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- Lost People: Magic and the Legacy of Slavery in Madagascar.* By David Graeber. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007.

In *Lost People*, David Graeber’s goal is to write a nonfiction social novel. To do so, he builds a mosaic from the stories people tell and animates them through his ability to narrate the fears, desires, and pasts that shape their world. The result is an ethnography with the types of human insights that have largely been left to “the arts” by an increasingly mechanistic or self-referential discipline.

The initial chapters place the contemporary ethnography in its historical and political context. Beginning with King Andrianampoinimerina (1789–1810), who organized a central state, and then moving into the French colonial period, Graeber traces the formation and alterations of authority in Madagascar. Graeber and the Malagasy break authority into two types: that which comes from telling others what to do and that which is derived from telling people what not to do. For instance, kings and naggers daily tell people what to do, while ancestors and elders occasionally tell people what not to do. However, the abundance of authority leaves it barren—especially in the vacuum of a failed state. *Lost People* explores this tension between immanent and latent authority through Malagasy stories and magic.

Lost People is set in the rural town of Betafo, 30 minutes by foot from the city of Arivonimamo. Its characters are a constellation of eccentrics who put this social drama in motion through their storytelling. Graeber chose Betafo because of its infamy as a hotbed of general acrimony, stemming from both contemporary and historical grievances between descent groups. The past is everywhere in Betafo. Tombs laden with social hierarchy loom over the town; the *andriana* (noble) residents put themselves into rank order according to their ancestry and above the relatively new tombs of the *mainty* (descendants of slaves). The past both creates conflict and serves as the arena where political contests take place. Most recently, these conflicts have revolved around the return of *andriana* to Betafo to work their land after the economic decline of the 1980s. If there is tension without the physical authority or institutions to resolve it, what happens? *Lost People* is organized around answering this question.

Inspired by Maurice Bloch (1975, 3), Graeber looks to the stories people tell as a political setting where the dead, living, and supernatural characters become intertwined. The analysis of these stories leads to the most compelling thesis of this book, that “stories of personal tragedy—usually, framed as tales of transgression and retribution . . . [are] significant because it was especially through the lens of such personal dramas that people thought about wider historical change” (p. 175).

Readers are fortunate that Graeber and Malagasy culture both value good storytelling. Through his analysis of these stories, it becomes clear how gossip brings the past into informal politics. The *mainty* make use of magic and stories

In the Society of Story

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about historical cruelty against the *andriana*. Local *andriana* use their cosmological knowledge of *fady* (taboo) to dominate the higher-status *andriana* interlopers from the city. Other *andriana* use stories about witchcraft and *lolo* (ghosts) against their former tenants. However, the past is not simply a local political resource. Graeber also shows how ancestors may become homunculi who then orchestrate the downfall of their own descendents. The story of Sely stands out in Graeber's anthology of tales. Sely was a wealthy *andriana* who wavered between honoring the ancestors and his wishes to have children, thus caught between past and future. As the result of his vacillations, he destroyed his family and his status. Under orders from the ancestors, his self-destructive actions culminated in carrying his wife—a *mainty*—from her deathbed to the cold ground outside of his house. He later defiled these ancestors by placing his wife's body in a tomb reserved for *andriana*. The past enters the world not as malleable gossip at one's fingertips; instead, as Graeber quotes Marx (1975, 103), it "weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living." Graeber not only tells us of the past and Sely but also conjures this dynamic in readers' own psyches in such a way that they will be, at moments, haunted by this vivid tragedy. The horrors of the past are not equally distributed among the Malagasy. One could imagine that *mainty* would inherit the pain of the ancestors, and, indeed, this is true. However, for the *andriana*, the ancestors have more prohibitions and destructive spiritual force.

Lost People also has some lighter moments. To say that the book is about stories, authority, and a town in Madagascar feels a bit like stating that *Moby Dick* was a thoughtful vignette about a highly kinetic fishing episode. It is difficult to express the level at which Graeber's mind and words have their own magic. He starts his book by claiming that he strived to write an ethnography in the style of a dialogic Russian novel, a dangerous way to start a book. But unlike many others who want to assert meaning through an intentional stylistic method but end up producing a disjointed and contrived work, Graeber's talent as a narrator merges form and content so well that the reader follows a story rather than an anthropological project. This narrative method allows Graeber to move between the particular and the general with a speed and subtlety all too rare in a scholarly era defined by the blunt rigidity of anthropologists interested in linking ethnographic moments to fashionable academic constructs. As a result, Graeber offers more insights that pierce the core of life and culture in a single page than many ethnographies manage to capture in a chapter. Moreover, *Lost People* is accessible to a general reader who does not have years of training in anthropology and its vocabulary because Graeber teaches social theory rather than simply naming concepts such as "sympathetic magic" before discussing them in the context of Betafo.

Graeber's style of storytelling achieves much of his indirect goal of creating an ethnography that does justice to the characters who made it. His intention is to show us that though

there are differences between "us and them," there are profounder differences among "them." Instead of strictly grafting heterogeneity to class, race, gender, or other variables, he allows characters to exist in ways more true to how we generally experience them in our lives. We do not usually conceptualize our hometown oddball who lives by the river and collects unicorn figurines from the 1940s as the result of post-Fordist production or Melungeon concepts of space. *Lost People* does not ignore social and cultural analysis, but rather it allows characters to escape what can become suffocating thought systems. By doing so, we end up in some interesting places and with a more relatable Betafo that is inhabited by people who give us insight instead of serving as vessels for abstractions.

What makes *Lost People* an extraordinary book is its freedom of thought. It is important not because of its position in the next round of anthropological debates but because of the graceful eclecticism of the author's perceptual and creative range. One hopes that ethnography built on such foundations will be treasured by anthropology today and tomorrow.

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"Forever Foreign": Made in Germany

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Cosmopolitan Anxieties: Turkish Challenges to Citizenship and Belonging in Germany. By Ruth Mandel. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.

In *Cosmopolitan Anxieties* Ruth Mandel studies the *Ausländerproblematik* (foreigner problem) vis-à-vis German cosmopolitanism. The issue of "Germanness" is examined with a particular focus on the Turkish population, who were once called guest workers and are now referred to as German-Turks (not Turkish Germans) or even simply Muslims. Mandel's ambition is to describe and analyze the multi- and intercultural lives in Berlin, specifically in the bustling district of Kreuzberg. Her analysis reflects on other groups in Germany, especially Jews (but also Greeks, Gypsies, Polish, and Russian Germans), as well as minorities in the United States, that deepen her detailed discussions of the distinct and interrelated issues of identity, migration, cosmopolitanism, and religion. It is thus astonishing that the subtitle of the book reads merely