerous points in the book, one is always both online and embodied, virtual presence always involves a representational anchor elsewhere. Gay men face a similar situation temporally: denied full acknowledgment in the present moment, they orient toward a possible future of acceptance, of being fully acknowledged as present, always here and not here, now and not now. Lastly, gay men struggle with how their telefetish is always commodified. According to Hillis, in these instances, they are actively volunteering to be fetishized, which is both affirming and disquieting in equal measure. Hillis suggests that over time, this tension is unsustainable, and many gay men only volunteer to be fetishized for a certain period and then quit.

*Online a Lot of the Time* asks significant philosophical questions about how our theoretical traditions are challenged by online communication. Ethnographers may prefer concrete examples in which the nuances of the material are carefully explored. This book points the way to some ethnographic places to begin answering these very Euro-American questions.


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Reading the first pages of *Dreams That Matter*, when Ahmad, a public servant in a town in the Red Sea, sits with the author of this book and complains about the situation in Egypt (“The government used to steal our money,” he says, in the first sentence of the book), one cannot avoid mentally invoking what was to happen just a few months after the publication of this book: the Egyptian revolution that recently deposed the Mubarak regime in February 2011. From this perspective, the title of this book seems somewhat prophetic, and is revealing of how ethnography can be historically relevant “by anticipation,” offering an anthropological portrait of the complexity of Egyptian life that helps the reader envisage the prerevolutionary situation. Adding to other fundamental and notorious references in the anthropology of Egypt (namely, Gilsenan, Mahmood, and Hirschkind, among others), Mittermaier opens the scope of reflection and analysis by incorporating an approach that speculates, using dreams and dream interpretation as foci, over an “anthropology of imagination”—taken here as a broad range of meanings, modes of perception, and configurations of the real (p. 3)—that adds a deeper layer of thought to the well-known debates on Islamic politics in Egypt.

However, using just the Tahrir Square events as an empirical framework to understand this book would be unfair for Mittermaier’s book, that was produced before the events and has much more to offer than an interpretive guideline for them. On the contrary, her description of the social agency (or “materialization”) of dreams in Egyptian life becomes an acute and trenching portrait of contemporary Egyptian politics, ethics, urban life, media practices, academic debates, religious and spiritual agency, and protagonist, ritual practices, and so forth.

With a fluid and elegant prose, Mittermaier develops, through what she calls an “attentive listening” (p. 10) and a collection of dream narratives (p. 21), a fascinating unraveling of the place and agency of dreams in contemporary Egyptian society, intersecting several stances of expression and action—from poetry to textual reading, proselyzing, dream interpretation, television programs, journals, the Quran, and so on. Using her own personal background as a daughter of an Egyptian and a psychoanalyst, she “rebels” against a Western tradition of psychological anthropology (understood here in its philosophical sense) and plunges into the north African country to assert on the limitations of certain binary conceptualizations in this particular empiria. She then situates herself in and around Cairo, the Nile bridges, the City of the Dead, the Red Sea, and on the shrines of famous prophets and religious (mostly Sufi) specialists, where she reveals, through the negotiations and debates she encounters and participates in, fundamental differences between traditions and experiences of Islam. For this, she is guided by four *shaykhs* (scholars or Sufi spiritual advisers) who, through their individual charismatic personalities, leadership commitments, and dream interpretations, unfold on her different versions of authority, social relevance, morality, and practice.

From this perspective, despite spending most of the book describing the life and work of the shaykhs in the shrines, Mittermaier keenly avoids the pitfall of encapsulating her analysis solely within the religious sphere, broadening her scope to show the reader how dreaming and its interpretation participates in several planes of significance.
and ideology and involves different notions of heuristics, knowledge, materiality, and morality that flow in and out of secular and religious categorizations. As she recalls in her introduction, “almost everyone had a dream to tell or an opinion about why dreams should or shouldn’t matter” (p. 22). With this kind of approach, Mittermaier increases the theoretical depth of her proposal, that is, ultimately, a critical contribution to psychological anthropology.

If there is anything to be missed in this wonderful book, it’s a more explicit discussion of the notion of “landscape,” as is explored by other anthropologists concerned with the interface between anthropology and psychology (namely, Tim Ingold), which could add further interrogations regarding perception, aesthetics, sensoriality, and imagination. However, Mittermaier’s anthropology of imagination (see pp. 16–20) is sufficiently compelling so as not to require these complementary connections. Furthermore, through its “apprehension” of dreams, it is instructive for other scholars performing within ethnographies of intangible objects; however, it does not speak, even if to decry it, to an important set of debates that stem from the intersection between anthropology and phenomenology. Also, as we move along the book, into dreams and landscapes, and understand their political implications, perhaps a discussion of the concept of “ideology” (taken here generally as sets of ideas, expectations, and actions—the core that underlies narrative and discourse) could have added even more interesting points to the analysis. But these last comments do not, ultimately, refer to hypothetical shortcomings in the book; rather, they stem from the intellectual stimulation provoked by reading it.


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In *Dilemmas of Modernity*, Mark Goodale argues that, contrary to the common perception that epochal shifts have occurred in Bolivia with the advent of neoliberalism in the 1980s and the election of Evo Morales in 2005, liberalism has in fact remained a consistent, central organizing in Bolivian society since Independence in 1825. Describing liberalism as a multifaceted “pattern of intention,” Goodale examines the life of the law in Alonso de Ibáñez, a rural province of 25,000 people in the North of Potosí region.

This book is an important read for scholars who are attempting to unpack the discrepancy between the utopian goals and often horrific effects of liberalism. For example, in Bolivia, liberal elites in the late 19th century orchestrated the mass dispossession of indigenous people from their land in the name of individual rights and private property. Goodale sets out to show the unusual centrality of law in shaping Bolivians’ identities and actions, most recently as expressed in human rights discourse. He argues that the widespread enthusiasm for human rights as a framework for justice is tragically limited, as human rights represents a moralizing, and colonial, discourse. Elite human rights activists from outside the province define human rights rigidly and narrowly, bypassing a rich array of indigenist and syndicalist community-oriented political frameworks. Furthermore, Goodale asserts, human rights frameworks put the onus of responsibility on individuals to effect societal change by recognizing their own self worth, rather than emphasizing the collective organizing that is necessary to truly redistribute wealth and power in Bolivia. Goodale finds that human rights have failed in the region, as evidenced by women’s scarce opportunities to pursue legal remedies for violence against them, the large number of residents’ cases that languish in the provincial court, and persistent malnutrition and untreated chronic diseases.

In chapter 1, Goodale introduces many Bolivians’—and foreigners’—views of the North of Potosí as bound by static indigenous tradition that stands in direct opposition to liberal modernity (“How cold, how barbarous!”) (p. 8). Goodale counters, however, that the region is as much part of the flow of economic history as the rest of the country and that its residents are as enraptured by liberalism as other Bolivians. Goodale traces several important social categories and theoretical frameworks that have guided Bolivians, which he argues are all formed in direct response—although sometimes in opposition—to liberalism (pp. 13–14). To describe how Bolivians, including *nortepotosinos*, combine multiple identities and multiple theories of political action, Goodale invokes the geological metaphor of strata “which coexist uneasily and indefinitely” (p. 14). These multiple class–race identities and political frameworks lead many residents, on the one hand, to share the elite view that liberal law and human rights occupy a higher evolutionary level than community-based law while, on the other hand, believing in the efficacy of community-based norms such as restitution for crimes in place of incarceration. Goodale explains his approach as tracing how “people … find meaning and dignity at modernity’s ragged edges,” which they do, in part, by theorizing “the transformative power of liberalism” (28). Goodale suggests, however, that the central dilemma of modernity in this poorest region of one of the world’s poorest and unequal countries is that the “benign” elements of liberalism, such as human rights, are inextricably intertwined with the damaging free marketization of the economy and a pernicious individualism that blocks the redistribution of wealth and power (p. 29).