In recent decades, ethnographies of transnationalism and globalization have become prominent across the social sciences. Within anthropology, this turn helps address the longstanding ethnocentrism of ethnographic research, one that tended to treat categories like 'culture' and 'place' as static and bounded. The Ends of Kinship builds on this turn, yet in a way that beautifully retains the nuance and texture of an earlier generation of ethnographic writing. The book charts the changing lives of people in (and from) Mustang, a remote district in northern Nepal with close ties to Tibet. Sienna Craig began traveling to Mustang over 25 years ago. Since then, the region has undergone dramatic demographic, ecological, economic, and political shifts. Increased migration to other sites in Nepal, but also to sites abroad—both is a driver of and consequence of such transformations. As applied to the mundane and metaphysical, these dynamics constitute a singular process, and that the process is deeply conflicted. Such migrations promise opportunity and threaten traditional lives. They strain cultural connections and offer new tools for their reinvigoration. The Ends of Kinship takes up these issues with enviable prose and remarkable depth. It explores how people from Mustang, whether in Nepal or New York, "sacred for one another, steward a homeland across time and space, remake households elsewhere, and confront distinct forms of happiness and suffering through this process" (p.10). The central question of the book is how a new reality, characterized by distance, reshapes a community's sense of belonging, obligation, and cultural continuity.

Craig offers two key concepts to illuminate these dynamics: the titular two critical benefits. First, Craig's twin conceptual pillars (i.e., the ends of kinship and the 'khora of migration') are interlaced through circuits of labor and exchange, of kinship and sociality. They are inseparable from the spaces of loss and mourning. Indeed, these are the twin-faced effects of a singular process. This book will hold the attention of undergraduates as well. Indeed, Craig has produced something more hybrid, exciting, and true-to-life. As she has made clear, understanding the two main field sites requires understanding them together. They are interlaced through circuits of labor and exchange, of kinship and sociability. To consider them independently would miss something crucial about both. Likewise, placing literary short stories alongside ethnographic nonfiction joins a growing body of work challenging academic writing conventions. There is a beautiful literary quality to all of Craig's nonfiction chapters, and a keen ethnographic depth to her creative short stories. In other words, both genres speak to and strengthen each other throughout.

The Ends of Kinship does not delve deeply into contemporary theoretical arguments, and Craig offers only passing glances at existing ones. The artistically driven, rich in-text citations throughout, though she does include a glossary, Essay on Sources and Methodology at the end of the book. On the one hand, some readers may feel disappointed by this. It would have been welcome to see the rich ethnographic nonfiction content situated more deeply within ongoing scholarly debates. On the other hand, the book's approach has at least two critical benefits. First, Craig's two conceptual pillars (i.e., the ends of kinship and the khora of migration) emerge from the research context itself, meaning that her discussion is less beholden to the terms of a Western intellectual cannon. Second, the lack of in-text citations and theoretical tangents lets the words breathe and reverberate. They are less encumbered by rigid frameworks, less burdened by overlaid concepts. This allows the writing to resonate more freely.

This book will hold the attention of anyone interested in Nepal, migration, or diasporic experiences. It is complex yet accessible, making it suitable for undergraduates as well. Indeed, Craig has set up a website that includes, among other resources, a series of reflective writing prompts to accompany the book. Craig writes of witnessing the cultural maintenance, of kinship and sociality. They are inseparable from the spaces of loss and mourning. Indeed, these are the twin-faced effects of a singular process.

---

**Stretching community, bridging distance**

*Migration and belonging in Mustang and New York*

**Benjamin Linder**

**Reviewed title**

*The Ends of Kinship: Connecting Himalayan Lives between Nepal and New York*

**Sienna R. Craig. 2020.**

*Seattle: University of Washington Press*  
*9780295747609*

---

**Pushing genres and conventions**

There are at least two possible books contained within *The Ends of Kinship*. There are, for instance, one book about contemporary Mustang and another book about a South Asian diaspora in New York City. Alternatively, there might have been one book of literary fiction and another book of academic ethnography. Undoubtedly, its author has the knowledge and ability to have pulled it off. However, in foregoing such arbitrary divisions, Craig has created a more hybrid, exciting, and true-to-life. As she has made clear, understanding the two main field sites requires understanding them together. They are interlaced through circuits of labor and exchange, of kinship and sociability. To consider them independently would miss something crucial about both. Likewise, placing literary short stories alongside ethnographic nonfiction joins a growing body of work challenging academic writing conventions. There is a beautiful literary quality to all of Craig's nonfiction chapters, and a keen ethnographic depth to her creative short stories. In other words, both genres speak to and strengthen each other throughout.

---

**Notes**

1. [https://sites.dartmouth.edu/endsofkinship](https://sites.dartmouth.edu/endsofkinship), accessed 4 March 2021.