

Matthäus Rest and Gertraud Seiser (eds) (2016), *Wild und Schön: Der Krampus im Salzburger Land* (Wien: LIT Verlag)

The Krampus is a fascinating figure of socio-cultural life in the Austrian Alps: half-goat, half-demon, it appears at the beginning of winter. The Krampus usually accompanies St Nicholas (the saint of the children) on his home visits in Alpine villages, carrying a cane to punish those who did not behave well. In the days leading up to St Nicholas' day, packs of Krampuses can be found running wild through the streets of villages and towns, spreading fear and excitement as the sound of the big cow bells they have strapped around their bodies announces their arrival and the imminent beatings for anybody who crosses their path. Since the turn of the millennium the Krampus tradition has experienced a remarkable revival, leading to an ever-growing number of people participating in its preservation. The story goes that the Krampus is part of an ancient custom in remote Alpine valleys. Rooted in Celtic or Germanic winter-cults, it is intended to cast out bad winter spirits and bring fertility to Alpine pastures.

This is the most common narrative people participating in the Krampus tradition go by. It is also the story the media and wider public like to tell to explain the role of these mythical figures. Upon closer inspection, however, this story proves to be everything but settled. In their edited volume *Wild und Schön* (Wild and Beautiful), Matthäus Rest and Gertraud Seiser cast critical light on the figure of the Krampus and its role in contemporary social-political life in Alpine towns and valleys. Together with anthropology students from the University of Vienna they attended numerous Krampus events and gatherings across the Salzburger Land in Austria, accompanied men dressing up as Krampuses, participated in Krampus club gatherings and talked to the inhabitants of the villages and towns where the Krampus tradition is practised. By submitting the experiences, stories, and activities they found in the field to critical social analysis, the authors establish a complex and nuanced picture of the figure of the Krampus. In seventeen chapters they draw out the many layers of social and cultural life the Krampus links into. From an auto-ethnographic description of life behind the Krampus mask, an interrogation into the various forms of Krampus events that have taken shape in the Salzburger Land, more 'classical' anthropological interpretations of the links between local customs and processes of group-identification, to the role of masculinity in Krampus clubs and in the performance of exclusionary ideas

of belonging, the book gives insight into a vast array of phenomena linked to the figure of the Krampus. The ethnographic accounts are accompanied by many pictures and photographs, pulling the reader into some of the sensual dimensions of the Krampus phenomenon. The visual representations as well as the book's structure – which also contains a chapter explaining what ethnographic research is and the questions it pursues – make it accessible to a wider, non-academic readership. Given the many stubbornly persistent myths surrounding the figure of the Krampus, I see the ambition to translate socio-anthropological findings to a wider audience as an important step in forming a dialogue between various communities of interpretation and the 'truths' they harbour.

The volume sheds crucial light on a phenomenon that, even though immensely popular, has received scarce academic attention. While folklorists have written about the Krampus, they have tended to do so in a removed, culturally deterministic way. Rest and Seiser convincingly show that the narrative of the Krampus as an ancient figure demonstrating mountain villagers' intrinsic, 'indigenous' relationship to the land is a modern fabrication in urgent need of critical re-reading. It was first introduced at the beginning of the twentieth century when some of the most important representatives of *Volkskunde* started to inquire into Krampus customs in Austria. By looking into the various representations and manifestations of the Krampus across history, the authors trace its genealogy as a socio-cultural practice that is inextricably linked to modern projects of nation-building. They show that as much as the Krampus formed an important tool in local struggles over autonomy, it was always also crucially embedded in global capitalist processes. It allowed impoverished mountain villagers to present and sell their heritage to curious tourists and city people, thereby linking the Krampus into a global economy of heritage-making. By paying attention to the ways the Krampus has come to permeate the entertainment and tourism industry as well as to the ways famous Hollywood characters have left their traces on contemporary Krampus masks and performances, the authors show how deeply the Krampus phenomenon is embedded in processes of globalization.

Rather than portraying the Krampus as reminder of a past that was marked by more social cohesion and harmonious relationships between people and nature, Rest and Seiser invite their student-authors to carefully look at the social practices surrounding this figure in the here and now. In doing so, they manage to bring much-needed complexity and nuance into Alpine ethnographies. In Austria, the

move to more processual and critical global frameworks of analysis has paradoxically led European ethnologists to abandon the study of cultural practices in rural Alpine villages altogether. Eager to create a clear differentiation from the folklorist paradigm in *Volkskunde*, they have shifted their focus to urban settings, arguing that this is the more suitable place to capture global phenomena. *Wild und Schön* helps to readjust this misbalance. It brings a seemingly ancient tradition into the present, showing the ways it pulls rural mountain villages into global circuits of exchange. I believe that the ethnographic interventions form an important starting point for a renewed Alpine ethnography that pays attention to the ways global transformations shape the everyday lives of people living in mountain towns and villages. That Rest and Seiser involved the next generation of Austrian social anthropologists in this project points the way for more critical ethnographic engagements with the German-speaking Alpine region.

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C. Nadia Seremetakis (2019), *Sensing the Everyday: Dialogues from Austerity Greece* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge), 250 pp., \$35.96, ISBN 9780367187767.

Everyday life is a playground for multi-layered epistemological conflicts. The truth and the social memory that are transmitted by the institutional and ideological tools such as mass media, however, are not the only ones that shape the daily realm of remembrance. Imagining everyday life as a terrain of practice and exploring its micro events as transformative, antiphonic, and dialogical, Nadia Seremetakis analyses the performances of counter-truth and counter-memory by everyday people in the times of austerity in Greece.

The myriad micrological actions that blur the dichotomies such as traditional and modern, national and transnational, private and public, past and the future, Hellenistic and European are the case studies for this research where anthropology, following Stanley Diamond's belief, is considered as 'the study of people in crisis by people in crisis' (21). Against the official discourses that are mainly analysed through the declamation of the mass media in the book, Seremetakis turns herself to the empirics of the experience of the present tense in order to analyse the 'social nervous system' (144) in the expression of trauma and pain.