features a detailed Methodological Appendix, outlining the data sources and analytical methods employed. The author's problem-oriented approach, tailored to delve into the intricacies of the phenomenon, clearly embraces methodological eclecticism.

The broad disciplinary scope is the book's strength, making it accessible and relevant not only to sociologists but also to other scholars in the social sciences and humanities. It is apparent that the author had the reader in mind when writing, which is reflected in the easy-to-read style, not burdened with disciplinary jargon. The author has also made his arguments understandable to a global readership by thoroughly contextualising the research problem, the locality and the findings. From the point of view of a sociologist of the region, this undoubtedly legitimate aim of maximising readership comes at the expense of a more substantial contribution to sociology. Personally, I would have wished a more thorough critical theoretical and state-of-the-art discussion of the interplay between social memory and historiography, as the author frames both with a suspiciously harmonious positivist distinction between the objective and the subjective. Reading the book, I often wondered whether it was necessary to familiarise readers with the macro-level accounts of what 'objectively' happened in order to interpret subjective experiences of social change and to understand the notions of social justice and merit embedded in participants' narratives. Rather than contextualising them with historiographical descriptions, it might be better to pay more theoretical and analytical attention to the narratives themselves, trusting them as an intersubjective reality that the narrators have created in the interviews as factual and that they guarantee as such. This would perhaps lead to a more focused sociological interpretation of the memory of economic aspects of the post-1989 transition process in Central and Eastern Europe.

Martin Hájek
*Institute of Sociological Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, Prague, Czechia*
✉ martin.hajek@fsv.cuni.cz

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**Anonymous: The performance of hidden identities**, by Thomas DeGloma, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2023, 280 pp., USD $30 (paperback), ISBN: 978-0-226-76513-6; USD $99 (cloth), ISBN: 978-0-226-82879-4.

In the cultural sociological work *Anonymous*, DeGloma (2023) argues that anonymity is a performance 'in which actors obscure personal identities as they make

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meaning for various audiences' (p. 5), including pseudonymous actors offering a substitute identity in addition to anonymising their original one (p. 12). Drawing on rich historical and contemporary cases, DeGloma develops a cultural sociology of anonymity, an effort in theory-building based on symbolic interactionism following Erving Goffman and the cultural pragmatics of Jeffrey Alexander. Anonymous actors employ 'relevant cultural codes and symbols' (p. 26) to make anonymity meaningful when they put it into action. The meaning of anonymity thus varies across specific contexts, serving different purposes. This book, therefore, elucidates the nuanced meanings of any act that obscures the actor's real identity, a phenomenon that is more common in contemporary social life than one might first think.

For both anonymity and pseudonymity, actors use cover representations 'as *impersonal fronts* that stand in place of the signifiers we would otherwise use to establish personal identity' (pp. 10–11, emphasis original). DeGloma first differentiates four notions of impersonal agencies – *someone*, *anyone*, *everyone*, and *no one* – that audiences use to 'conceptualise the forces behind anonymous action and expression' (p. 19). These agencies range from concrete to abstract: a 'someone' is one particular person; 'anyone' highlights the 'impersonality and interchangeability' (p. 21) of the actor; furthermore, 'everyone' represents a group of people rather than one person; and, finally, 'no one' even erases any personal identities and emphasises instead the collectivity of a non-human entity. Yet, the reader should note that these categories do not simply match one of the meanings of anonymity that are discussed in the following chapters but are 'variously relevant' to each case and manifest 'in different forms and in different combinations' (p. 19).

After the introductory chapter, four main chapters follow, which discuss, respectively, protective, subversive, institutional, and categorical anonymities. The second chapter serves as a premise for the later ones as DeGloma contends that '[t]o some extents, all anonymous acts are protective' (p. 34). Anonymous actors are both 'perform[ing] while protected' (p. 35) and 'perform[ing] their need for protection' (p. 37). Building on this protective nature, actors employ anonymity for subversive social movements as they carry out 'ego deprecation' (p. 76), reducing themselves to 'everyone' who is in similar circumstances. For subversive movements from the Ku Klux Klan to Internet hackers, the actors use anonymity to (re)define their actions in terms of meanings such as 'oppression, injustice, and emancipation' (p. 78) against their antagonists.

While the second and third chapters focus on somewhat conventional forms of anonymity, the fourth and fifth chapters discuss less obvious ones, persuasively showcasing the theory-building effort of DeGloma. By highlighting these inconspicuous forms of anonymity, such as when the actors are less conscious about their identities being obscured or are imposed as such, DeGloma shows that people can perform anonymity unintentionally or subconsciously. This insight grasps the subtle yet critical role of culture in people's anonymous acts. In the fourth chapter, the author demonstrates that social organisations and systems are actually anonymising those who work for them. These individuals act on behalf of the institutions, but their agency is also substituted by the

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constructed institution's agency at the same time. This discussion clearly draws from a long lineage of sociology and social psychology research, from bureaucratisation to McDonaldization (Ritzer, 1993), and research on modernity and the Holocaust (Arendt, 1963; Bauman, 1989). But in contrast to these works, DeGloma focuses on how the anonymous actors in the systems define their actions and how the systems enable them to do so (p. 109). In the fifth chapter, DeGloma moves to the typification of people as 'culturally coded character-types' (p. 140), a phenomenon that is rarely regarded by either sociologists or these people themselves as anonymity but rather usually as, for example, stigmatisation, stereotypes, and prejudice. He sees these acts as performances nonetheless because such typification usually 'structure[s] and express[es] social relations of power, inequality, conflict, and contention' (p. 142) that are beyond the micro interactionist context. This type of anonymisation, therefore, consists of actions that are informed by cultural values and judgements. Viewing anonymity as social performance and synthesising its different forms, from the most common to the least obvious, reveal that anonymously expressing oneself is an omnipresent practice in social life that is no less influenced by the culture structure than ordinary actions carried out under real identities.

A critical point made in the fifth chapter is the distinction between 'acts of self-typification' and 'acts of other-typification' (p. 139), which serves the purpose of this chapter well, but is also beneficial for the overall understanding of anonymity as social performance. Following Maurice Natanson's 'reciprocity of anonymity,' DeGloma notes that 'categorical cover representations can be voluntarily donned or imposed' (p. 139) and that either way, actors 'cast others and themselves as culturally coded *character-types*' (p. 140, emphasis original). Is there also a distinction between 'self-' and 'other-anonymisation' with regard to the other forms of anonymity discussed in the book? For example, in the context of distance killing in modern wars (pp. 117-21), the weapon operators (attackers) and the victims (attacked) are both being anonymised and anonymising the other party. Similar are the examples of subversive anonymity in social movements (pp. 81-84), in which the activists simultaneously anonymise themselves and their antagonist, usually a political regime – an anonymised social system. Discussing the dynamics and interplay between the 'anonymiser' and the 'anonymised' in a few selected, extensive cases could further explore how different meanings of anonymity coexist and entangle with each other in its social performance.

DeGloma skilfully ends the book with an eloquent discussion on 'unmasking acts' – 'efforts that expose or attempt to uncover the identities of anonymous or pseudonymous actors' (p. 173). Unmasking allows the audience to reflect upon the meaning of the previous anonymity. As DeGloma argues, it can (de)legitimate the once obscured actor, personalise the interactions, bring prestige, or increase social tension alongside anonymity. Understanding *un*masking, in this sense, is the inseparable other side of understanding masking, a promising area that awaits further scholarly engagement.

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For sociologists, this book is particularly relevant because anonymisation is a core component in research ethics and practice, which, as DeGloma addresses in his discussion on protective anonymity (pp. 52-55), has long been regarded as a means of protecting the participants' privacy, interests, and even security. Yet, this presumed nature of anonymity in research is being increasingly questioned and challenged (Moore, 2012). For example, anonymisation might not be effective in local communities where research participants are easily recognisable by their peers (p. 52) (see also Banks et al., 2013, p. 268). The four characteristics of anonymity outlined by DeGloma, therefore, can also serve as a framework for social scientists to continue reflecting upon this ethical issue. Could anonymity in social science research be a performance of 'good' and 'ethical' research practice? What does being anonymised or pseudonymised mean to the participants? Even though the researcher might negotiate with the participants by using 'extensive masking' (p. 53) or contextualised descriptors (Moore, 2012, p. 334), could these practices be cases of 'categorical anonymity' that inevitably entails cultural implications for the readership nevertheless? Moreover, choosing between naming and anonymising concerns the (un)equal representation of a community or social group (Banks et al., 2013, p. 267). Is the participant speaking for themselves or on behalf of 'everyone' in their community? DeGloma's work opens invaluable space for debates on research ethics from a cultural sociology perspective and calls for the incorporation of the meaningful anonymity into the presentation.

In sum, this book is ground-breaking research on anonymity and pseudonymity. Conceptualising anonymity as a social performance, DeGloma contributes to a cultural sociology of identity that explores how social identities are created, practiced, and understood in relation to cultural values and how these meanings inform people's acts in their daily life. It also encourages reflections on the (sometimes unnoticed) anonymous/anonymising acts in various social contexts and empowers individuals by recognising their individuality. This book will be of great interest to sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, policymakers, and social activists, and will serve as excellent reading material in advanced courses in cultural sociology, political sociology, and research ethics/design for postgraduate students.

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Jiayi Tian
*The University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK*
Jiayi.Tian@ed.ac.uk http://orcid.org/0009-0005-4523-6855

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