**Digital Anthropology.** Heather A. Horst and Daniel Miller, eds. London: Berg Publishers, 2012. 316 pp.[*]

Reviewed by Matthew L. Hale

The proliferation of digital technology over the last four decades has changed the lives of millions of people around the world. Computers, mobile phones, video games, wearable devices, and the Internet, to cite only a few examples, have transformed how many human beings form communities, store and exchange information, buy and sell goods, and express themselves. *Digital Anthropology*, edited by Heather A. Horst and Daniel Miller, examines a diverse range of emergent digital practices—virtual worlds, social networking websites, geolocative media, disability, design, museum exhibitions, digital politics—in order to demonstrate the importance of an anthropological approach to digital culture and to lay the foundation for digital anthropology to become a new anthropological sub-discipline.

The collection consists of 14 essays that are divided into five parts: Introduction, Positioning Digital Anthropology, Socializing Digital Anthropology, Politicizing Digital Anthropology, and Designing Digital Anthropology. With the exception of the introduction by Horst and Miller, each section features three articles all of which share a common structure. Each contributor begins with a survey of the literature and analytical concepts relevant to their topic, followed by two or three brief case studies, and ends with a discussion of some of the potential implications of digital technology and/or the future of digital anthropology. While this structure lends a sense of consistency to the entire volume, which will make it especially useful as a course textbook, it sometimes feels forced and seems to restrict, rather than frame, some of the contributors' argument(s).

The most direct and important contribution of *Digital Anthropology* appears in Horst and Miller's introduction entitled "The Digital and the Human: A Prospectus for Digital Anthropology." In it, they outline six principles for the foundation of digital anthropology as a new anthropological sub-discipline. The first principle states that digital technology and media have intensified (rather than reduced) the dialectal nature of culture. The second asserts that the rise of digital culture has not made humanity any more mediated than it had been before. Horst and Miller therefore argue against the romanticization of the pre-digital era as a kind of more authentic prelapsarian moment. The third and fourth principles—that digital anthropology ought to continue anthropology's commitment to holistic investigation and cultural relativism respectively—contend that the digital is not an inevitably homogenizing force, but that it is situated within both global and local contexts and must therefore be understood as such. The fifth principle is that the digital.is defined by a tension between its capacity to produce on the one hand openness and accessibility and on the other closure and restriction. Finally, Horst and Miller posit that digital culture is no less material than what one might call analog or pre-digital culture.

In formulating these six principles, Horst and Miller argue three things: (1) That the rise of

digital technology has not fundamentally transformed what it means to be human (a clear critique of posthumanism, though the editors unfortunately never directly engage with this emerging body of research), (2) that digital culture is no more mediated than it had been before, and (3) that humanity within the digital context is no less authentic than pre- or non-digital life. While all of the contributors to *Digital Anthropology* critically engage with these general themes, the six principles that Horst and Miller outline in the introduction are not fully developed in the 13 remaining essays in the anthology. Rather, they are mentioned only in passing, if at all. As a result, the introduction and the rest of the collection feel somewhat disconnected. Despite this, each of the essays in *Digital Anthropology* are thoroughly researched, well written, and engaging and collectively they demonstrate the impact of digital technology on everyday life in a diverse range of cultural contexts. Although I do not have room to comment on each of the contributions within the volume, I do want to briefly draw attention to four especially productive essays.

Tom Boellstorff's "Rethinking Anthropology" examines the online virtual world known as *Second Life* in order to argue against the mistaken assumption that virtual/online worlds and the actual/offline world are somehow fusing into a single undifferentiated domain. Faye Ginsburg's "Disability in the Digital Age" explores the powerful and creative ways in which individuals with disabilities use digital media platforms as a means to communicate with and to construct publics. Finally, in "Digital Politics and Political Engagement," John Postill considers the strengths that anthropology can bring the study of digital politics and social movements. Finally, readers of this journal will be especially interested in Haidy Geismar's chapter, "Museum + Digital = ?," in which she investigates the effects of digital mediation of museum practices and the ways in which one engages with and experiences collections within both online and physical spaces.

*Digital Anthropology* is a smart, accessible, and timely edited collection. It successfully demonstrates the importance of an anthropological approach to digital culture and what the study of the digital has to offer to anthropology. It is a must read for anthropologists who are interested in digital technology and media and will be beneficial to researchers within adjacent disciplines such as communication and [new] media studies, sociology, and informatics.

*Matthew L. Hale is a dual PhD student within the departments of Communication and Culture and Folklore and Ethnomusicology at Indiana University. His research focuses on consumption, media circulation, visual and material culture studies, embodiment, and popular culture within the United States. His publications and photography have appeared in* Western Folklore*,* New Directions in Folklore*,* Anthropology News, Folklore Forum*, and* Steaming into a Victorian Future *(Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2013).*