less supervised by family, church, or state than young people of previous generations. Tempted by Broadway, lured to gambling dens, or edified by choir practice, these young people walked a fine line between recreation and dissipation. Newspaper editorials and popular tracts describe the moral peril of these hours, but Baldwin draws on numerous diaries and letters to give a clearer sense of the actual experiences of the urban night. We see that the unequal progress of gas lighting and the limits of policing invited all classes to use the urban night as never before: Baldwin describes the sites of drinking, whoring, and gambling alongside shopping, dancing at charity balls, and serenading. It was the theater, Baldwin notes, which often bridged the more respectable early evening with the sharper edge of the late night. By the 1870s, performances started uniformly at 8 p.m. and ended sometime after 10 p.m.

For an important minority of the city's population, the night meant work. Baldwin examines a range of more or less counter-cyclical occupations: cleaning city streets and privies; producing and distributing several editions of each daily newspaper; provisioning, transport, and shipping; and manufacturing (including a fascinating discussion of attempts to limit women's factory work at night). Essential to all this nightlife and night work were the "owl cars" (all-night buses or trolleys) that Baldwin examines to show the opportunities and dangers of the urban night for women of all classes. In the new urban night we see women and men enacting the gender roles of an industrial, capitalist, and consumer age in spaces shared with women but dominated by men.

The vivid scenes that make up this study, unfolding in burgeoning cities from New York to Omaha, evoke a sense of the profound transformation of the urban night as colonial danger and desolation gave way to teeming streets in which waves of labor and leisure collided. Yet Baldwin shows how the night relentlessly underscored and sustained the divisions between rich and poor, polite and rude, old and young, and above all, between men and women. Urban historians and gender historians will find many points of comparison and inspiration here.

———Craig Koslofsky, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Rachel Heiman, Carla Freeman, and Mark Liechty, eds., *The Global Middle Classes: Theorizing through Ethnography*. Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2012.

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As part of a recent growing body of scholarship on its topic, this volume features ethnographically rich and theoretically-driven chapters that seek to rethink the global formation of the middle classes across different geographical locations. A product of an Advanced Seminar at the School for Advanced Research in 2009, the book provides specific ethnographic studies of the

formation of the middle classes in Barbados, China, Egypt, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nepal, and the United States. Squarely located in the discipline of anthropology, the editors draw on the specific ethnographic descriptions and attempt to critically theorize class formation more broadly. In so doing, they develop an ambitious research agenda. They propose a theoretical framework in which the middle classes become the main class—as a class—to understand contemporary globalization. By proposing a global perspective, they try to theorize the differences and similarities among middle classes' subjectivities through time and across different geographical places. They also make the case for a reconceptualization of globalization and its practices of consumption, and put new forms of immaterial and affective labor at the core of capitalist relations and state formation.

A short review cannot do justice to this thought-provoking and ethnographically rich set of chapters. But in a context where similar volumes have been published from different disciplines (by Julian Go; and López and Weinstein) it is important to ask some questions in the spirit of interdisciplinary discussion. The articles, and particularly the editors' introduction, find inspiration from an eclectic but productive repertoire of social theories, and seek to locate cultural/moral logics, new forms of labor, consumption patterns, struggles for space, and definitions of citizenship at the core of the formation of class subjectivities. They argue that class subjectivities are not simply structural reflections of economic conditions. That is to say, as some other scholars have argued before them, they see structural, material, affective, and symbolic conditions to be dialectically intertwined in the production of class subjectivities and class relations in which "people make meaning in their everyday lives, make do amid the conditions of possibility in which they live." As a result of this dialectical process, certain historical actors become classed subjects and "ultimately influence the economic order of things" (p. 9). Thus, they argue that class is a "lived experience," a social process, a historical/cultural problem that is formed in relation to other classes.

At the core of this theorization, middle-class subjectivities, anxieties, and aspirations appear as deeply contradictory precisely because of their middle location in society—their position between working and capitalist classes. It is this internalized conflict that explains "the anxieties and contradictions so characteristic of middle class life" in time and across different geographical places (279). This is not entirely a new argument in studies of the middle class. Such theorization tends to characterize middle-class subjectivities and interests as contradictory, aspirational, and conflicting in contrast to the working classes and elites whose interests and subjectivities seem to be clearly coherent, unambiguously real, and unmistakably consistent precisely because they are either sellers of labor or owners of capital. I am sure the authors would reply that this is not necessarily the case since these contradictions are not exclusive to the middle class and are found in class subjectivities

more generally. But if that is the case, an important question remains unanswered: what *is* middle class about those contradictions, aspirations, and anxieties at the core of their class subjectivities?

The book's different chapters make a strong case for putting immaterial and affective labor at the core of neoliberal societies, class subjectivities, consumption practices, and state formation. This aspect of the volume is an important contribution to understanding contemporary globalization. Although most of the authors harbor the assumption that these new forms of labor are of recent creation and thus part of a neoliberal globalization, I would argue that affective and immaterial labor have a thicker history, and that they have been intimately connected to the transnational consolidation of the service sector during the second half of the twentieth century. Because, as the authors argue, these forms of labor are not necessarily exclusive to the middle classes, it is unclear throughout the book how, historically, these forms of immaterial and affective labor have specifically become defined as part of middle-class subjectivities. One could think of, for example, a "domestic worker" taking care of a middle-class household in mid-twentieth-century Brazil, or more recently an immigrant woman caring for middle-class children in a suburb of Washington, D.C. I think what the authors miss here is a more complicated ethnography of how class tensions and struggles are now happening not only between capital and labor, but also *within* new forms of affective and immaterial labor.

The volume seeks to avoid a teleological understanding of the middle classes by offering a globalized and comparative understanding of class subjectivities. Here the scope of the ethnographic descriptions and geographical coverage is impressive. And yet, most, if not all of the descriptions of middle-class experiences and subjectivities across different places are characterized as "provincial," "local," or "regional." Indeed, the authors propose to understand the local and regional circumstances as conditions for the formation of the middle classes. To be sure, Mark Liechty tackles this issue in the book's last chapter by trying to explain what he refers to as "the déjà vu moment that seems to indicate close proximities between the elements of middle class experiences in contemporary Nepal … early twentieth-century Chicago, Victorian Britain or nineteenth-century France…" (273). The reader is left with the sense that the similarities or differences across time and places are global as a result of a cumulative effort of well-bound, coherent local and regional manifestations of specific historical developments within "the rise" of capitalist socio-economic conditions.

Thus, in this global understanding, no middle-class experience is any less authentic or more original than any other. But how then to explain that policy makers and scholars still associate certain definitions of middle classes with specific geographical locations? And how do we account for the role of imperial powers in the making of the middle classes that have historically legitimized specific definitions of middle-class subjectivities as "universals"? Although I

wholeheartedly concur regarding the need to avoid teleological and Eurocentric understandings of the middle class, I would argue that now we also need to decipherer the process through which specific definitions of "middle classness" achieved a dominant status worldwide. Such a task requires that we not only compare similarities and differences between coherent and geographically distinct cases, but also show how those cases have historically been connected through a process of constant translation, dialogue, contestation, and exclusion that defines class subjectivities across the world simultaneously. The study of these transnational connections may be able to explain why a specific notion of middle classness—usually associated with practices of consumption—now seems to exhaust the meanings of democracy across the globe.

———A. Ricardo López, Western Washington University

Marie-Hélène Huet, *The Culture of Disaster*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012, pp. ix, 261, figures.

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This intriguing book explores the emergence of disaster as a political concept. Drawing on the work of thinkers such as Giorgio Agamben, Slovoj Žižek, Max Horkheimer, and Theodor Adorno, Huet offers readers a panoramic survey of disaster in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, ending with a discussion of the impact of the culture of disaster on filmmaking. The geographic foci are Europe and North America. Huet's main concern is to understand how efforts to make sense of disaster have structured thinking in the post-Enlightenment period.

Huet understandably places a lot of emphasis on developments during the Enlightenment. Her discussion of the 1755 Lisbon earthquake is instructive. The calamity is commonly taken to be the first so-called modern disaster. By this it is typically meant that instead of interpreting the catastrophe within a theological framework some thinkers began to see this kind of event through the lens of science and reason. Huet, however, taking her cue from the Frankfurt school, argues instead that the meaning of the Lisbon disaster exists elsewhere. The Enlightenment conferred a legacy founded on the control of nature. This is the principle that disasters such as Lisbon challenged, in effect revealing that complete mastery of the natural world was illusory. Moreover, Huet contends that the Enlightenment did not just extinguish supernatural explanations; it dealt a substantive blow to "the idea of a purely natural disaster" (p. 9) and led instead to the rise of the idea of "human-engineered calamity" (2).

This is a wide-ranging book. Huet discusses topics ranging from the 1720 plague in Marseilles, to the 1832 cholera epidemic, to Rousseau's work (which formed the basis, she argues, for a kind of disaster identity), to