

florists' unloading their older inventory, that women buy 35% of all Valentine's Day flowers and overwhelmingly not for men—all this and more can be gleaned from this book. Some of the New York metropolitan area details are especially interesting—for example, that not a single one of the nation's top ten "women's" magazines is among New York's top ten, nor are any of the nation's top five in New York's top twenty! Of course this suggests a sampling problem, but sampling has never been a major issue for ethnographers.

This reviewer has spent about one-third of his life in New York. His grandfather was a wholesale florist who long supplied blooms to the acclaimed divas of the Metropolitan Opera. He is part of the "invisible college" of agricultural commodity chain researchers. Rarely is his home without cut flowers, usually bought at a local farmers' market or his campus's organic produce stand. He wants you to know that despite its shortcomings, *Favored Flowers* is a wonderful book, intermingling political economy, class analysis, gender, and culture in a fragrant bouquet. It would cheerfully adorn many a bookshelf or reading list.

Freedoms and Solidarities: In Pursuit of Human Rights, by **Judith Blau** and **Alberto Moncada**. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007. 211pp. \$27.95 paper. ISBN: 9780742548022.

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In liberal philosophy, the human condition is very often characterized as a ponderous yet frantic vacillation between the desire for autonomy and the need for belonging. In this volume—their third collaboration—Judith Blau and Alberto Moncada stress that human freedom has both collective and individualistic dimensions and that liberalism wrongly emphasizes the latter aspect. Freedom is further truncated by liberalism's tendency toward a negative definition (i.e., freedom from). Drawing on the writings of Amartya Sen, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Hannah Arendt, the authors suggest that we conceptualize freedom not individualistically in terms of self-interest but collectively and positively as

solidarity. Freedom-as-solidarity is not a zero-sum game in which individuals compete for a scarce resource. Rather, it has the properties of a collective good, a large pool of rights and responsibilities to which all are entitled and to which all contribute. (My freedom is dependant upon your freedom and I cannot be free if you are immiserated or oppressed). As against *homo economicus* or Robinson Crusoe, they advance a social ontology in which the individual is defined both by the discrete choices she makes as well as by a dense web of social relations. Moreover, they go beyond liberalism's tolerance of diversity to argue that pluralism is a precondition of freedom. Difference, in this view, is enriching rather than divisive.

It is not enough to advance a more capacious definition of freedom, however; if the world is to be made a more just place, the authors counsel, it falls to social movements, non-governmental organizations, and others to enact it. And to do so, they need a guiding ethic, an animating spirit. The main problem with cosmopolitanism, a likely candidate in an age of globalization, is that it is supererogatory: it demands too much of our moral energies to be a feasible guide of action. But while global capitalism may be undermining rights and social protections around the world, Blau and Moncada argue, it also prepares the conditions for a new form of global consciousness. By dint of information and communication technologies, the sense of global interconnectedness is more acute now than ever before. The notion of human rights is particularly well-suited to the task as it embodies what we share (i.e., the need for food, shelter, jobs and basic rights; stewardship of the planet) as well as our diversity of aims and ideas of the good (i.e., self-determination, cultural difference). Moreover, such a framework defies traditional conceptual boundaries: the political, economic, and cultural are inextricably bound and it is this refusal to arbitrarily sever them that is the book's major contribution.

While they have none of the Marxist chariness about utopianism, Blau and Moncada argue that many social movements and communities already embody these ideals, at least in nascent form. The Zapatista movement in Mexico is an example of the latter, while the various social movements that gather at the World Social Forum figure as an

illustration of the former. Drawing on these examples, they sketch the contours of what substantive democracy and a fair economy might look like. Yet they hasten to add that reality and social change are fluid and normatively indeterminate: they can provide no blueprint to a better world but can only delineate some of its features.

Where the book runs into some difficulty is that its central purpose is unclear: for whom and for what reason has it been written? Since social movements and certain egalitarian communities already embody Peter Singer's "one-world ethic," they presumably do not need social scientific guidance. And while the sentiments expressed are admirable, the authors too often assume the like-mindedness and kindred political loyalties of the reader and there is little here to convince the uninitiated. "Capitalism," they write in one section, "is also racist" (p. 63). More importantly, the general critiques of liberalism and globalization come at the expense of a closer engagement with the social formations that may prefigure a more just and equitable society. In place of a careful analysis of their potential and limitations, they reprint statements of principles and charters, often taken from websites. Thus a major flaw of the book is the lack of empirical investigation, as it is not at all clear that the autonomy-solidarity, individual-community dialectic can simply be wished, willed, or redefined away. We need to see how this plays out on the ground, in practice.

Finally, the celebration of cultural pluralism is just too uncritical. It reaches its peak in the closing paragraphs where the authors imagine the world community seated at the dinner table: "Can't we imagine celebrating our differences in the most ordinary exchanges. . . . We engage in chatter as the meal progresses: 'Did you grow the vegetables in your garden?' . . . We enjoy the camaraderie as we pass around pictures of our children and grandchildren, every hue of the world's peoples. (All of them are, of course, the 'most beautiful,' each and every one of them the most beautiful). We all help clean up, while we chatter about this and that, and then the evening draws to an end. With our farewells, we thank our hosts: 'mhuway su,' 'danke,' 'grazie,' 'merci,' 'asante,' 'obrigado,' 'thank you!'" (p. 178). Of course, since we are seated at a communal table, we are all

hosts. And so, in a book that tirelessly expounds the virtues of the social, we end by thanking ourselves.

The Internet Imaginaire, by **Patrice Flichy**, translated by **Liz Carey-Libbrecht**. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007. 255pp. \$29.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780262062619.

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Imaginaire or collective vision is the structural frame underpinning the author's thesis. Utopian power to envision a new means of communication system is one aspect of the *imaginaire*. The other is ideological power. Flichy argues that power does not disappear (pp. 162–163), but can reappear in new form. He refers to corporate America's tangible control over a new communication medium whose origin is traceable to two diametrically opposed social visions—commerce and the social good. A second theme present in the book is of technological innovation and its social integration into mainstream American life. Flichy inquires about the Internet's transformation from its early *imaginaire* of a utopian communication system to its present form as commercial *imaginaire*. The early technological network was a social collective project based upon multiple utopias and guided by years of public funding and multiple academic and scientific experiments. However, once military and commercial activities separated on the Advanced Research Projects Agency Network of the U.S. Department of Defense (ARPANET) in 1983, the Internet becomes a story of competitive interests of business, politicians, and entrepreneurs vying against the social visions of artists, software developers, and engineers.

Originally published in French in 2001, the book's organizational structure reflects Flichy's interpretation of the conceptualization of power as expressed in *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* by Ricoeur. Flichy modifies Ricoeur's variance between ideological status quo and utopian revolutionary change. Flichy conceives a social *imaginaire* as an oscillating spiral among processes constituted by the dynamic interplay among social, polit-