

linguistic practice (p. 211). Because the same linguistic practices may be positively valued at one scale of belonging and negatively valued at another, speakers actively negotiate between these competing affiliations in their everyday interactions.

Those seeking studies of publics, modernity, rupture, globalization, locality, media, language ideologies, and post-Soviet regions have much to gain from this book. All throughout, the author engages with an array of literature and theoretical frameworks from linguistic and sociocultural anthropology, sociolinguistics, globalization studies, post-Soviet scholarship, and media studies. Considering the amount of information and evidence on which this study is based, Graber offers an impressive account of detailed analysis of ethnographic and archival data, cleverly tied up to the central concerns of the book, minority publics, and notions of belonging. Conscious of her position as a researcher, the author concludes with insightful suggestions on how to move forward with language revitalization efforts and social justice for linguistic minorities.

Word by Word: The Secret Life of Dictionaries. Kory Stamper. New York: Vintage Books, 2018. xiii + 300 pp.

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The practice of lexicography is experiencing a surge in interest from both language professionals and the general public, with a slew of recent handbooks and trade publications that have shed light on the craft of dictionary-making. Simon Winchester's immediately popular, *The Professor and the Madman: A Tale of Murder, Insanity, and the Making of the Oxford English Dictionary* (HarperCollins e-books, 2009), and its recent screen adaptation, has served to introduce new readers and viewers to the ideological and political facets of language. Kory Stamper's highly engaging *Word by Word: The Secret Life of Dictionaries* is part of this welcome uptick, and offers the reader a beautifully crafted study of how the lexical sausage gets made. Stamper is a trained lexicographer with impeccable credentials: over two decades of experience at Merriam-Webster and regular billing in venues such as *The Guardian* and the *New York Times*, through which she has helped to demystify lexicography and explode entrenched misconceptions about language.

Through teaching classes on lexicography for under-resourced and Indigenous languages, I have come to appreciate the complexity of opinions that people hold about dictionaries. Most positions lie somewhere along the continuum between the poles of descriptivism and prescriptivism. We love words in ways that are embodied and highly experiential, and all but millennials and Generation Z will likely feel some attachment to the print dictionaries of their youth. In certain socioeconomic subgroups, receiving a dictionary as a gift from a relative on completing high school could almost be considered a rite of passage. As Stamper notes, we yearn to "have some deeper connection with the word, to take responsibility for it. . . . It's not enough to know how to spell a word or what a word means; you have to *know it*" (p. 197).

The fourteen chapters that make up *Word by Word*, concluded with a formidable epilogue that stands alone as an essay on linguistic authority and imagination, cover many of the questions that animate the work of linguistic anthropologists. Stamper uses her impressive grasp of and dexterity with English to educate rather than berate, and the result is a very well-balanced book. Drawing on her experiences working at Merriam-Webster, Stamper reflects on the changing linguistic landscape of race, gender, and bias, dipping into lexicographical history and linguistic ideologies along the way.

A concern that shapes this book is whether dictionaries inadvertently create the lexical world that they seek to describe. Stamper navigates this question carefully, noting that lexicographers "don't decide what part of speech a word is—the general speaking, writing public does" (p. 25). At one point, she even describes her work as that of a "linguistic bystander" (p. 166). Noting that most lexicographers "would rather hide under their desks than be reckoned culture makers" (p. 248), Stamper highlights how the publishers who produce dictionaries (and fund the painstaking research that goes into their creation) have, for decades, intentionally cultivated the very authority, influence, infallibility, and awe that contemporary lexicographers are eager to shed. "The dictionary," Stamper suggests, "in a bid for cultural relevance and market share, is the one who has trained the public to think this way,

but what we hold ourselves to be authorities on has changed dramatically since we started this gambit" (p. 233).

In such an interpretation, lexicographers are but the pawns in a multidimensional game, shouldering the interlinked responsibilities of both documenting how a language is changing while negotiating the mistaken belief that they themselves are the all-powerful arbiters of this change. Stamper points to the ingrained belief and associated misunderstanding—reinforced by indignant letter-writing campaigns to the editorial desks of popular dictionaries—"that if we make a change to the dictionary, then we have made a change to the language, and if we make a change to the language, then we also make a change to the culture around that language" (p. 241).

All of this uncertainty around linguistic authority is further accentuated by the digital turn, through which dictionaries are "no longer fixed objects, revered books kept on the family shelf, but malleable, ever-changing works that mirror the quicksilver nature of our language" (p. 258). Stamper reminds us that dictionaries, particularly North American ones, are a "slave to the dollar" and not—as many readers might wish to believe—"magnanimously sponsored by academic institutions" (p. 257). In addition, the fast-changing commercial underbelly of contemporary dictionary production requires that people now "pay with their eyes, not with their wallets" (p. 259). We would do well to remember that online dictionaries—certainly the free ones—need user eyeballs to rest a little longer on the advertisements to keep the platform solvent.

An unanticipated by-product of encouraging dictionary editors to blog, tweet, and promote "Words of the Day" has been to make the hidden work of lexicography more explicit. Some lexicographers—Stamper included—have embraced the visibility and forged professional identities as experts with social media handles in ways that are new for the profession. Historically, at least, the labor of lexicography resembled that of translation: Excellence was usually unseen and unrecognized. A good definition, like a good translation, is like air: You only notice it when it is bad.

Yet, while the internet has ensured that the "business of lexicography is in flux, . . . the work of lexicography is unbowed" (p. 261). Through copious examples and the careful documentation of historical uses, Stamper demonstrates how "language always lags behind life" (p. 261), if only because language usually "begins as something private and then moves into the public sphere" (p. 191). Stamper acknowledges that dictionary users are frustrated that even in this hyperconnected age, lexicography "is a slower process than most people want it to be" (p. 224), but offers no hollow apology for the time that revisions take. Lexicography remains the slow food movement of language work: collecting, defining, and arranging words, a practice essentially unmodified since Noah Webster described it in 1816.

But lexicographers are not just impartial bystanders, dispassionately collating words above the hurly-burly of everyday life: They have responsibility to the society in which they live and whose linguistic habits they document. Stamper's prose comes alive when she engages with the political moment, addressing sexism, racism, and other forms of prejudice through her expertise at the editorial desk: "linguistic surgery" as she calls it (p. 160). "All words are made up," Stamper notes, defusing and educating at once with her signature light touch. "That's pretty much how this racket works. Do you think we find them fully formed on the ocean floor, or mine them in some remote part of Wales?" (p. 65).

Another important aspect of Stamper's work is the rebuttal of ardent grammarians and amateur etymologists—"a meaningless personal opinion trying to dress itself up as concern for preserving historical principles" (p. 184)—who see in linguistic change the desecration of their beloved tongue. In this, *Word by Word* serves as an indispensable antidote to the infuriating charms of *Eats, Shoots and Leaves* by Lynne Truss (Profile, 2003), a book that filled the Christmas stockings of pedants across the Anglosphere for years, whipping up manufactured rage about punctuation and split infinitives. While linguistic anthropologists are trained to analyze deep-rooted beliefs and ideologies about linguistic purity, Stamper familiarizes a wider readership with these same issues through topical examples and engaging prose: "That we have to learn Standard English proves that it is not our native dialect" (p. 62).

Word by Word is a passionate love letter to the English language. If there was anything that I missed from this otherwise thoroughly enjoyable and instructive read, it was some modest recognition of the fact that under-resourced language communities have quite different lexicographical requirements. Traditional lexicography—of the kind that Stamper describes and practices—was established by and for the needs of dominant languages. For speakers of endangered languages, or for language communities with few written records, dictionaries contain crucial historical, cultural, and territorial information and often become primary tools

for language learning. While a sustained focus on such issues lies beyond Stamper's scope, even a few judicious footnotes or references in the bibliography would have helped to showcase the diversity of lexicography and highlight the range of texts that function as dictionaries.

While Stamper thinks like a linguistic anthropologist, she writes like a poet, and makes a strong case for lexicography to be considered a craft, rather than an art or a science. Craft, she argues, implies "care, repetitive work, apprenticeship and practice" (p. 256). *Word by Word* also serves as a cry for recognition of the labor that goes into lexicography, a field so devastatingly described by Samuel Johnson—himself the grandfather of dictionaries—as populated by "harmless drudges." Through a combination of unapologetic nerdiness in defense of precision and playful self-deprecation—"people do not come to the dictionary for excitement and romance; that's what encyclopedias are for" (p. 127)—Stamper connects powerfully with her reader, ensuring that *Word by Word* will be adopted into syllabi in linguistics and anthropology courses alike.

A Contested Caribbean Indigeneity: Language, Social Practice, and Identity within Puerto Rican Taíno Activism. *Sherina Feliciano-Santos*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2021. xxvi + 227 pp.

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What does it mean to recognize in oneself and one's family an identity that the society around one considers extinct? Such is the situation of people who see themselves as Taíno.

Indigenous to the Antilles, especially Puerto Rico, Cuba, Hispaniola, Jamaica, and the Bahamas, the Taíno were the first inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere to encounter Columbus. Spanish colonial historians declared them extinct by the end of the 16th century, making them the stuff of Caribbean legend. They became the basis of the tripartite cultural/racial backstory of Puerto Rico: the (extinct indigenous) Taíno mediating the (conquering white) Spanish and the (enslaved black) African. The detail and material shape of the Taíno cultural ancestry story in Puerto Rico owes much to the work of the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña and its founding director, archaeologist Ricardo Alegría. Yet, cultural practices and language elements long and routinely characterized as *indio* point to recognition of indigenous ancestry. Recent mitochondrial DNA studies point to another form of Taíno inheritance. So, what does it mean to be Taíno now?

This is the question at the heart of Sherina Feliciano-Santos' *A Contested Caribbean Indigeneity*. Based on two years of fieldwork with Taíno/Boricua activists, Feliciano-Santos addresses how, in multiple respects, they perceive being Taíno as an identity passed down through families in Puerto Rico. She pursues this not in terms of whether claims to being Taíno can or cannot be justified, but in terms of what people take as recognizable signs of being Taíno, how that recognition happens, and how it is shared. Such recognition is considerably more semiotically ambivalent than that accorded the legitimated, stabilized sets of qualities making up conventionalized identity representations. The signs themselves are not fixed and are interactionally (and therefore discursively) negotiated in ways that are not fixed, with no official discourses to filter or judge variation.

Having addressed in chapter one, "The Stakes of Being Taíno," how knowing oneself as Taíno in the present, through "acts of linguistic and cultural reclamation" (p. 24), exists in tension with social dynamics pushing Taíno identity into a vision of a completed past, Feliciano-Santos turns in chapter two, "Historical Discourses and Debates about Puerto Rico's Indigenous Trajectory," to contemporary Taíno perceptions of Puerto Rican history. Here, Taíno/Boricua activists recall the histories which, in contrast to the established settler-colonial version, have been kept by families, often intermarried with non-indigenous people, long hidden in more mountainous areas where everyday Taíno household and farming practices survived, along with Taíno-derived words, and family histories of thinking of themselves as *indio/a*. Chapter three, "Jíbaros and Jibaridades: Ambiguities and Possibilities," considers the jíbaro figure of early accounts and its likely indigenous origins. Jíbaros as indigenous figures are described in terms of characteristic house forms (the *bohío*) and furnishings, sleeping hammocks, foods and food preparation, eating implements made from gourds, certain forms of dance, and so on, with their attendant lexicon. The jíbaro figure was recast and mythologized