

line from the revolutionary praxis of a century ago to the contemporary moment of global neoliberal reforms today.

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## **Kimberly Theidon, *Legacies of War: Violence, Ecologies, and Kin***

**(Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2022), pp. 128, \$22.95 pb.**

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In this book, Kimberly Theidon draws on stories of violence and reproduction in Peru and in Colombia to reflect on the meaning of reproductive justice in the broadest sense. *Legacies of War* may have started as a book on children born of rape, an under-researched and often elusive topic that shifts focus away from the overwhelming attention given to conflict-related sexual violence of men against women. However, as Theidon, and a handful of others before her, make clear, these children are also legacies of war and deserve our attention. They represent the harm done and continuing suffering of mothers and their children. Weaving the stories she collected, her fieldwork experiences and relevant scholarship into a set of reflections on forced reproduction and how this reverberates in nature and in the social world, Theidon presents a thoughtful and illuminating ethnography of the legacies of war.

One of the many key insights Theidon offers in this book is that the children born of war are a testament to the complicity of entire communities in, if not facilitating, then at least ignoring the sexual abuse women endured. While often men in rural communities in Peru turn a blind eye to the rape of women and girls, Theidon shows, male authorities also facilitated military access to women and girls – widows, neighbours, daughters, nieces – and actively contributed to their stigmatisation post-conflict. As such, ‘women live with the proximity of betrayal’ as well as with ‘public secrets’ (p. 16). From such a perspective, the ripples of rape are not only felt because of the reproductive consequences but because of the continuous reminder that the community does not believe women are worthy of respect, care and support. If true, the most intimate of community relations – kinship – is extremely fraught, placing women, children and men in a constant unresolved tension with each other. This scenario may also help explain the continuous high levels of domestic and sexual violence throughout Peru (see Encuesta Nacional Demografía y Salud Familiar (National Demographic and Family Health Survey, ENDES) 2019).

By focusing on mothers’ naming practices, however, Theidon shifts the focus from the anticipated stigma they suffer to their unexpected agency: women gave

children born of violence names that reminded them, and the community, of their origin. In so doing, they refused to be shamed and to remain silent about the sexual violence they have been subjected to. Theidon sees such a practice as evidence of women's power: by rejecting the shame and suffering imposed on them, they refuse to keep the secret about what happened to them and those who betrayed them.

Theidon extends her interpretation to the ecological effects of sexual violence. Scholars are increasingly interested in how the ideologies that engender capitalist exploitation and environmental destruction overlap with those that engender the exploitation and violent treatment of people, in particular, of women, people of colour, and Indigenous people (see Cara Daggett, 'Petro-Masculinity: Fossil Fuels and Authoritarian Desire', *Millennium*, 47: 1 (2018), pp. 25–44; Josef Barla and Sophie Bjork-James, 'Introduction: Entanglements of Anti-Feminism and Anti-Environmentalism in the Far-Right', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 36: 110 (2021), pp. 377–87). Theidon makes an additional point: the experience of physical violence, with all its reproductive and social consequences, has a profound effect on the ecological balance of Indigenous life worlds. The natural world is profoundly social, and the social is entangled with the natural world. This connection also steers the author towards thinking about intergenerational sequelae of violence that are both social and biological, affecting humans and nature alike.

Drawing on epigenetics, Theidon argues that the 'maternal environment' cannot be limited to the womb as host environment but must include the social context of conception and infrastructures of reproduction that influence and shape reproductive outcomes. While it is often not up to women whether and how they conceive, they are often blamed whatever the outcome – as Jacqueline Rose has so eloquently unpacked in *Mothers: An Essay on Love and Cruelty* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018). Rose proposes a shift in discourse around motherhood by presenting reproduction and mothering as potentially radical and revolutionary political acts in dialogue with, and shaped by, the inhospitable context in which women are asked to mother. Theidon's reflections on women's agency in forced motherhood likewise rescue women's choices as wholly rational, justified, personally and politically coherent and potentially radical. This argument extends to women who decide that their infants do not survive because their lives would not be worth living.

*Legacies of War* is not a book primarily about children born of war but rather about reproductive justice, cycles of male violence, and the slow but steady destruction of life worlds in war and in peace, far beyond the specific contexts of the Peruvian and Colombian war-scapes on which it draws. The specific stories and conversations that Theidon uses to develop her arguments offer much bigger insights into wartime violence and its continuums and sequelae in peacetime, and the use of ethnography and epigenetic methodologies to uncover the complex long-term entanglements of episodes of violence, people's life courses, and the social and natural world we inhabit.

As good scholarship does, Theidon's book also raises a range of additional questions, both empirical and theoretical. Like Theidon, I am very curious about the men in these stories – those who raped and abused, and those who facilitated or condoned. How do community authorities, neighbours and life partners who looked the other way, and then post-conflict shamed or continued to abuse women who were raped, perceive their own role, their lives, their agency and

authority? Who do they love and how do they care for them? Some (former) soldiers impregnated women, wilfully and violently; are they proud of their own actions, ashamed, or curious and yearning to know and perhaps even father their potential offspring? What are the intergenerational ripples of perpetrating rape and how will they play out in the lives and politics of those concerned? Is there space for dialogue and reflection between those who often continue to live in close proximity of each other? What might the role of writing and ethnographic reflection be in these conversations?

*Legacies of War* provides deep reflection and raises difficult questions. As such, this is an important book for students of the Andes, global gender justice, and (post-)conflict violence and reconciliation. In addition, it is a very well-written journey through the possibilities and value of ethnographic work and scholarship.

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## **Maximilian Viatori and Héctor Bombiella, *Coastal Lives: Nature, Capital, and the Struggle for Artisanal Fisheries in Peru***

**(Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2019), pp. 228, \$50.00 hb.**

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In this compelling case study of artisanal fisheries in Lima, Peru, Maximilian Viatori and Héctor Bombiella draw on historical archives and over ten years of ethnographic research to document how lives, actions and interactions among artisanal fishers have been shaped by centuries of global forces beyond their control. In particular, the authors draw attention to neoliberalised fisheries policy over the past several decades, which has catalysed the reduction of complex social-environmental systems into single, commodifiable, manageable resource units. The authors argue these transformations extend an ongoing process of dispossession that has been unravelling the fishery commons throughout Peru's colonial history to present. The book is ethnographically centred on the fishing wharf in the Chorrillos district of Lima, Peru. Viatori and Bombiella describe the local debates around the development and 'modernisation' of the waterfront to illuminate tensions between working classes and affluent residents, and the rhetoric that reinforces these forms of social differentiation. The authors interrogate the pervasiveness of dominant discourses in fishery policy that depict artisanal fishers as uncivilised 'coastal others' in need of regulation and education about 'individual responsibility'.

In Chapters 1 and 2, the authors convincingly argue that the contemporary crisis in Peru's fisheries should not be interpreted as a classic 'tragedy of the commons'.