Felipe Rojas, Byron Ellsworth Hamann and Benjamin Anderson, eds. *Otros pasados. Ontologías alternativas y el estudio de lo que ha sido* (Other Pasts: Alternative Ontologies and the Study of What has Been) (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, Ediciones Uniandes, Fondo de Promoción de la Cultura, 2022, 372pp., numerous b/w and colour illustr., pbk, ISBN 978-958-9003-93-0 (pbk), 978-958-9003-94-7 (e-book). Open Access limited to three chapters: https://musa.com.co/otros-pasados/)

What does the past look like from over there? *Otros Pasados. Ontologías alternativas y el estudio de lo que ha sido* is about the other pasts of past peoples. Co-editor Felipe Rojas tells us that this 'archaeophilia' in its archaeological guise is a recent manifestation of an age-old tendency. Moreover, the volume not only presents the 'alternative ontologies' of the subtitle but often shifts our ontological centre by presenting the view from over there, from the usual target of the Western gaze. In the process, 'over theres' are transformed from islands of cultural curiosity within a sea of ontological sameness to non-reflective points from which ontological alterity spreads.

The book originated at a 2017 conference held in Bogotá, Colombia, and is the sequel to an earlier volume (Anderson & Rojas, 2017). It is a high-quality production with colour images throughout. In substance, *Otros pasados* is a significant contribution to archaeological debates around conceptualizing, investigating, and writing alternative pasts. The theme is new—the volume addresses the challenge of ontologically alternative pasts. It is a response to the fundamental question of what counts as material evidence of the past in different historical traditions. Answers come from a dizzying array of cases, geographically and temporally, the effect of which is to underscore the many ways the question of alternatives pasts can be—and was—addressed. One can understand the 'other pasts' of the volume's title as additive—additions to the past we already know—, corrective—correcting the past we thought we knew—, plural, in the sense of other peoples' pasts (in addition to 'our own'), or as point-of-view dependent, such that we can explore the past from where we are standing now or from some historical point in time or cultural place. This pluralization of perspectives marks a refusal to adopt a God-position grounded in the true, original past, or in the very idea of a fully recuperable past.

There is, inevitably, a tension at the heart of this project, one which is brought to the fore in the opening paragraphs of the preface, where the adventures of the fisherman Abdullah from *One Thousand and One Nights* and his watery double are juxtaposed with an Amazonian Makuna tale of fishy humans. Highlighting the global, interdisciplinary, and ontological intentions of the volume, the tension is that of maintaining ontological specificity in the face of comparative possibilities. The risks are worthwhile to the editors. To fail to compare, co-editor Felipe Rojas argues in his chapter, is to fall foul of 'cultural solipsism' (studying what we already know). The expected pay-off is that the specific cultural dynamics in one time and place will illuminate those of another. By way of example, Rojas presents us with three references to Babylon in unexpected times and places: Roman, Armenian, and Aztec. Babylonia is invoked in all three cases in explicit reference to ancient ruins by local populations desiring to explain their interpretation of their pasts. Rojas argues that there is a human impulse to use ruins and other remains from the past to support historical arguments, born out by the comparison of the cases that reveals that all rely on physical evidence to focus attention on the age and value of local ruins. The ancient city acts as a hinge that articulates local ruins with universal stories that arrive with imperial expansion.

While ontology is central to the book, it remains undefined—the editors perhaps intentionally allowing each case to develop its own position. Even so, there are points at which an author argues for or against ontology but what they are arguing against is, to other authors, not recognizably ontological. Sometimes ontology is shorthand for ‘beliefs about reality’ (Jeffrey Moser, Benjamín Anderson) and at other times for ‘reality’ itself (Mariana Petry Cabral). Moser prefers ‘affect’ as a framing concept, for example. As such, the relationship between epistemological and ontological projects is largely left to the reader to discern (Irina Podgorny’s and Alain Schnapp’s excellent chapters show there is no need to mention either term to nonetheless say something about them).

Juan Camilo Niño Vargas’, Cabral’s, and Byron Ellsworth Hamann’s chapters are explicitly concerned with ontological questions. Niño Vargas offers an important corrective of the division of the Americas into two, broad ontological ‘zones’ in recent scholarship (Andes and Amazon), carving out an ontological space for the central American Chibcha. A careful explication of notions of time and the cosmos reveals an ontological schema in which the human occupies the double position of centre and climax of temporal processes. Time is conceived as irreversible, a succession of dramatic processes of humanization and dehumanization, thought of as vegetal germination and bestial metamorphosis. This, Niño Vargas argues, is a ‘humanist’ universe, as opposed to the ‘animist’ and ‘analogical’ universes of the Andes and Amazon. Cabral, in contrast, builds on ontological foundations already laid by the extensive work on Amazonian perspectivism. Her chapter presents the most direct challenge to our ontological assumptions through a narration of the author’s experiences of doing archaeology with the Amazonian Wajãpi. What happens if we allow others to be archaeologists, Cabral asks, but on their own terms? Well, parrots become archaeological evidence, among other things. Cabral uses epistemology in the service of ontological change, where the act of comparing the systems of knowledge of the Wajãpi and those of archaeology is a central part of the archaeological investigation—an exercise in perpetual translation. If we accept parrots (*jacamín*) as archaeological remains and the Wajãpi as archaeologists, we can take the ontological excess—all that the Wajãpi recognize as real but that doesn’t fit into our categories—and reconsider the objectives and relevance of archaeology. Amazonian perspectivism is also taken up in Hamann’s chapter, which, much in the spirit of the preface, constructs the unlikely pairing of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and Maurice Halbwachs. Hamann describes an ‘historical perspectivism’ in sixteenth-century Spain and the New World through the works of Bartolomé de Las Casas and Diego Durán. Thus, we get an account of ‘other pasts’ within modern, Western culture and a Halbwachian perspective of the historical memory inherent in perspectivism.

The difference between Hamann’s chapter and the other more historical chapters (Podgorny, Schnapp, and Anderson) is that he not only adopts the perspective of historical actors but complicates their view by demonstrating the intense borrowing of perspectives. Still, each is very much concerned with the construction of a past. Podgorny demonstrates how the awakening of a scientific historical consciousness was inseparable from contemporary material conditions through an exploration of the extinction of the Great Auk (*Pinguinus* *impennis*) in the context of colonial expansion, global capitalism, changing practices around garbage, and new kinds of historical consciousness. The chapter is wonderfully detailed, clearly showing the relationship between the loss of the Great Auk and the development of an awareness of its passing at the same time as its remains formed the basis for the establishment of its temporal and geographic spread (and geological concepts of time more generally). Schnapp's erudite chapter explores antiquarian responses to ruins as a way of understanding natural and cultural processes as one and the same. Based on the assumption that most cultures have been curious about their pasts—the volume's central tenet—he presents the outline of a universal theory of ruins which establishes a bridge between nature and culture. The chapter explores and teases out nuanced meaning from historical writing of natural and cultural processes in a kind of Brechtian-inflected posthumanism in which cultural ruins are subsumed within the general category of natural ruination. Anderson's chapter continues the historicist trend, tracing the changes in how style has been conceived in archaeology, whether from the point of view of an empirical detailing of an object or as a way to muse about the spirit of the age that produced the object. Anderson argues that the two concepts of style—what he terms empirical and ontological—are both always present in the study of prehistory. His case study is a passage from the work of the sixteenth-century painter and architect Giorgio Vasari in which he shows that both meanings of style are present. The case is compelling, though the concept of ontology deployed by Anderson risks undermining its material status (which is reserved for his notion of 'empirical' style).

Santiago Giraldo's and Carl Langebaek's chapters address pasts in contemporary Colombia. Giraldo's chapter has a readable narrative form rather than being a dense academic text. The author reveals how different historicities adopted by anthropologists, *campesinos* (the rural population), and the indigenous Kogui community can diverge or converge in relation to specific material remains and the consequences for education. Time and differing narratives about the material remains of the past can appear incommensurable, which is in tension with a future-looking state. Langebaek very clearly states the case for the importance of concepts of time to history. In a detailed and multi-perspectival chapter, he shows that the universal linear scale of modern thought does not match the velocities of individual cases. The chapter shows strikingly that time is complex, taking the example of how the local, colonial context of *criollo* Colombia built its identity partly in opposition to European notions of time. Colombian *criollismo* is not based on evolutionary thought. Rather, the 'indigenous past' is repeatedly accessed and used as moral lesson in the present. An example of the manipulation of an indigenous past by an elite, an epistemological rather than ontological project, the chapter is valuable for the ways in which it reveals *criollo* political and historical imaginings in opposition to a modern template.

Taking Langebaek's challenge into the pre-conquest Andes, Steve Kosiba recuperates the Incan way of knowing their past. To this end, he uses a great breadth of material, ranging from huacas (sacred places or things) and the Inca *ceque* system (composed of a series of ceremonial pathways), to historical documents, and the full gamut of theoretical resources, from Native American scholar Vine Deloria to anthropologist Keith Basso's work on the Apache (as well as Johannes Fabian, Gregory Bateson, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Karl Marx, and others). The unapologetic reference to Deloria is refreshing, as he is treated as one theorist among many rather than parochially (Montgomery, 2021). The Inca past, Kosiba argues, derived from both living (huacas, stones) and dead ancestors; a past that implied the negation of other Indigenous pasts.

Moser's chapter also concerns stone: exploring the relationship between ecology, rock, experience, ideas, and art, he confronts the question of ontology head on, formulating stone as a scale-changing hyperobject (an object which is 'massively distributed in time and space relative to humans' (Morton, 2013: 1)) that confuses traditional ontological distinctions in Buddhist statuary in Anhui, China. Moser argues that experience of the notable lateral stratigraphy of sedimentary rock in Anhui promoted a new kind of aesthetic at the same time as the explicit logic of Buddhism promoted a thoughtful response to that rocky setting. Geo-aesthetics guided sculptors but were also produced by sculpture; a geo-aesthetics, then, that resulted from an implicit ontology derived from the local experience of stone.

Cohesion in the volume is helped, as Hamann shows, by the import/export trade in pasts across times and cultures, both modern and non-modern, Christian and pagan. The other pasts that I find most exciting are those that are neither ours nor theirs, neither corrective nor additive, but something entirely new, something that emerges at the confluence of materials, practices, and concepts. Here Cabral's and Moser's chapters stand out. But the tension I alluded to remains. The editors know they sail treacherous seas when they use the signifying language of fish and humans to draw Abdullah and the Makuna close. Is it enough to state clearly 'I compare' to avoid the pitfalls of doing so, especially when ontological difference is concerned? Would it not be safer to insert more difference—as the *jacamín* might suggest—into the editors' tale? Yet the volume is not about the *jacamín*; nor is it only about difference. The book braves the waters of a global, comparative, ontological approach, a 'comparative archaeophilia,' that succeeds at encouraging the reader to put into dialogue the multiple, layered pasts that each past itself reveals.

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The West is a grand book: grand in its timespan of nearly three millennia; in its near-global geographical spread; and, above all, in its subject: a new history of