The growth of “new genetics” has dramatically increased our understanding of health, diseases and the body. Anthropologists argue that these scientific advances have also had far-reaching social and cultural implications, radically changing our self-understanding and our perception of what it means to be human; that we have become “biomedicalized,” fragmented, and commodified – thus redefining our notions of citizenship, social relations, family, and identity. This book shows how anthropology can contribute to and challenge the ways we have come to understand genetic issues. Exploring a range of issues and case studies in human genetic research, it provides an ethnographic “reality-check,” arguing that we must look beyond the “gene-centrism” of genetic codes, family trees, and insular populations, to explore their wider cultural, ethical, and philosophical implications. Merging natural and social issues with the real world of medical science, this book will be welcomed by anyone interested in anthropology, sociology, biology, health, and medicine.

Gíslason Pálsson is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Iceland, and an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute. He has published over 100 scholarly articles and twenty books, including Coastal Economies, Cultural Accounts (1991), Nature and Society: Anthropological Perspectives (1996), Beyond Boundaries: Understanding, Translation and Anthropological Discourse (1995), and Images of Contemporary Iceland (1996).
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