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Running out: In search of water on the High Plains by Lucas Bessire

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Citation

RANDLE, Sayd. Running out: In search of water on the High Plains by Lucas Bessire. (2023). *American Ethnologist*. 50, (1), 155-156.

Available at: https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/cis_research/97

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ican identity), the state, and both patients' and practitioners' own actions and experiences. Her vibrant description of a prayer circle around a painting of the Virgin of Guadalupe embracing three differently racialized fetuses outside an ILE clinic beautifully captures how abortion can be seen as endangering a particular form of morally desired mexicanidad. While many scholars have drawn attention to the power of the Church in shaping morality and policy in Latin America, *Lawful Sins* deftly demonstrates how the moral regimes embedded in Catholicism's pervasive cultural presence affect abortion care in insidious ways. For instance, such moral regimes surface in the forms of paternalistic care offered at the ILE clinics, where repeat patients who were seen as "irresponsible" were subject to scolding and harsher care, and where providers see their role as social laborers that help the Mexican body politic by these same actions.

Lawful Sins also contributes to timely debates around the viability of reproductive rights discourse. In the experience of Singer's women interlocutors, very few claim abortion access

as a right. Rather, they situate their abortion decisions in the contexts of their own responsibilities and desires, making decisions in the context of social inequities. In this sense, *Lawful Sins* invites the reader to think beyond rights and engage instead with justice-oriented frameworks.

This book will have broad appeal, especially for scholars in medical anthropology, Latin American studies, gender studies, and public health. I can envision it as part of the curriculum for upper-level undergraduate classes in related fields. It would work well as material to generate student reflection on abortion experiences across cultures. In addition, this book would be of interest to activists seeking to better understand the nuances of abortion access in places besides the United States.

Singer has aptly captured her own journey of becoming unsettled, describing how, as an American, she arrived in Mexico City with a framework for understanding abortion which did not readily explain or apply to the realities of abortion access in Mexico. In sharing this journey, readers can likewise expect to have their assumptions disrupted in generative ways.

DOI: 10.1111/amet.13118

Running out: In search of water on the High Plains

By Lucas Bessire. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021. 264 pp.

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Throughout his lyrical *Running Out: In Search of Water on the High Plains*, Lucas Bessire returns repeatedly to Wagonbed Springs, an oasis long gone dry in western Kansas. Within his densely woven narrative of aquifer depletion, these springs emerge as a place with several valences. They are, of course, an aboveground manifestation of the effects of subterranean water extraction. But just as central to the book's project, Bessire uses the site to explore the notions of complicity and repair—both his own and his ancestors'—in relation to the fast-declining Ogallala Aquifer.

A different account of this ongoing drawdown might have dwelled more on a piece of the region's waterscape that does not (and may never) mark the region's waterscape: an \$18.3 billion aqueduct, the centerpiece of the local Groundwater Management District's (GMD) plan to sustain agricultural production when the groundwater runs dry. Centering that vision (which Bessire mentions briefly), the story here could easily emerge as a familiar one for readers of critical environmental histories, just logics of capitalist resource exploitation and socioecological fixes all the way down. But by instead using Wagonbed Springs as his organizing device, Bessire signals the book's ani-

ating motive: to provide an account of groundwater depletion that illuminates its multiple, sometimes contradictory dimensions, and to do so in a way that grapples with the author's own role in this slow-moving ecological disaster.

Running Out is written as a discordant homecoming story, of Bessire returning to lands, family, and local histories that he had fled as a younger man. In the opening pages, he greets his estranged father at the family homestead and stays a single night, just long enough to hear about the Ogallala's perilous drawdown. Split into four broadly thematic chapters—Lines, Bones, Dust, and Clouds—the narrative that follows traces Bessire's years-long efforts to make sense of the dwindling aquifer. These broad organizing themes are chosen, he suggests, to "gesture to the range of apparently disconnected elements that drive aquifer depletion and tie it to other domains of loss and resilience" (p. xiii).

Bessire's father makes introductions and accompanies him to interviews with relatives, farmers, and staff at the GMD. Bessire's late grandmother Fern, an amateur historian who spent decades agitating to move a commemorative marker for the Wagonbed Springs to a more accurate location, provides a dense archive of correspondence and documentation stored in his father's home, a collection that guides the inquiry indirectly. The account that emerges is one explicitly grounded in guilt for his family's role in the depletion Bessire documents. More than once, he notes that it was his great-grandfather's irrigation wells that drained the springs he and Fern have spent so much time studying.

This is a book written to be read by audiences beyond academic anthropology (that, judging by its status as a 2021 National Book Award Finalist, it seems to have found). As Bessire writes in a note to the reader, the book's form, presenting a set of layered, overlapping stories related to the aquifer's depletion, was crafted to match its conceptual argument about

the patterns of blockage and flow that constitute this process. As a method for conveying the nature of this aquifer's drawdown, the approach is generative and effective. Compelling and resonant, the book's innovative form and careful storytelling are its greatest strengths and contributions to the discipline.

Telling the story of aquifer depletion as the continuation of settler violence within the landscape, the account joins a growing body of literature across environmental anthropology, human geography, and Indigenous studies exploring settler colonialism's ongoing role in contemporary environmental production. In Bessire's hands, this project entails writing against thin narratives of natural resource management rooted solely in the logics of capital. Alongside an image depicting a veritable mountain of bison skulls, he details just how little money was made by the people who wiped these herds from the prairie, puncturing theories of market-driven extirpation. Such visceral details are effective in both advancing a critique of too-coherent Marxian approaches to the landscape and raising uncomfortable questions about the legacies of such violence among the descendants of its perpetrators.

One answer comes late in the text, when Bessire recounts the story of Jay, a local golden boy who successfully sued a neighboring company for draining their local groundwater basin and making his pumps run dry. Jay had hoped his victory could help spur a reckoning with unsustainable drainage and some new conservation measures across the GMD. Instead, his family started receiving death threats, to complement the snubs and gossip they had been enduring since the legal battle began. The

local commitment to water mining ran deep, deeper than the community's affection for this favored son. Reflecting on Jay's plight, Bessire casts the arc as a telling example of how deeply entangled community values in the area had become with the logic of depletion. Embedded in the account is a compelling scalar observation, troubling the unexamined celebration of local control and management of natural resources.

Appropriately, the book's final page is set at Wagonbed Springs. Bessire has returned to Kansas after a lengthy absence and is visiting the site with his father and a woman called Kate. A reader without patience for authors centering themselves might find this moment self-indulgent, capping the sprawling story of an environmental crisis with a sentimental scene significant largely in Bessire's personal arc. But following the thread of his attention to the issues of complicity and inheritance, this landing place reads as a useful provocation for anthropologists of all stripes. Bessire has presented one model of what it looks like to grapple directly with our own roles in creating the depleted world-as-it-is, acknowledging his connections to uncomfortable legacies and personal failures, a project he frames as taking "responsibility for the future we are all making" (p. xiii). If readers agree that this undertaking has value, how might we refine it—formally and substantively—in future works?

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DOI: 10.1111/amet.13121

There's a disco ball between us: A theory of Black gay life

By Jafari Allen. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022. 440 pp.

Baird Campbell 

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To be anthologized is to be called and culled together under one cover. The title may not fit easily for each of us or for each of our genre choices, styles, or languages. But we consent to be gathered together to at least explore our common through-lines ... hoping for generative connections to our individual projects. (p. 48)

This passage from the first chapter of Jafari Allen's *There's a Disco Ball between Us: A Theory of Black Gay Life* lays the groundwork for an exploration of Black gay lived experience that bridges historiography, (auto)ethnography, and media analysis. Rather than seeking to define Black gay life as any one experience, Allen deftly makes room for the multiplicity of

experiences and perspectives that have nonetheless been anthologized as a bounded, coherent group. This tension animates the entire monograph, as the author tacks between the broad and the specific, the micro and macro, offering different reflections and refractions of this anthologized group, like the disco ball from which the book takes its name.

The provenance of the book's title is itself evidence of the project at the core of the book. Borrowed from artist Wura Natasha Ogunji's piece *Oyibo versus Herself (That's Not the Atlantic. There's a Disco Ball between Us)*, this title is an explicit invitation by the author to reconceptualize the physical separation between Africa and its diaspora not as a void, but as an ongoing series of reflections and refractions of experience.

In this same vein, *There's a Disco Ball between Us* is invested in an archaeological excavation of Black and Black queer pasts that informs but does not uniformly shape Black gay experience. Divided into three parts, Allen anchors the first in what he calls "the long 1980s"—a period between 1979 and 1995—that encompasses the emergence of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the resulting silence and heightened conservatism of the Reagan and Thatcher governments, and the occurrence of the "Black Nations/Queers Nations" working conference. The author adds, not inconsequentially, that the end of the long 1980s was also the beginning of the end for disco balls, signaling the end of another era.