LGBT Advocacy in Northern Ireland

Jennifer Curtis
November, 2014

In the summer of 2008, Iris Robinson had a lot to say about homosexuality. On 6 June, in a radio interview, the Northern Ireland MP urged gay people to seek reparative therapy. On the 17th, in the House of Commons, she declared that 'There can be no viler act, apart from homosexuality and sodomy, than sexually abusing innocent children.' On the 30th, in the Northern Ireland Assembly, she called homosexuality an 'abomination.' In a follow-up radio interview in July, she rounded out her comments by explaining a 'government responsibility to uphold God's law' — referring to a Biblical death penalty, presumably for cases of irreparable homosexuality. LGBT advocates objected to Robinson's views with swift and savvy political tactics.

Robinson's comments generated intense media coverage, partly because of her political office and her status as wife Northern Ireland's First Minister. Public outrage at her comments marked a turning point of sorts for LGBT advocacy. The local Pride Festival and other organizations solicited condemnations of the comments from political parties, trade unions, and religious leaders—and enlisted their support for the upcoming Pride Festival. The city's annual Pride Festival doubled in size, and many local leaders began to publicly support LGBT rights. Subsequently, LGBT advocates nurtured these newfound alliances and galvanized broader public support for the cause of LGBT equality.

Media coverage of Robinson's comments and subsequent scandals surrounding her personal life often obscure the response of LGBT advocates, and the longer history of LGBT activism in Northern Ireland. Considered within this historical context, the Robinson incident reveals broader challenges to how we think about human rights in post-conflict politics, and human rights advocacy

generally.

As an anthropologist, I have studied grassroots rights politics through fieldwork and archival research in Belfast since 1997. Over these years, the peace process unfolded fitfully, and the settlement often seemed less transformative than proponents claimed. At the same time, debates about LGBT rights created political possibilities that are dramatically different than the post-conflict divisions of unionism and nationalism.

The lesson of Robinson's 'summer of love' is not that Northern Ireland is a parochial backwater run by bigots, although political conflict since the 1960s has made the region an exotic oddity in public imagination. Actually, the first international court decision on sexual orientation and human rights originated in Northern Ireland. In 1981, the European Court of Human Rights upheld Jeff Dudgeon's challenge to Northern Ireland's sodomy law (*Dudgeon v. U.K.*). Set against this long history of legal mobilization, conflicts about Robinson's rhetoric are potent reminders that advocates must embed human rights principles in social life.

Like other queer rights movements, LGBT activism in Belfast traces its origins to Stonewall and liberation movements of the late 1960s. Since then, local advocates continued to pursue LGBT equality, although the cause was often marginalized by the violent civil conflict. In the 1970s, local advocates lobbied for law reform. Political leaders, particularly from Robinson's party, the DUP, resisted. Indeed, Robinson's language in 2008 echoed the rhetoric of 1970s reform opponents, whose 'Save Ulster from Sodomy' campaign was led by her party's former leader, Reverend Ian Paisley (Democratic Unionist Party).

In 2008, public reception of this rhetoric was dramatically different from those days when campaigners claimed 70,000 signatures against law reform. Local politicians and civil society groups publicly distanced themselves from her views.

> *These rejections of anti-gay politics and rhetoric were not the product of inevitable social progress. Rather, public support for LGBT equality emerged from campaigns for legal changes, pragmatic policies, and public understanding.*

Legal equality for LGBT people in Northern Ireland is an understudied consequence of the 1998 peace settlement, the Good Friday Agreement (GFA). The multi-party peace talks foregrounded human rights considerations, and the GFA's provisions add sexual orientation to a list of safeguarded categories, alongside religion, race, gender etc. Even before the settlement was finalized, gay activists were acutely aware this change was imminent, and began planning campaigns for legal equality.

Legal equality was not automatically triggered, and a wide range of supporting legislation was necessary. However, the devolved assembly functioned only intermittently during its first decade, and necessary legal changes were implemented from Westminster or by civil servants. Conscious of this dynamic, local LGBT activists directly lobbied MPs from Britain and state agencies for legal reforms, such as the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2000, Civil Partnership Act 2004, Criminal Justice (No 2) (Northern Ireland) Act 2004, Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2006, and Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008.

Since the agreement, the social context of queer life in Northern Ireland has changed even more dramatically than the legal environment. The louche haunts and alleys of Belfast's Cathedral Quarter have been redeveloped and rebranded.

> *Pubs, cafés, and shops now vie for the "pink pound" and assert their "gay-friendliness." The revitalized city center contrasts sharply to the desolate*

1970s, when a "ring of steel" was erected, and gay and deaf people, prostitutes and punks, surreptitiously created subcultures in Belfast's militarized nightscape.

The annual summer array of rainbow flags contrasts with even the 1990s, when the peace process was in its infancy, and the city boasted only one gay bar, perched furtively by the docks.

Increased recognition and acceptance of LGBT people also contrasts with the continuing ethnopolitical antipathies. For example, since the 1990s, Orange parades have caused intense rioting and annually reminded the world of the region's longstanding divisions. Political polarization has intensified. Parades, symbols, and past violence remain contentious, intimating, for some, a return to conflict. In the past year unionists staged protests to restore the Union Jack over City Hall, and republicans protested the arrest and questioning of Sinn Féin president, Gerry Adams.

Against this continuity of conflict, Belfast's annual summer Pride Festival asserts a new and different kind of reconciliation. Belfast Pride is the largest pride event in Ireland and is the largest cross-communal organization in the region. The festival is much more than a parade. It includes a weeklong schedule of dozens of events, including public debates, film screenings, plays, exhibitions, cabarets, and church services.

The emergence of LGBT rights activism at the end of the twentieth century was part of the global expansion of human rights advocacy and law. Since then, both critics and advocates of human rights have begun to question the "proliferation" or politicization of human rights.

> *Today, we are rightly suspicious when human rights talk justifies wars and other wrongs. However, warnings about "third generation" or "invented" rights also discredit the claims of groups who only recently gained access to the promises of human rights.*

So in practice, attempts to restrict human rights claims in legal and rhetorical terms also restrict access to both legal authority and rhetorical power.

Despite sobering evidence of the ongoing insecurity and inequality faced by LGBT people in Northern Ireland, events in 2008 are part of a larger story of gradual change. The story of LGBT organizing in Northern Ireland is a potent reminder of links between fundamental human rights to assembly, association, and speech, and practices that embed equality and create safety for vulnerable people. LGBT activists have pursued concrete legal changes and real social reconciliations—within trade unions and schools, between churches and gay parishioners, state agencies and gay citizens, and even, at times, advocates and opponents of gay rights.

> *These rapprochements are not based on claims for new rights or exclusive communalized rights; they emerge from an inclusive understanding of human life, experience, and value. This history shows how changes in law and society are interdependent, and that human rights advocacy is central to mutually reinforcing legal and social practices.*

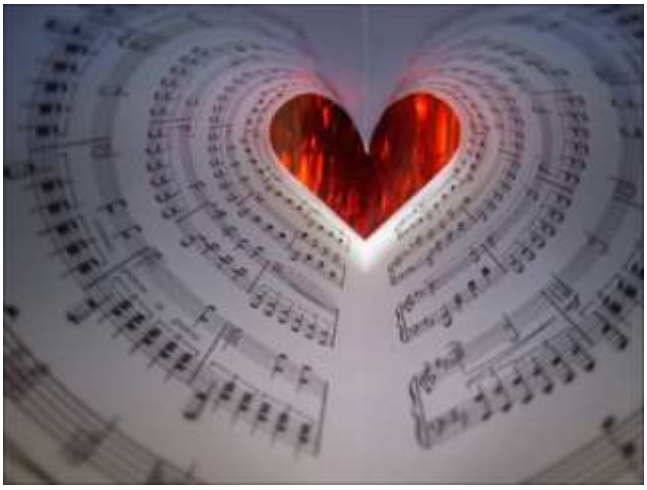
Music’s Marvellous Medicine & Moerman’s ‘Meaning Effect’

Gavin Weston
November, 2014

I am not alone in using music medicinally. The use of music’s mood altering properties was one of the themes to emerge out of The Fieldwork Playlist conference I ran with Dominique Santos last year. Whether I want to evoke a prior experience, lift my mood, get ready for a night out or wallow in a sense of self-pity I have track-lists set up to indulge these needs and desires. Had your heart-broken? There’s a song for that! Need to write a bit more quickly or avoid procrastination? There’s a song for that!

Or… songs… plural. And they won’t be the same for everyone. And some of the

songs will do the exact opposite to other people.



For me a headache would be soothed every bit as much by a bit of Dark Side of the Moon as it would be by an aspirin – but I'm assuming the same album would make famous Floyd-hater Johnny Rotten feel a lot worse.

Much of what music does taps into well established psychological and physiological responses. Minor keys sound sad. Music with a beat that mimics a fast heart rate is exciting. These, and other wondrous properties that are beyond my musical ken, are part of what makes music so medicinally efficacious. Yet as with other medicine this is just one layer in it's effectiveness.

Daniel Moerman's *Meaning, Medicine and the 'Placebo Effect'* (2002) suggests that we ought to reconceptualise the placebo effect – the gap between what is medically effective in a given treatment and what actual effect it has – as something more interesting in and of itself.

Two placebo tablets are more effective than one. A placebo injection is more effective than a placebo tablet. This demonstrates that belief in the effectiveness of certain scientific procedures leads to them being more effective.

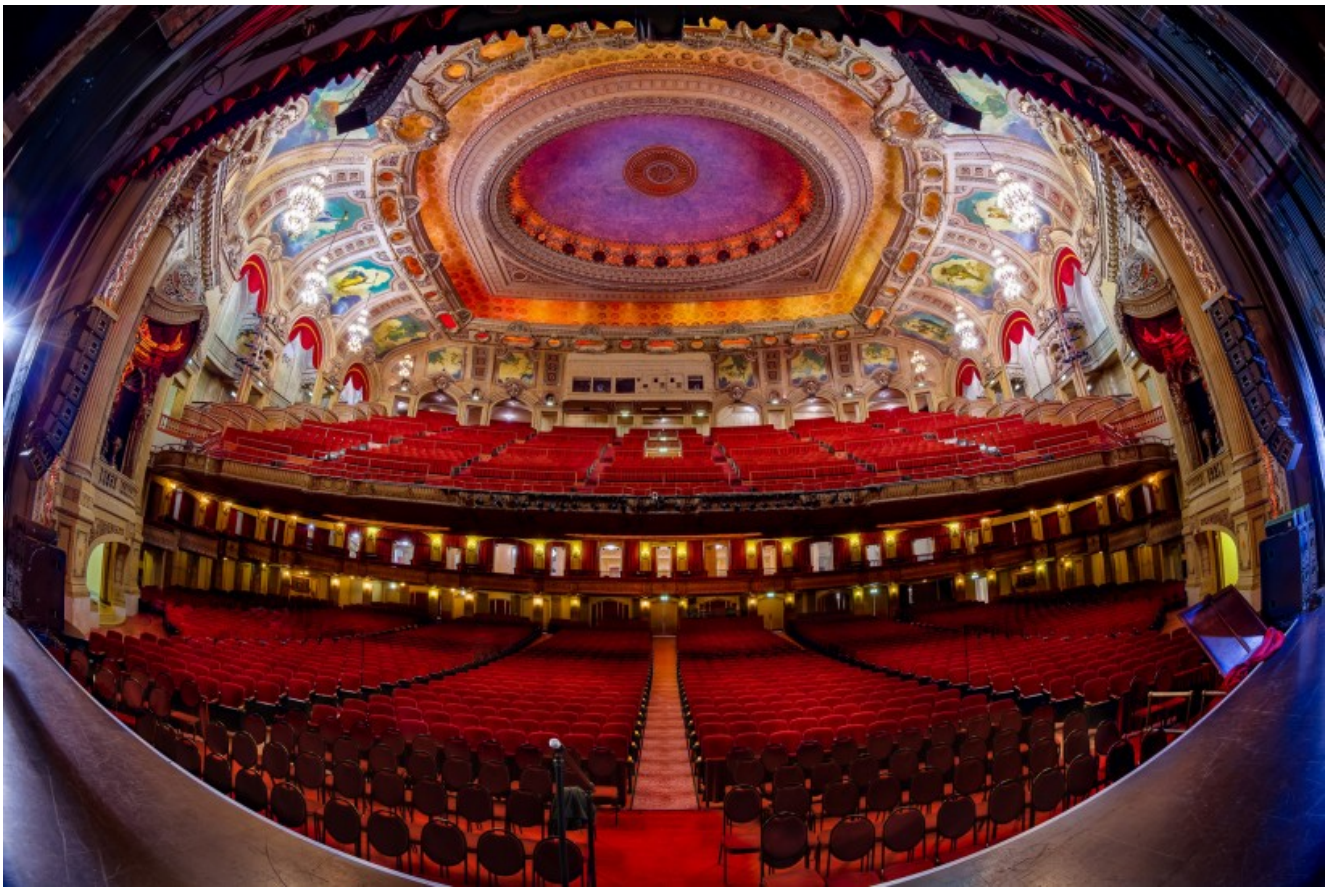
> *Moerman pins this down as being about meaning, and therefore a product of personal and sociocultural specificities.*

Blue tablets are generally more calmative – unless you're an Italian male, in which case they tend to excite you because the national football team wear blue. A mixture of the general and the specific, the medical and cultural. If we bear in mind that knowing that something is a placebo doesn't remove its effectiveness as a placebo we have the beginning of a ethnopharmocological approach to music. I am simultaneously being entirely flippant and entirely serious when I say this.

> *When someone tells you of an ailment – have a stab at suggesting a song that might help them. If music is a medicine – it's time we all start thinking of it pharmaceutically.*

The Politics of Framing and Staging. Interdisciplinary approaches to performance

Jonas Tinius
November, 2014



Bernardo: Who's there?

Francisco: Nay, answer me: stand and unfold yourself! [i]

These opening lines of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* create a scenario of first and strange encounters: One cold winter night, the two sentries Bernardo and Francisco are standing guard on a platform before the Danish royal castle Elsinore, when the ghost of Hamlet's father appears in the dark.

This is directly relevant to anthropological analyses of everyday social life: whether we are studying artists in illicit urban settings in Spain, popular democratic practices in rural provinces in India, or the privatisation of public

housing and public spaces in London, our field sites are permeated by practices of framing and staging. While the practices implied by the concepts ‘framing’ and ‘staging’ can thus serve as powerful metaphor to describe both, the most intimate presentation of self and the categorisation of a large groups of people, they also raise further questions: In what ways does the theatrical imagery of a stage or the visual image of a frame help us overcome misleading dichotomies such as performance and reality, presentation and essence, rhetoric and communication? How can we conceptualise framing and staging both as political instruments for influencing, say, public opinion and as the very essential practice for constituting sociality or subjectivity?

> *Asking what it means to ‘enact’ the self or to ‘display’ belonging are fundamentally ethical and political questions that address a wide range of aspects of social life.*

Currently in its second year as a research hub, the *Cambridge Interdisciplinary Performance Network* at the *Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities* (CRASSH) in Cambridge asks precisely those questions. By bringing together people from anthropology, classics, medicine, modern languages and literature, music, politics, and zoology together, it instigates discussion on how their various approaches to and vocabularies of performance intersect and interact. Such an interest in performance reflects a shift away from the idea of singular performances to thinking about collective processes, conscious enactments, and the implications of audiences. Its remit thus spans across but, crucially, also *beyond* the study of theatre and artistic practices to ask how performance can more widely be studied as a concept to interrogate reflected and deliberated social action, public policies, or self-cultivation.

The *Performance Network* is organised around a fortnightly seminar series,

convened by classicist Clare Foster and anthropologist Jonas Tinius. Building on its opening year in 2013/2014, which included seminars on cognition, cities, dance, collections, and science, as well as an inaugural conference entitled 'Beyond the authority of the 'text' – Performance as Paradigm', this year's programme revolves around the overarching theme 'The Politics of Staging and Framing'. Again, through a range of seminars dealing with the public sphere, creativity and capitalism, truth and power, science and laboratories, intellectual life, and the creative industries, an international symposium on the concept of the scene, and a second conference on the annual theme, the network seeks to engage in questions of counter-hegemonic cultural imaginations, collective self-identity, and political activism. How do artists deal with situations of complicity with the economic and political relations they seek to critique? How does public life get imagined and enacted? What does it mean to speak of the rehearsal of everyday life?

The seminar series began with an opening session entitled 'Performing the Public Sphere'. The first of two speakers was Dr Anastasia Piliavsky, a political anthropologist who has been working on corruption, petty crime, and India's informal economy. Alluding to the phenomenon of stage fright – the inability to express thoughts –, she suggested that any public performance is closely tied to the framing pressure exerted from an audience.

> *"But why should this be so? We will feel the weight of our audience—a presence that constrains. Very simply, because we will feel exposed" (Piliavsky, Stage Fright, presentation, 13 Oct 2014).*

Extrapolating from this introductory scenario, she discusses how sociologist

Erving Goffman took this scenario as a means to describe all social interaction in public. Suggesting that those focusing on individual articulation of thought regard social parameters as "strictures", Gofman understood them as "the armature of communicative life" itself (Piliavsky, *ibid*.). Put in other words, she suggested that "the sociology of communication tells us that communicative disclosure requires social enclosures" (*ibid*.). For Piliavsky, Goffman's thoughts on public interaction provide the grounds for an ethnographically productive critique of the Habermasian conception of the public sphere and public communication. According to his normative historical account outlined in *The Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere*, the socio-political transformations giving rise to a certain kind of public sphere relied on normative principles of openness, acceptance, and consensus.

At the heart of Piliavsky's critique of this project was an ethnographically grounded scepticism that this is how politics works on the ground. In many instances, especially among villagers of the North Indian state of Rajasthan, where she conducted most of her fieldwork, publicity is believed to inhibit debate and effective social communication does not take place in plain sight, but through particular channels and face-to-face conversation.

Having raised questions about the wider applicability of this critique, her talk was followed by a discussion of independent street art in Madrid. Dr Rafael Schacter, anthropologist and curator, provided an overview of the different kinds of public independent arts practices on the streets in Madrid. Whereas what he called "consensual practices" tend to ornament the streets, performing complementary images in public that seek dialogic and productive communication with members of what could broadly be conceptualised as a public sphere, "agonistic practices" reacted *against* the established urban space and ordering of the public (Schacter, 2014).

Creating thus alternative and intervening public art, this latter form of practice corresponded less well with a conception of public communication as espoused by Habermas, but could be better understood as localised resisting narratives that seek conflict rather than consensus. Such narratives, resembling Piliavsky's deliberations on Rajasthani democratic politics, do not always seek open, dialogic communication, but may well serve to hide, obscure, or challenge facile means and public channels of aesthetic-political communication (see Schacter, forthcoming, 2015).*[ii]* In their own ways, thus, independent street artists in Madrid created collectives with entirely different publics in mind, with conflicting yet not exclusionary practices which corresponded to or challenged the public framing of space provided by a city.

During a discussion led by Dr David Madden, urban sociologist at the LSE, several strands were identified as crucial to a debate on the study of performed public spheres.

> *Do exclusivity and foreclosure complement or challenge conceptions of a public sphere? In what ways might it be more fruitful to consider the multiple, contrasting practices that constitute and challenge existing conceptions of public space rather than rely on normative understandings of what a singular public sphere is? What are the roles of audiences and witnesses for the production of public acts? How do failure, competence, and authenticity feature in narratives about public performances?*

This seminar and the network's discussion series more generally raise interesting questions for new approaches to the relationship between anthropology and art. With many new collaborations planned and discussed for example at this summer's EASA 2014 conference in Tallinn, e.g. at Roger Sansi's Laboratory *Anthropologies of Art* or Thomas Fillitz' panel *Anthropology and Art*, the

Performance Network contributes to a growing trend of interdisciplinary research on the intersection between these two fields. This ties in with the Art meets Anthropology ALLEGRA posts published earlier this year on Aman Mojadidi.

The Network's upcoming annual conference, 'The Politics of Framing and Staging: Performance as Paradigm II' will take place on Monday, 8 December 2014 at CRASSH in Cambridge. Registration has opened. For more information, visit our website for podcasts and updates, follow us on Facebook and twitter (@PerformNet), or write to the Network convenors Jonas Tinius (jlt46@cam.ac.uk) or Clare Foster (clef3@cam.ac.uk).

References:

[i] William Shakespeare. *Hamlet*. Act 1, Scene 1.

[ii] Schacter, Rafael. 2015. 'The invisible Performance/The Invisible Masterpiece: Visibility, concealment, and commitment in Graffiti and Street Art', in: Flynn, Alex and Jonas Tinius. Eds. *Anthropology, Development, Performance: Reflecting on Political Transformations*. London/New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Karaoke as performance ideology: youth and self-fashioning in Kampala's night life

Nanna Schneiderman
November, 2014
Yellow Bar, Mukono, Central Uganda; February 2010.

It is Saturday night in Mukono on the outskirts of Kampala city. The bustle of the trading center and market is cooling down, the traffic jams have died out; now the night-time bustle and the jams on the dance floors are beginning all over town. Tonight is Karaoke Talent Night, a hand-painted banner outside Yellow Bar announces. At the bar, young women are sipping Bell lager. At the opposite end of the room, a stage and a DJs booth dominate the wall. The stage is wooden and hovers above the backs of the rows of white plastic chairs in front of it. Black fabric, black paint, simple lights on the middle of the stage.

As 11.30 approaches, the room is filling up. The hall smells of stale beer, urine and sweat; it tastes of it. Most visible are young men, dressed up in "fashion design" clothes—sneakers, jeans and T-shirts with slogans; caps, and jewelry with

gleaming plastic gems, moving jerkily with darting eyes. A few older men in meticulously ironed shirts and dress pants are escorted by women with braided or relaxed hair. The room is so big, and much of it is shrouded in a smudgy darkness where groups of men sit and drink, beer bottles crowding their tables, where women dance incitingly with their bottoms parked in the crotch of their male partners.

> *On the stage two young men in baggy jeans and sweatshirts are struggling to perform the hit song "Ability" by the Ugandan superstars The Goodlyfe Crew. They sing along with the song, but seem not to know the words well and their movements are uncoordinated and aimless, unrehearsed. This displeases the audience, and the Master of Ceremonies (the MC), who is the host of the show, signals the DJ, who stops the music. The MC collects two wireless microphones, as he ushers the two disappointed young men off the stage. "Thank you, thank you, ladies and gentlemen," the MC says as if to an imagined applause. He has already alerted the next performer, who gets up from his chair, ready, as the others pass him.*

We begin within a typical scene from Kampala's nightlife: young people on a

stage, performing songs made famous by others, before an audience. Since the middle of the 1990s karaoke has emerged as a popular from of entertainment and it has given rise to a new generation of music performers and stars in Uganda.

Conventionally we think of karaoke -the Japanese word for “empty orchestra”— as a particular kind of social singing where the singer provides a live vocal to specially prepared versions of popular songs where the lead vocal tracks are left empty. However, in its Ugandan version, karaoke refers to a range of music performance practices that are based on the creative potential of imitation in the technological ”splitting” of sound from its makers, or its source. Urban youths in Uganda perform karaoke in different contexts; at shows like the one at Yellow Bar, in karaoke talent competitions at schools, at parties as well as large music shows at sports grounds and arenas. Karaoke has been pivotal for the development of the informal music industry in Uganda, which some estimates provide livelihood for 100,000 Ugandans, performing, recording, broadcasting, and selling music. Rather than trying to pin down karaoke as a specific type of performance, I will try to explore karaoke as a performance ideology which underpins the contemporary music scene. In the context of a large urban youth population, whose access to education and the formal job market is limited, karaoke somehow has caught the dreams and aspirations of young people, and it points to shifts in the relations between people and popular music in Uganda, as well as to how music making practices indexes notions of self-fashioning and innovation among urban youths in Kampala.

> *Without wasting time,” the MC beams, standing in front of the stage and gesturing to the next performer, “here is a bit of dance from Mukono’s Michael Jackson.*

Hesitant cheering, a moment of empty sound. A young man steps up onto the stage. One hand in glove, shiny black shoes, aviator shades, black soft hat. He stands on the edge of the stage, making him a black silhouette in profile. The three spots are pointed elsewhere. The audience sits expectantly. The music sets him in motion. A medley of greatest hits and greatest-hit moves. The young man snaps his fingers with a flick of the wrist, pops out his skinny chest. That tiny movement is Michael Jackson, no mistake. He grabs the hat in a downwards movement, then places one hand just above his crotch and the other behind him, index and pinky fingers pointed down, moving to the rhythm of Billy Jean. His mouth mimes the lyrics as he skips, slips and slides across the stage. One foot slides behind the other, toe on the wooden surface, then the other, heel down. The effect is peculiar. It looks like Mukono Michael Jackson is walking forward, but he is actually moving his body in the opposite direction—moonwalk. There are cheers. He ends in a kind of clumsy pivot and stands on his toes for a second, grabs his crotch. Mukono Michael Jackson, on stage, mimes Billy Jean (almost perfectly adopted from the Motown twenty-fifth anniversary performance of 1983).

The Rise of the Karaoke Generation

Considering the rich musical heritage of Uganda and its history of storytelling, singing and playing on instruments, the performance of Mukono Michael Jackson may seem quite alien to what is thought of when the words “Uganda” and “music” are put together.

The localkaraoke-scene, as it was told by my friends in Kampala, emerged in the middle of the 1990s as Kampala became more peaceful and secure after decades

of civil war and unrest, and its residents began venturing beyond their own neighborhood and into the nightlife of the city. This was concurrent with the liberalization and privatization of the media economy. Commercial radio stations, and small cassette dubbing enterprises mushroomed. The foundation for the new market for popular music was partly its informality, which enabled the commodification of music in flexible and inventive ways by local music enthusiasts who had little access to start-up capital, while keeping international potential investors and recording companies afield.

The market for popular music was grew explosively, and there was a high demand to experience the global urban genres that were hitting on the new local FM stations live. Urban teens stepped onto the local stages to entertain each other. Karaoke was a way of participating on the nightlife scene, “to get a chance on how it feels to be a star,” as a newspaper reported on one of the very first karaoke talent nights back in 1996. And this became a vantage point for youths to imagine

and practice popular music in Kampala.

Lyrical G was one of the young people who started his musical career as a karaoke performer in the mid-1990s. The advent of commercial radio increased the availability of American and Jamaican popular music genres like dancehall, hip-hop and R&B, and this changed Lyrical G's relationship with music, he said, as we hung out in a roadside bar on a lazy Kampala afternoon:"For me, getting into this hip-hop ting (…) [is] 'cause I'm a fan first and foremost. " He explained how he and a group of friends became inspired by American rappers like Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg, and took turns to perform their songs at high school dances and local bars. Karaoke in this way allowed aspiring singers to get on stage and "do" music without having to hire a backing band, acquire expensive technological equipment, or pay studio fees to record self-composed songs.

Lyrical G and his group now attracted their own following of fans, becoming regular performers in various different night time venues throughout the week in the city. Initially, they were not paid to perform, except from the tips and drinks offered by fans after performances, but as their popularity grew, bar owners and promoters started offering them money, because their names on the list of performers would ensure an audience and clientele in their venues. A new generation of musicians was on the rise.

In the early 2000s digital music recording came to Kampala, and within a few years hundreds of music studies popped up in the city. Lyrical G called his first recording of his own songs his "graduation":

> *After a while, I graduated to writing my own stuff. And then recording it, getting my own stage, doing these concerts. (…) And I had already made a name, appearing on stage and rapping. I stopped doing other people's songs. Now I was writing my own small little-little raps.*

Lyrical G became one of the few who made a name for himself as a hip-hop *artist* in Uganda by rapping convincingly in English, while most of his contemporary karaoke "graduates" sung and chanted in the local language Luganda or Swahili. He built a steady following of fans among fellow hip-hoppers, and later won several music awards, besides travelling the East African region and beyond performing his music.

Lyrical G exemplifies a success trajectory for a musical career among the karaoke generation—from being a fascinated fan of global music stars, to being inspired to take on the stars' stage personas doing karaoke (of the same stars), to *graduating* to creating one's own songs and recording them, thus identifying oneself with the same genre as the global stars who were the inspiration to step on stage.

Though they had their own material, the generation of singers who had started their music careers as karaoke performers continued to perform karaoke-style, singing along with or miming their songs on CDs. Karaoke in this way represents a way for young Ugandans to participate in global youth cultures, forging trajectories for inserting oneself in a potentially global "star system" of artists and celebrities. Put simply, the karaoke generation modeled their artistic identities and their hopes for future trajectories on the stars they mimed. Karaoke as a novel kind of performance ideology form the 1990s onwards changed not only local popular music genres, but also who a musician could be, as young mimers embodied North American and Jamaican pop icons like Michael Jackson, Celine Dion, Mariah Carey, Snoop Dogg, Shabba Ranks and Buju Banton.

Shifts in performance ideologies

After independence in 1962, popular music took center state in the cultural politics of Uganda. The new nation turned away from what was seen as colonial culture, imitating European styles and genres, and turned its efforts to establishing a distinct national identity for a modern African state. The state actively embraced music and dance as part of ideologies of “Africanization” or “de-Westernization”. In Kampala, jazz bands performing “dance music” became the hallmark of the new independent Ugandan culture, as they took inspiration American jazz, Latin American rhythms and Central African styles, playing African rumba with either Lingala (Congolese) or Luganda lyrics promoting and celebrating independence and pan-Africanism.

The story of Afrigo Band, known as Uganda’s longest running “dance band”, reflects the performance ideologies of the post-colonial era in Kampala. Starting out in 1976 as an offshoot of one of the most popular jazz bands in the city, Afrigo Black Power Bandtied themselves into pan-African independence ideologies. Their music repertoire and performances sought to express ideals of “Africanization and unity,” as a band member told me, “trying to make a single rhythm that unites us.” Afrigo Band in the 1970s became one of the most popular groups in Uganda, performed for – and was promoted by – the (in)famous president Idi Amin, and their music was in heavy rotation on the national radio channel. Jazz bands like Afrigo used foreign technologies, languages and musical elements to create music that captured the ears and imagination of wide audiences, promoting political messages and speaking to and for “the people” in the spirit of Uganda as an independent state.

Afrigo continues to be a popular band in Kampala, drawing a steady audience to their regular weekly performances. Jazz bands in Kampala, like in other parts of East Africa, are large ensembles, typically performing with ten to twenty people on stage. Bands also include understudies; second- and third-string band members. Music performances may last five or six hours, and in this time, instrumentalists, singers and dancers take turns on stage; building up the emotional space of the room. In these performances members of the band and the audiences interact, as the band leader or singers recognizes the presence of dignitaries on the microphone, take requests, and modify lyrics of songs to fit the events going on in the dancehall; as dancers engage the audience; as members of the audience may engage fellow audience members by singing along or dancing to particularly significant passages of a song.

> *Emphasis here is on different forms of reciprocity as performers and audiences collectively constitute the performance space. These different forms of exchange, within bands, and between the band and the audience, constitute a kind of circulatory performance ideology in which participants my take up*

different positions in the course of a single performance.

Musicians also move between bands, and older musicians recall how they in the 1960s and 1970s circulated between Kampala, Nairobi, Dar Es Salaam and even Kinshasa, playing with different ensembles and working as studio musicians. Individual musicians rose to fame as members of bands, and audiences would praise the talents of their favorite guitarists or singers, yet the stable institutions and names in the music scenes were the bands.

Post-colonial Uganda also faced musicians with the shadow side of state patronage. With the rapidly deteriorating economy and increasingly volatile living situation in Kampala, Afrigo band remained active by forging client-ties to Idi Amin's regime, but many prominent musicians went into exile. The situation was only made worse after the overthrow of Idi Amin in 1979 and the contested election in 1980, as the rebel group National Resistance Army led by Yoweri K. Museveni went to war. Older musicians and entertainment reporters, I talked to, said that by the early 1980s only a handful of bands were playing in Uganda, and public nightlife was restricted by curfews and insecurity for people moving beyond their immediate neighborhoods.

Museveni's slogan, as the National Resistance Army/ Movement (NRA/M) came into power in 1986, was that his rule was not only a change of guards but a "fundamental change." The new regime set out to make Uganda democratic and to ensure its citizens a decent standard of living. Museveni explicitly emphasized participation in the market and individual entrepreneurship as a way to get there. In his biography, "Sowing the Mustard Seed" from 1997, he writes about the majority of Uganda's population as peasants trapped in the backwater of underdevelopment.

The peasant “is not worried about markets because he has little to sell. (…) The hill is the outer limit of his horizon.” The public discourses of the NRM regime where bodying forth an image of citizens as the opposite; participants in the marketplace with their eyes not on the hills of the neighbors farm, but on global horizons. The NRM and Museveni’s rule in practice represented a shift towards liberalization and privatization through structural adjustment programs and economic to reform. The hopes of a market driven economy were encapsulated in the slogan “prosperity for all”. The “fundamental change”was also felt in popular music.

The new generation of musicians taking the stages from the 1990s and onwards, actively fashioned themselves as individual figures, rather than as a part of a circulation of positions within a group. Here karaoke is a central site for drawing forth the performer’s singular and individual talents and potentials through the imitation of global music stars.

Bobi Wine, who has been one of the most successful singers on Kampala’s music scene over the last ten years, said in an interview about his early days as a teenage karaoke singer in the slum:

> *Originally we did not have a style. Ugandan music was not listened to, only Congolese [dance] music. But there was a time, especially with the influence of Chaka Demus and Pliers; the dancehall, that wave that came… It was similar to ours, yet different. The vibe was the same—that syncopated beat. It was—it was African yet it had a foreign style (…) That helped us discover ourselves. And we’ve been developing styles and we’ve been identifying abilities in us.*

The American stars on the black music scene and the Jamaican dancehall artists breaking through internationally in the mid- 1990s emphasized their artistic identities as entrepreneurs, fashioning themselves as “brand names” and consumer products. Global pop stars and their status as celebrities increasingly

became “an advertisement for a new gilded age when commodities overpower everything, (….) reducing hitherto insoluble problems to the dimensions of the market,” as Ellis Cashmore wrote about global celebrity culture in 2010. These global superstars became models for ways of performing value and fame among urban youths in a Uganda where the president and the ruling party in slogans promised “prosperity for all” through economic liberalization and growth.

In karaoke, a singer becomes more than an entertainer at parties and social gatherings, or a mouthpiece for “the state” or “the people”— a singer is someone for and of her or himself. The global genres hip-hop, R&B, and cross-over dancehall fashioned the singer as a star; singular solo performer on the stage who could not be replaced or substituted by another. The karaoke singers did not call themselves musicians: they were *artists*. Singing and doing music to “feel like a star” and to be an *artist* were distinctive new ways for young people to engage with popular music. The circulatory dynamics of popular music in “dance music” and jazz bands was by my interlocutors seen as fundamentally different from the performances karaoke generation. My younger friends in the music industry recognize the legacy of Jazz bands, some of which continue to be popular in the new millennium. But they emphasize that where bands retain their following by what they themselves call “*circulating*” their hit songs, playing the same repertoire over several years, the stars of the young generation have to constantly perform new hits and new styles to keep and attract their fans, to keep “*selling*.” The musicians of the karaoke generation became *artists*, stars and entrepreneurs, by experimenting with how their music, and they themselves could be traded as products in the local music economy, seen as embedded within global music industries.

> *In this sense, it is apt to think of karaoke as a performance ideology available to youths in Kampala, shaping trajectories from fandom to stardom, creating novel kinds of subjectivities and relations in the city.*

The generation of singers who started their careers performing karaoke has

fundamentally different experiences with and understandings of popular music than the musicians of the dance and jazz bands that went before. Young people's self-fashioning in karaoke as *artists* and stars, with products to sell to consumers, has been fundamental for the emergence of the new music scene and the thriving music economy in Uganda.

During the performance, several audience members walk up to the stage to shove a token of appreciation into Mukono Michael's hand. Some of the women stop in front of the stage to dance for a moment before they return to their seats. The tippers give to the performers they think are talented. Mukono Michael's emaciated body lends him credibility as his legs in the too-short black pants jerk rhythmically into awkward positions. Mukono Michael's friends cheer him on, as the music ends. Smiling and giving out high fives, Mukono's Michael Jackson takes off his shades and the hat, and stuffs the coins and 1000 shillings notes into his pockets, before he and his friends disappear into the dense night. The MC prepares to announce the next act on stage in Karaoke Talent Night. Girls are still dancing, groups of friends still drinking and laughing in the corners.

Excited about popular music in Africa? Here are some great reads:

Askew, Kelly (2002). *Performing the nation: Swahili music and cultural politics in Tanzania*. University of Chicago Press.

Perullo, Alex. (2011). *Live from Dar es Salaam: popular music and Tanzania's music economy*. Indiana University Press.

Shipley, Jesse Weaver (2013). *Living the hiplife: celebrity and entrepreneurship in Ghanaian popular music*. Duke University Press.

White, Bob W. (2008). *Rumba Rules: the politics of dance music in Mobutu's Zaire*. Duke University Press.

Air Guitar as Folk Art

Paul Mullins
November, 2014

On arriving at Oulu, Finland's airport, signs somewhat cheekily announce "You're in a smart city." The proud reference to Oulu's ranking as one of the world's seven most intelligent communities is a departure from Finns' generally reserved, modest, and reticent personalities, and it might seem even more surprising that each August Oulu is home to the Air Guitar World Championship's crowd of loud and colorful extroverts. For 19 years a host of international visitors have descended on Oulu parading about town playing invisible musical instruments and championing the egalitarian art of air guitar. The two of us have been among that crowd for several years, with one of us winning the title of Air Guitar World Champion in 2012 and the other in the crowd as a participant-observer.

> *It is easy to dismiss air guitar as a meaningless leisure, but we want to suggest that air guitar might be more productively understood to be a folk expressive art; that is, air guitar unites music, dance, and theater in an expressive art that admits everyone, can be reproduced infinitely, and expresses common ideals if not values.*

The fundamentals of air guitar performance remain consistent over time even as each performer brings their own subtle variations to performance, so it is a distinctive public theater accessible to nearly anybody who is part of global popular culture and knows the core traditions set out by the likes of Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, and Stevie Ray Vaughn. Across an astounding array of cultural divides, we share recognition of Elvis' swagger, Angus Young's duckwalk, and Jimi Hendrix's stage presence, bound together by music and great performers in ways that air guitar embraces and aspires to expand.

Perhaps the most fascinating dimensions of air guitar are its utterly democratic ambitions and egalitarian (or at least idealistic) politics. The Air Guitar World Championship optimistically argues that its aspiration is to "promote world peace. According to the ideology of the Air Guitar, wars would end, climate change stop and all bad things disappear, if all the people in the world played the Air Guitar." There is not especially good scientific evidence that climate change will be arrested by interpretations of Duane Allman, but that brash idealism is made possible by the accessibility of air guitar. Air guitar's unique performance of camp, confidence, naïve sincerity, self-aware insignificance, and playful theatre is quite possibly among the most accessible of all expressive arts.

> *Air guitar has a fundamentally egalitarian ethic, accessibility, and non-judgmental standards so it constructs community in similarly broad and inclusive ways that admit entrance to everybody.*

Expressive arts like guitar playing, dancing, singing, or acting are of course displays of technical skill, creativity, and performance talent that separate great artists from those of us in the audience. In contrast, *anybody* can play air guitar; the air guitarists who strode the stage in Oulu in August are perhaps distinguished by their imagination, confidence, and theatricality, but much of the

allure of air guitar rests with its absolutely egalitarian appeal and an acceptance of all performances. The very act of playing an invisible guitar in front of strangers would inspire anxiety in many of us, but air guitarists accept the sincere efforts of performance and the love of music, which creates a very powerful sense of community among air guitarists.

Air guitar performances hope to evoke the emotional impact of Eddie Van Halen, rather than the technical skills that produce a particular sonic experience; consequently, playing air guitar involves a quite distinctive set of performance skills. Air guitarists aspire to capture the emotional thrill of guitar masters' performances and display the nuances of musicians' bodily playing, ranging from prosaic hand motions to physical stance to facial expressions. In many ways, they face a distinct challenge because the performance itself must make an audience feel moved by the emotional power of an air guitarist who is interpreting music yet not creating it. Air guitarists may not actually "play" music, but they acknowledge, embrace, and then display our emotional and bodily responses to music and build a distinctive community that revolves around the pleasures of performance and acceptance.

> *Air guitar's energetic public performance and unassuming goofiness may contrast with Finnish cultural restraint. However, Finns certainly are not alone embracing disciplinary codes of restraint, rationality, and self-consciousness that discourage many of us from unleashing our best Johnny Ramone interpretation.*

Air guitarists celebrate the innocent pleasures of unfettered and sincere expression that many of us entertained as children but have now suppressed beneath behavioral disciplines. Air guitar's pretensions for world peace and ambitious goals counter-intuitively come from the least self-important of all arts, a people's folk expression in which the most prominent performers and their desires are indistinguishable from our own. Certainly some zealous critics see air guitar as an assault on the high art of metal, but like nearly any art, air guitar is not really an interesting subject of analysis if it is simply reduced to musical virtuosity and technical performance. Instead, it provides a rich insight into contemporary life if we see it as a performance that imagines and expresses pleasure and community and unites people with common ideals.

(Image: Justin "Nordic Thunder" Howard by Alyce Henson)

Let’s Dance (or Perform)!

Allegra
November, 2014

After a few heavy weeks – violence, borders, Kurdish disapora – this week will feature something lighter, perhaps. For this week will be Allegra’s first ever (but certainly NOT the last) Dance Extravaganza!

Or more specifically, this is how the plan got started via some innocent social media exchanges, an increasingly cherished route for Allegra’s content. A tweet, a Facebook post and an email later and there we have it – a full week of Boogie Down FUN!

In reality we offer, of course, something much more interesting still, namely four posts featuring detailed and nuanced accounts on music, dance, performance and politics. Just as we discovered via one of our favorite posts yet, namely Flatulanthropology, when given the appropriate anthropological ‘scrub down’ even such seemingly flimsy topics as ‘pull my finger’-jokes acquire profound

layers that are only waiting for analysis. And the same certainly applies here.

> *With these thoughts in mind, we kick things off with something quite flamboyant, namely the annual Air Guitar World Championships taking place in Oulu, Northern Finland. Can mimicking the memorable strokes of Jimi Hendrix really bring about world peace – as one of the contest's modest slogans go?*

Paul Mullins – Allegra's 'very own donut guy' – discusses this and much more in his take on this unique combination of 'camp, confidence, naïve sincerity, self-aware insignificance', which he calls 'quite possibly among the most accessible of all expressive arts'.

We then continue with a post that takes a huge geographic leap, but perhaps bears closer similarity to underlying issues than what spontaneously meets the eye: Nanna Schneiderman talks of Ugandan youth culture, particularly the role of karaoke in it.

> *Her post is contextualized in a broader study exploring popular music culture – a commonly overlook area of youth culture in development work and research – to understand how karaoke as a particular performance ideology shapes the actions, values and future life-courses of the engaged participants, as well as to understand how popular music culture functions as a space for self-fashioning and innovation.*

After that we leave music behind us momentarily to glance at how performance – or rather 'the complexities of framing and staging' as this post explains – influence behavior and thought in relation to their immediate environment, or, how, in turn, human behavior influences the way we frame spaces and spheres for others. In his post Jonas Tinius discusses ongoing work to explore these issues via very 'now' experiments combining anthropology and the arts.

We conclude this week with a post by 'Allies Ally' Gavin Weston, who shares his thoughts on using music 'medicinally'. What does this mean – and what role does the placebo effect have here? True to Allegra's experimental spirit this post remains at present largely a sketch, and we look forward to the unfolding of the thought process behind it; not the least a particular book linked to an event called 'the Fieldwork Playlist' arranged last year at Goldsmiths.

> *Thanks – once again – for joining our bizarre intellectual magic carpet ride; we hope to keep you entertained!*

Studying violence anthropologically

Allegra
November, 2014

This week, Allegra investigates a difficult subject: violence and suffering as these are experienced on the margins and peripheries of the late modern world.

We start the week with a conversation between Dr Atreyee Sen and Dr Rubina Jasani in which both authors discuss the rise of Hindu nationalism or Hindutva in India and its impact on women. The authors, both anthropologists, have conducted long-term fieldwork in the slums of Mumbai and Ahmedabad where the experiences of inter-religious tensions continue to determine not only everyday interactions, but also the territorial reorganization of localities. Their paper offer two 'undiluted' case studies of (a) a Hindu woman rioter attacking Muslims in Mumbai, and (b) a Muslim woman confronted with Hindu mobs in Ahmedabad. The sequence of events described by the women highlights how the dread of Hindutva-related processes on the ground defined notions of safety and solidarity

amongst both casualties and perpetrators of violence. The two voices of women occupying these contested spaces further reveal how women's experiences of suffering and loss during the eruption of religious hostilities are intimately related to their domestic space, family relations, bereavement, mobility, their socio-economic position within urban ghettos, the integrity of female bodies, etc., over and above women's disillusionment with the state, secular and faith-based organisations.

We continue with a post written by Nida Kirmani entitled 'City of fear: everyday experience of insecurity in Lyari (Karachi)'. Her research focuses on how fear and insecurity impact on the spatial negotiations of young Baloch men living in Lyari. It highlights the ways in which overlapping fears colour the experience and imagination of urban space by such marginalized groups, placing constraints on their movements and hence restricting their access to public space.

Gerhard Anders introduces his new book: "Transition and Justice: Negotiating the Terms of New Beginnings in Africa" which examines a series of new beginnings in Sierra Leone, Uganda, Rwanda, Mauritania, Kenya and South Africa. He argues that one characteristic feature of the debates about justice and transition in these situations is the contradiction between the official condemnation of violence, on

the one hand, and the multifarious ways in which violence actually shapes the new beginnings, on the other.

Emma Varley's recent fieldwork explores how the distribution of health services in Gilgit (Northern Pakistan) and its complex and variable moral economy of medical care hinges on questions of sectarian affiliation and identity. She also evaluates how the sectarian embeddedness and involvement of clinical sites, health service providers and patients result in exclusionary or differential health service provision and, consequently, a higher observed incidence of maternal morbidity and mortality.

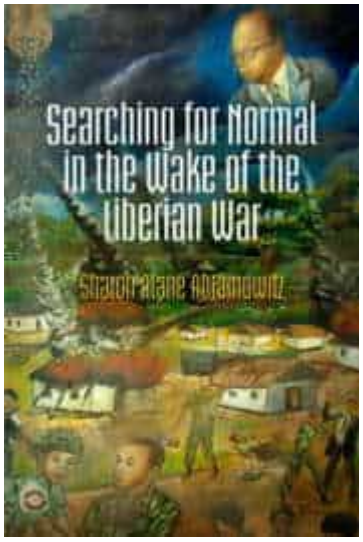
We conclude the week with a list of recent publications on 'violence' looking for reviewers!

Stay tuned!

Books on "Violence" looking for reviewers #AnthroViolence

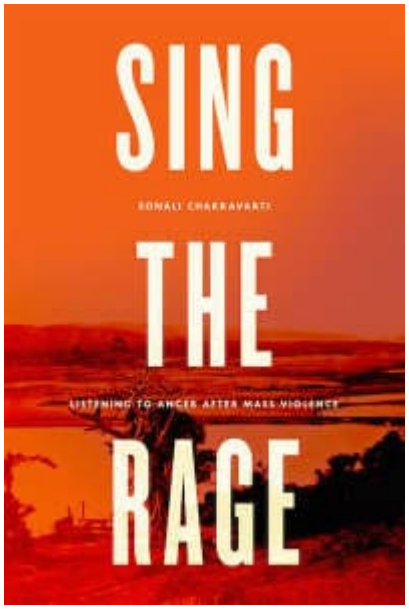
Allegra
November, 2014

It has been a stimulating week at Allegra, with many fabulous posts by anthropologists working on ‘violence’. If you missed it, do not panic: you can retrieve all the content of this thematic week here. To conclude this thread, we publish here a list of recent books all related to the topic. If you are interested in reviewing one of them, contact Allegra’s review editor Judith Beyer or Reviews assistant, Sophie Allies-Curtis at reviews@allegralaboratory.net and they will send you a copy!



Abramowitz, Sharon Alane. 2014. Searching for Normal in the Wake of the Liberian War. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 280 pp. Hb: $65.00. ISBN: 9780812246261.

Searching for Normal in the Wake of the Liberian War explores the human experience of the massive apparatus of trauma-healing and psychosocial interventions during the first five years of postwar reconstruction. Sharon Alane Abramowitz draws on extensive fieldwork among the government officials, humanitarian leaders, and an often-overlooked population of Liberian NGO employees to examine the structure and impact of the mental health care interventions, in particular the ways they were promised to work with peacekeeping and reconstruction, and how the reach and effectiveness of these promises can be measured. From this courageous ethnography emerges a geography of trauma and the ways it shapes the lives of those who give and receive care in postwar Liberia.



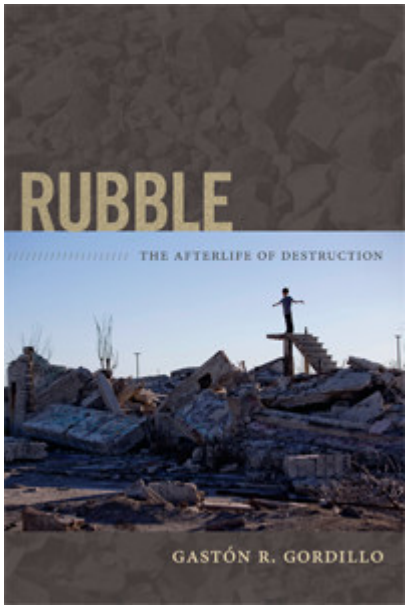
Chakravarti, Sonali. 2014. *Sing the Rage. Listening to Anger After Mass Violence.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 232 pp. Hb: $35.00. ISBN: 9780226119984.

What is the relationship between anger and justice, especially when so much of our moral education has taught us to value the impartial spectator, the cold distance of reason? In *Sing the Rage*, Sonali Chakravarti wrestles with this question through a careful look at the emotionally charged South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which from 1996 to 1998 saw, day after day, individuals taking the stand to speak — to cry, scream, and wail — about the atrocities of apartheid. Uncomfortable and surprising, these public emotional displays, she argues, proved to be of immense value, vital to the success of transitional justice and future political possibilities.

Freedman, Karyn L. 2014. *One Hour in Paris. A True Story of Rape and Recovery.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 208 pp. Hb: $20.00. ISBN: 9780226073705.

At once deeply intimate and terrifyingly universal, *One Hour in Paris* weaves together Freedman's personal experience with the latest philosophical, neuroscientific, and psychological insights on what it means to live in a body that has been traumatized. Using her background as a philosopher, she looks at the history of psychological trauma and draws on recent theories of posttraumatic stress disorder and neuroplasticity to show how recovery from horrific experiences is possible.

Freedman's book is an urgent call to face this fundamental social problem head-on, arguing that we cannot continue to ignore the fact that sexual violence against women is rooted in gender inequalities that exist worldwide—and must be addressed.



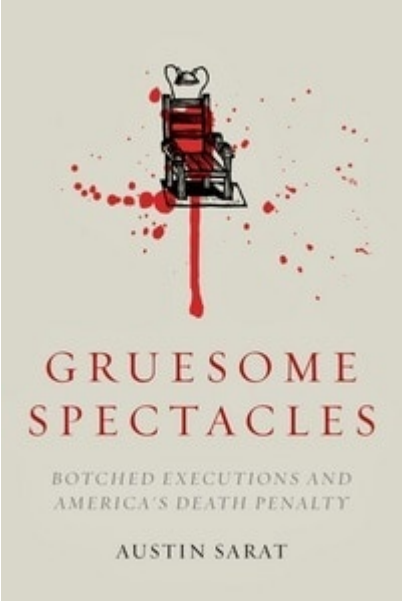
Gordillo, Gastón R. 20134. *Rubble: The Afterlife of Destruction.* Durham: Duke University Press. 386 pp. Pb: $22.83. ISBN: 9780822356196

At the foot of the Argentine Andes, bulldozers are destroying forests and homes to create soy fields in an area already strewn with rubble from previous waves of destruction and violence. Based on ethnographic research in this region where the mountains give way to the Gran Chaco lowlands, Gastón R. Gordillo shows how geographic space is inseparable from the material, historical, and affective ruptures embodied in debris.

Examining the effects of these and other forms of debris on the people living on nearby ranches and farms, and in towns, Gordillo emphasizes that for the rural poor, the rubble left in the wake of capitalist and imperialist endeavors is not romanticized ruin but the material manifestation of the violence and dislocation that created it.

Kaldor, Mary. 2012. *New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era, 3rd Edition.* Cambridge: Polity Press. 224 pp. Pb: €21.60. ISBN: 9780745655635.

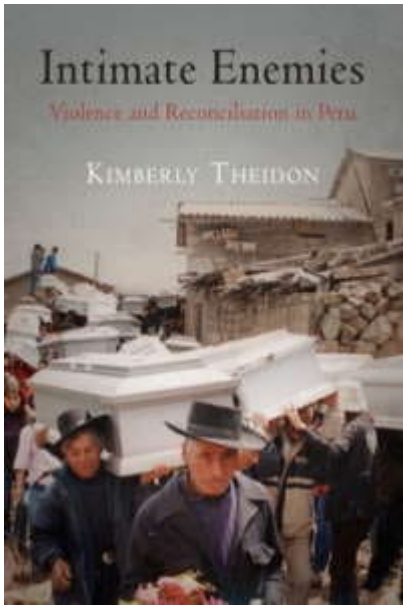
Mary Kaldor's *New and Old Wars* has fundamentally changed the way both scholars and policy-makers understand contemporary war and conflict. In the context of globalization, this path-breaking book has shown that what we think of as war – that is to say, war between states in which the aim is to inflict maximum violence – is becoming an anachronism. In its place is a new type of organized violence or 'new wars', which could be described as a mixture of war, organized crime and massive violations of human rights.



Sarat, Austin. 2014. *Gruesome Spectacles. Botched Executions and America's Death Penalty.* Stanford: Stanford University Press. 288 pp. Hb: $24.00. ISBN: 9780804789165.

Gruesome Spectacles is a history of botched, mismanaged, and painful executions in the U.S. from 1890–2010. Using new research, Sarat traces the evolution of methods of execution that were employed during this time, and were meant to improve on the methods that went before, from hanging or firing squad to electrocution to gas and lethal injection. Even though each of these technologies was developed to "perfect" state killing by decreasing the chance of a cruel death, an estimated three percent of all American executions went awry in one way or another.

Sarat recounts the gripping and truly gruesome stories of some of these deaths—stories obscured by history and to some extent, the popular press.



Theidon, Kimberly Susan. 2014.*Intimate Enemies: Violence and Reconciliation in Peru.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 480 pp. Pb: $29.95. ISBN: 97808122-2326-2

Drawing on years of research with communities in the highlands of Ayacucho, Kimberly Theidon explores how Peruvians are rebuilding both individual lives and collective existence following twenty years of armed conflict. *Intimate Enemies* recounts the stories and dialogues of Peruvian peasants and Theidon's own experiences to encompass the broad and varied range of conciliatory practices: customary law before and after the war, the practice of *arrepentimiento* (publicly confessing one's actions and requesting pardon from one's peers), a differentiation between forgiveness and reconciliation, and the importance of storytelling to make sense of the past and recreate moral order.

If you are interested in reviewing one of these books, please inform Allegra's review editor Judith Beyer @ reviews@allegralaboratory.net . **Here are our review guidelines:**

Spelling: British English. Please use –ise and not –ize word endings.

Word limit: 750-1500 words

Font: Times New Roman

Size: 12

Line Spacing: 1,5

No footnotes.

If you cite other authors, please reference their publication in the end.

The review is to be written within three months from the dispatch of the book.

Please also include your name and (academic) affiliation.

Post header image credit: deviantART user nikogeyer

Medicine at the Margins: Conflict, Sectarianism and Health Governance in Gilgit-Baltistan

Emma Varley
November, 2014

Gilgit Town, the administrative capital of the impoverished, neglected and semi-autonomous Gilgit-Baltistan region in northern Pakistan, has been at the heart of nearly 30 years of sectarian conflict in which an estimated 3,000, most Shias and Sunnis, have lost their lives. While the origins of Gilgit's Shia and Sunni enmities are historical in nature and derive their strength from dynamic variances in sectarian doctrine, interpretation and ritual practice, as well as longstanding ethno-sectarian claims to belonging and power, over recent decades the differences fracturing inter-sectarian sociality have intensified and increased in occurrence and duration. The effect has been that sectarianism, as a simultaneously unifying and conflictive force, now serves to unsettle the myriad commensalities of ethnicity, caste, and kinship which were once valorized ahead of sectarian identity in order to hold each community to the other and keep violence at bay.

Moreover, the dissonances characteristic of Gilgit's Shia-Sunni 'tensions', as the conflicts are locally called, are no longer predicated merely on questions of

doctrinal or ethnic difference. They also reflect the acute social distortions and political polarizations arising from Sunnis' and Shias' contemporary struggles to capture and seize control of Gilgit-Baltistan's scarce political and economic capital. Indeed, Gilgit Town's 80,000 Shia, Sunni and Ismaili Muslim residents are differentiated not only according to the degree of their adherence to sect-specific religiously, socially and politically moderate or conservative positions; they are also ever-more at-odds thanks to the ideologically framed and resource-based competitions inherent to sectarian-aligned projects of regional development, such as the Ismaili Aga Khan Development Network. In turn, Pakistan's uneven governance of the region, which Martin Sökefeld qualifies as "post-colonial colonialism" (2005), produces power vacuums at local and regional levels, whereby politicization processes and power contestations are conceived along, and draw their freight and impetus most forcefully from, explicitly sectarian rather than shared forms of ethnic or regional affiliation.

With Gilgit Town now principally defined by the discord experienced by Shias and Sunnis and, to a considerably lesser extent, Ismailis (who belong to a sub-sect of the larger 'Twelver' Shia sect), my doctoral research (2004-2005) investigated the diverse impacts of inter-sectarian enmity and Shia-Sunni conflict for medical service provision in Gilgit Town's public, private and non-governmental sector health services (Varley 2008, 2010, 2012).

Against the backdrop of Gilgit's continuing hostilities, my recent fieldwork has explored how the distribution of health services and Gilgit's complex and variable

moral economy of medical care hinge on questions of sectarian affiliation and identity. By necessary relation, I have also evaluated how the sectarian embeddedness and involvement of clinical sites, health service providers and patients result in exclusionary or differential health service provision and, consequently, a higher observed incidence of maternal morbidity and mortality. Rather than try to fully account for the diverse sectarian modalities associated with medical services and health outcomes in Gilgit Town, this paper provides an ethnographic snapshot of the impacts of conflict on hospital access and service provision, and reflects on the role played by sectarianism in emergent health economies and the redistribution of health resources at the margins of the state (Das and Poole 2004).

Conflict, Sectarianism and Health Disadvantage

My initial interest in the interrelationship between sectarianism, conflict and health services followed from the complex fallouts of Shia-Sunni hostilities for Gilgit's hospitals after the January 8, 2005 assassination of Gilgit-Baltistan's Shia religious leader, Zia-u-din Rizvi, by Sunni militants. Gilgiti Shias, who comprise the majority of Gilgit Town's residents, responded forcefully through the organized use of violence and, by capitalizing on their growing dominance in a wide array of socio-political contexts reduced and excluded Sunnis' access to and control over political and economic resources, including those related to health. Importantly, Shias' efforts to estrange Sunnis from resources, and health services in particular, signify the reversal of the discriminatory practices formerly enacted against Shias, a minority in Pakistan but a majority in Gilgit-Baltistan, by Gilgiti Sunnis in coordination with the Sunni-dominated state.

Following Zia-u-din's death, Gilgit Town was wracked by 10 months of inter-sectarian hostilities, injuries and death, as well as Army curfews, the targeted killings of Sunni community leaders, including physicians, and the logistical disenfranchisement of Sunni patients from Shia mohalla (neighbourhood) based clinical facilities by curfews, checkpoints and the threat of violence.

Because in 2005 Gilgit's hospitals were based in Shia-dominated areas, and with healthcare services provided largely by Shias and Ismailis, medical sites came tosymbolize Shia advantage and, during active hostilities, Sunni disadvantage. Hospital attendance among Sunni maternity patients, for example, decreased by 90% following the start of the 'tensions', which compounded the region's already high maternal mortality ratio of 500 to 800 deaths per 100,000 live births (Varley 2010). Gilgit's 'tensions' therefore resulted in patients' marginalization, whether intentional or otherwise, from Shia enclave-based hospitals and, some interlocutors narrated, their neglectful or abusive medical treatment by non-

Sunni providers.

In ways which have fuelled Sunnis' anxieties about hospital settings, on January 8, 2005 the 250-bed government District Headquarters Hospital (DHQ), where Zia-u-din was initially taken for emergency treatment, was the scene for targeted attacks and the killings of nearly 20 Sunnis on and around the site. While gunmen threatened to kill Zia-u-din's Sunni treating physicians should he die from his injuries, the patient wards throughout the hospital were searched for Sunni male patients and attendants (Varley 2010). Because of the density of Shia homes surrounding the hospital, many Sunni patients and staff were unable to escape the hospital for several days. And even though the Sunni Department of Health Director was shot and killed on January 8 as he attempted to reach the DHQ from his office in the nearby Health Secretariat, in the months that followed Sunni medical officers and paramedical staff were not provided secure transport to and from the hospital, and often refused to attend their duties on days of 'tension' (Varley 2010). With physicians targeted for attack because of their perceived importance for the Sunni community, their deaths or relocation from Gilgit to comparatively 'safer' urban centers elsewhere in Pakistan, were perceived to prise new spaces for Shia economic and political advancement (Varley 2010: 65).

Sunni women and their families, who figured heavily in health decision-making, routinely stressed the importance of sectarian affiliation in determining their choice of hospital or even Provider.

In order to compensate for their restricted access to the DHQ, for example, Gilgiti Sunnis generated alternative community-funded health facilities. By late January 2005, Sunni politicians and those physicians displaced from their work at the DHQ proposed the ad hoc establishment of the no- and low-cost Kashrote Hospital, known popularly as the 'Sunni' Hospital. A government Forestry Officer's residence in a Sunni *mohalla* was rented using community donations and converted into a rough Surgery, Labour Room and In-Patient Ward. Because there were no facilities for X-rays, ultrasound and most laboratory tests, many patients were forced to continue relying on the DHQ or costly private clinics. High patient loads of approximately 1,500 patients per month overwhelmed the small hospital site and its staff, most of whom were unpaid volunteers or DHQ employees who received only partial disbursements of their government salaries after joining the Kashrote Hospital. Many staff argued the 'Sunni' Hospital was their only safe and viable opportunity for employment in a region increasingly dominated, they felt, by Shia and also Ismaili "control" over hospital administrations and hiring committees. Although a new 30-bed 'Sunni' Hospital, the Government City Hospital, was established in 2007 and expanded to a 50-bed facility in 2012, complicated cases are still routinely referred away from the chronically under-equipped hospital to the DHQ.

> *Nonetheless, many Sunni interlocutors frame their use of the hospital as a point of community loyalty, and emphasize the political and social necessity of prioritizing their allegiance to the at-siege Sunni community ahead of individual health needs.*

Sectarian Medical Economies

My 2010 return to northern Pakistan for an additional four years of fieldwork coincided with the renewal of protracted hostilities and bloodshed. In ways which have further compounded the politics and practices of inter-sectarian dissenssion, in the spring and summer of 2012, upwards of 30 Shias, Sunnis and Ismailis were killed in targeted attacks in Gilgit Town, while an estimated 50 Shias and 5 Sunnis were massacred on three separate occasions on the Karakoram Highway and the Naran-Kaghan Route interconnecting Gilgit to Islamabad, Pakistan's capital. In response, my recent research interrogates how sectarian enmities and recurrent violence shape, amplify and politically differentiate Sunni and Shia forms of identity and belonging, and underpin exclusionary forms of health governance and the post-2005 emergence of sectarian medical economies in particular. In striking ways, Gilgit's health services now socially and spatially exemplify the institutionalization of sectarian difference.

At the DHQ, Shia religious flags, posters and regular-occurring ritual processions and sectarian-informed political protests signal Shias' attempts to

assert forms of religious, political and territorial dominance over the hospital site and its services.

In ways that the illustrate the interlacing of sectarian and state spaces, a 30 foot high Shia religious flag, emblazoned with the name of Hazrat Ali, the revered fourth Caliph and spiritual progenitor of Shia Islam, was erected overtop the fortified concrete Army bunker which stands at the DHQ's main entrance. Not coincidentally, this is the same intersection where an estimated 15 Sunnis were killed immediately after Zia-u-din's January assassination. Sunni physicians and patients remarked that the Army's apparent inability to remove the flag or, at the very least, to prevent Shia rallies from being held at the hospital site evidence Sunnis' ongoing logistical vulnerabilities at the DHQ. Nor is it only in-town Sunnis who face challenges accessing the hospital. Because the DHQ is Gilgit-Baltistan's sole tertiary-care referral hospital, serving a patient base of over 1.5 million residents, Sunni patients from across Gilgit-Baltistan are profoundly affected by thehospital's insecure spaces.

Gilgitis' whose access routes to the DHQ fall through 'enemy' territory have

agitated for the diversion of civil, regional and federal funds in order to construct alternative access routes and 'Shia' or 'Sunni' health facilities. In the Sunni village of Baseen, which is located at Gilgit Town's outskirts, a 30-bed government 'Sunni' Civil Hospital was inaugurated in 2009, although today it remains incomplete, under-staffed and only partially operable. Speaking in July 2010, a Medical Officer at the Baseen Hospital explained the facility's importance for local residents quite simply:

> *"One patient, who needed surgery, refused to go to the DHQ from his home in Baseen, saying 'I can accept dying a natural death here, but I refuse to accept dying an unnatural death and being killed by a bullet there.'"*

In the Shia-dominated village of Danyor, near the site of a Sunni massacre of nearly 200 Shias in 1988, the 2007 establishment of a 30-bed public Civil Hospital (still unfinished), and the 2011 completion of 25-bed hospital funded by a Karachi-based Shia non-government organization, were justified not only through reference to the region's problematic maternal morbidity and mortality ratios, which persist even despite the near-total medicalization of reproductive and childbirth health, but also the Sunni "terrorists" and *mohallas* which stand between Danyor's residents and the DHQ. In turn, the Aga Khan Health Services plans to relocate its in-town hospital, the Gilgit Medical Center, to a "politically neutral" stretch of mountainside between a Sunni and Shia village at Gilgit Town's outskirts. Notwithstanding Shias' and Sunnis' health service vulnerabilities and exclusions, it merits note that Ismailis, who self-position and are understood to be neutral actors and un-invested in (even if also not unaffected by) the conflicts of their Sunni or Shia brethren, enjoy generally unrestricted access to the DHQ and all other Shia and Sunni *mohalla*-based facilities.

In much the same way that armed ethnic or sectarian conflicts expose identity-

related fault lines and precarities in similarly divided cities, such as Belfast and Beirut, Gilgit Town's Shia-Sunni hostilities demonstrate how identity risks and violence are distributed among and over-represented by some of Pakistan's most economically, politically and logistically marginalized citizens. To this point, with health facilities acting as sites for the enactment of conflictive sectarianism, providers' and patients' experiences crystallize the cultural, moral and political imaginaries by which local hostilities are interpreted and the state assessed. For instance, the DHQ's numerous insecurities, when considered in conjunction with the risks posed by Gilgit's newly established, under-staffed and poorly resourced sectarian facilities, serve as analytical and narrative platforms for Gilgitis' understandings of state dysfunction and governance gaps. Indeed, the regional and national governments' failure to ensure equitable service provision, improve civil security and reduce hospital-based hazards reinforced my interlocutors' broader dissatisfactions with the state's neglects of Gilgit-Baltistan and its peoples; discontents which are shared by and to an ironic degree unify Gilgit's otherwise at-siege sectarian communities.

Conclusion

In Gilgit, the social segregations and health deprivations observed and imagined to be produced through the differential care provided to patients by their sectarian others, and reinforced by acts of violence on hospital sites, mark sectarianism's pervasive and often inescapable effects. Moreover, such realities destabilize popular understandings of hospitals as neutral facilities, capable of reducing Shia-Sunni enmity through medical care which is guided by the therapeutic rather than sectarian impulse. In turn, the emergence of sect-specific medical economies, and the unequal and inequitable patterns of illness and death they produce, call our attention to conflict's enduring impacts for the organization and distribution of healthcare resources, the failure of the state to either enforce civil security or the basic principles of non-discriminatory medical service provision, and the emergence of sectarian identity as a social determinant of

health.

The role of sectarianism in health governance raises a number of ethnographic and practical concerns. Under which conditions do health services operate as vehicles of sectarian conflict and, when sectarianism is enacted through medical treatment, mechanisms of vulnerability, exclusion and harm? How do sectarianism's unwieldy politics affect or undermine medical providers' ethical commitment to equitable service provision? To what degree, and in which specific ways, can the health sector become a co-participant in the production and exacerbation of sectarian difference?

> *For deeply divided settings such as Gilgit, can we afford to avoid acknowledgment of the ways that identity can be deployed to privilege one community at the health expense of another?*

With sectarianism now inextricably tied to and reified by Gilgit Town's Shia, Sunni and also Ismaili medical economies, sectarianized hospital sites and services perpetuate sectarian difference, instability and inequality. The sectarian-linked privileging or life-threatening exclusions inherent to Gilgit's health sector should therefore serve as a necessary cautionary tale, giving us pause as we consider the implications of sectarianism for health programs, policy and interventions in unstable and embattled settings. The story of Gilgit, then, confirms the need for medical ethnographies of deeply divided societies to critically interrogate and illuminate the moral vagaries, distributive ethics and dynamics of identity shaping clinical services and health outcomes during times of crisis and conflict.

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Transitional Justice and the Critique of Violence

Gerhard Anders
November, 2014

The African continent has been at the forefront of experiments with transitional justice. There have been amnesties, truth commissions, criminal trials and supposedly localized institutions such as the gacaca courts in Rwanda all with the objective of ensuring accountability for atrocities and contributing to peaceful and democratic new beginnings.

The new volume *Transition and Justice: Negotiating the Terms of New Beginnings in Africa* examines a series of new beginnings in Sierra Leone, Uganda, Rwanda, Mauritania, Kenya and South Africa. One characteristic feature of the debates about justice and transition in these situations is the contradiction between the official condemnation of violence, on the one hand, and the multifarious ways in which violence actually shapes the new beginnings, on the other.

Transitional justice mechanisms such as truth commissions and criminal trials have become part and parcel of attempts to achieve transitions to democracy and

the rule of law in countries affected by systematic human rights violations committed by functionaries of the state and civil war. Truth commissions and courts are manifestations of a reformist and legalistic approach to effecting new beginnings; they have their foundation in legal documents including national legislation, international law or peace agreements between warring factions. For instance, the South African truth commission is based on the South African interim constitution of 1993 and the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act; the Special Court for Sierra Leone on an agreement between the UN and the Government of Sierra Leone authorized by the UN Security Council; the international criminal tribunal in Arusha on several Security Council Resolutions; and the International Criminal Court on an international treaty.

Liberal constitutionalism, rule of law and human rights are the ultimate objectives of fact-finding by truth commissions and criminal tribunals. For instance, the preamble of the South African Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act of 1995 establishing the truth commission invokes ‘a future founded on the recognition of human rights, democracy and peaceful co-existence for all South Africans, irrespective of colour, race, class, belief or sex’. Similarly, representatives of international criminal courts have highlighted the importance of criminal trials beyond the mere punishment of individuals who have committed crimes. In 2000, for instance, the UN Secretary General stated in his report to the UN Security Council that the Special Court for Sierra Leone ‘would contribute to the process of national reconciliation and to the restoration and maintenance of peace in that country’.

Truth commissions, trials and other initiatives clearly eschew the use of violence as a means to effect political new beginnings. In fact, they are often established with the explicit aim of avoiding violence by striking a political compromise between holding accountable the perpetrators of crimes and ensuring the

cooperation of the remnants of the old regime. In the debate about transitional justice this political pragmatism has been framed in the opposition between truth, i.e. accountability through means or public truth-telling, and justice, accountability by punishing perpetrators. In any case, transitional justice is aimed at breaking with a violent past and realizing a new beginning – peaceful and democratic.

The explicit rejection of violence as a means to effect political and social change is difficult to reconcile with criminal trials as transitional justice mechanism. Trials are often seen as problematic because those who fear retribution may threaten to resort to violence thereby jeopardizing fragile political compromises. It should also not be overlooked that criminal trials themselves constitute violence due to the violent nature of punishment meted out as retribution, a point to which I will return in more detail.

The rejection of violence is in striking contrast to conceptions of new beginnings that have often been associated with violence. According to Arendt:

> *The relevance of the problem of beginning to the phenomenon of revolution is obvious. That such a beginning must be intimately connected with violence seems to be vouched for by the legendary beginnings of our history as both biblical and classical antiquity report it: Cain slew Abel, and Romulus slew Remus; violence was the beginning and, by the same token, no beginning could be made without using violence, without violating. (Arendt 1990/1963:20)*

In Arendt's analysis, the problem of beginning is key to the understanding of modern revolutions and the violence with which revolutionary change tends to be brought about. According to Arendt, the modern idea of revolution differs from pre-modern ideas of political change as it envisages the beginning of a new era, a

complete break with the past to realize freedom, social equality and justice. When Arendt was writing *On Revolution* in the early 1960s, many African countries were achieving independence. Prominent African leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Touré and Julius Nyerere framed the strife for national independence in the language of revolution, socialism and Pan-Africanism and did not eschew the use of violence to achieve independence. Theorists such as Fanon explicitly condoned violence to end colonialism and emancipate the colonized populations from deeply entrenched racism and economic exploitation. In contradistinction to Arendt's analysis of revolutionary new beginnings and the revolutionary spirit of decolonization during the 1960s, current debates about new beginnings in Africa often revolve around transitional justice and explicitly reject revolutionary violence. Transitional justice also seeks a break with the past but by addressing past injustices rather than by violent means.

However, the realities of transitional periods with truth commissions or even criminal trials might be characterized by violence. Even the new social and political order envisaged by transitional justice might rely on violence, as empirical studies show (Anders and Zenker 2014, Branch 2011). These and other studies reveal the contradiction between the rhetoric of reconciliation and justice espoused by the advocates of transitional justice mechanisms and continued violence in regions such as Northern Uganda. The discrepancy between the liberal narrative informing truth commissions, courts and localized, neo-traditional initiatives aimed at reconciliation, on the one hand, and the messy contradictory realities in the regions affected by violence and injustice, on the other hand, need to be addressed by studies of transitional justice.

The unresolved relationship between transitional justice and violence is a forceful reminder of Walter Benjamin's *Critique of Violence*. This essay, published in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* in 1921, explores the relationship between violence, law, and justice. Discussing both, natural law theory and positivism Benjamin sees violence as constitutive of legal order, as the law being

latent violence. He distinguishes two forms of what he labels mythical violence. The first one is violence as a means to preserve and maintain the law, *rechtserhaltende Gewalt* in German, and the second one is lawmaking violence, violence establishing a new social and political order, *rechtssetzende Gewalt*.

In his reading of Benjamin's essay, Derrida highlights this ambivalent relationship between law and violence by reflecting on the German word *Gewalt*, which denotes both legitimate authority and violence.

> *Paraphrasing Arendt, acts of violence such as slaying Remus and Abel constitute the mythical foundation of legal order. Not less mythical, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789 represented a complete break with the past, rejecting the sovereignty of the monarch and introducing popular sovereignty.*

In line with the vision of a revolutionary new beginning, there could be no legal foundation for the trial against King Louis XVI, according to Robespierre and Saint-Just, who proposed to kill the king as enemy of the newly established nation.

Arendt's *On Revolution* and Benjamin's *Critique of Violence* enable us to interrogate both, law-preserving and lawmaking violence in situations where transitional justice institutions are supposed to contribute to peaceful new beginnings. Violence has been a blind spot in the debate on transitional justice and the heavy emphasis on truth-telling, forgiveness, repentance and due process has eclipsed detentions without trial, political show trials, the use of armed force and other forms of violence employed to effect transitions to democracy and the rule of law. The paradox of violence employed to make or preserve law noted by Benjamin highlights the elusiveness of justice in spite of truth commissions, international tribunals and neo-traditional reconciliation ceremonies promoted by international NGOs and African governments.

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City of Fear: Everyday experience of insecurity in Lyari (Karachi)

Nida Kirmani
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I first visited Lyari in August 2012 when I joined Laurent Gayer in conducting a focus group discussion with members of a community-based organization, which worked on providing education to youth in the area. Until this visit I had only heard snippets about this part of the city in terms of its reputation for violence and criminality, but having not grown up in Karachi and having only done limited fieldwork in the city, I knew very little of substance about this supposed 'no-go' area. The members of the community organization, who were largely Baloch, talked about how Lyari had been maligned by the media, how people in Lyari were discriminated against in employment, how the state security forces targeted them, and how a certain political party had waged a campaign against them. These themes–marginalization, stigmatization, political manipulation and state neglect—were issues I had explored before in my previous work on Muslim marginalisation in Delhi (Kirmani 2013). However, the context was extremely different. Where religious identity was the main dividing factor in Delhi, ethnicity, which often overlapped with political affiliation, seemed to be the major cause of

conflicts in Karachi. I continued to visit Lyari over the course of the following two years in order to understand the roots of the area's marginalisation and conflicts, building relationships with many of the residents in the process.

> *Lyari is referred to by outsiders as 'the Colombia of Karachi' because of its perceived control by drug mafias. However, the residents of this area proudly refer to Lyari as 'Karachi ki maan' (the mother of Karachi) because it is one of the oldest settlements in the city.*

Lyari began as a fishing settlement in the early eighteenth century and was one of the few majority-Muslim areas of Karachi before Partition. The population of the area grew significantly during the period of British colonial rule, when the British began modernising Karachi's port, relying largely on labour from Lyari. Although Lyari is often characterized as a Baloch area, the Baloch comprise approximately half of Lyari's population and the rest include Punjabis, Katchhis (originally from Gujarat), Sindhis, Pashtun, and some Muhajirs whose families migrated from what is now India in the years following Partition. This diversity is a source of pride for many of Lyari's residents. Covering approximately 1800 acres of land in Karachi's South district, Lyari is extremely densely populated, and as in most parts of the city, many of the area's conflicts are related to the struggle for control of land by various powerful groups including state actors, political parties, criminal gangs, and various mafias, with the lines between all of these groups often blurring.

The name ‘Lyari’ itself has come to be synonymous in Karachi with violence, crime and gangs. Because of this, I have had countless arguments with my family and friends about why I repeatedly visit this most-feared part of the city. No amount of assurance that the areas I was visiting were safe or that I had good friends there who were taking care of me would put their minds at ease. This is not to argue, as many of the residents of Lyari often did, that Lyari was safe. However, the reactions I received were disproportionate to a much more complex reality, one in which violent events did occur with varying frequency but most of the time were targeted at particular individuals, groups or areas. Ironically, and to the chagrin of my friends and family, all of these reactions only fed my interest in Lyari more, not because I am stubborn or a thrill seeker, but because they reflected the deep ethnic and class divisions within Karachi itself. These divisions exist in the minds of all people living in Karachi, including my own, and they have continuously grown in the last decades as violence in the city has escalated.

> *These divisions are fueled by a fear—a fear that is all the more powerful because the perpetrators of violence are often unknown individuals, or as people in Karachi call them, namaloom afraad.*

Even when the identities of perpetrators are known, they must by necessity remain nameless creating a kind of conspiracy of silence that further feeds the cycle of violence.

Fear has certainly become a 'way of life' (Green 1999) in Karachi. Laurent Gayer (2014), in his recent book, *Karachi: Ordered Disorder and the Struggle for the* City, describes fear as being experienced as a 'chronic condition' in the city. His work highlights the ways in which residents of Karachi have altered their everyday lives by developing 'flexible routines' in order to navigate around potential sites of violence (*ibid*.: 242). This 'hermeneutics of danger', where residents must constantly read physical and atmospheric signs in order to avoid danger, leads people to live in a state of constant insecurity (*ibid*.). As Gayer so eloquently argues, fear and insecurity structure the everyday spatial tactics of Karachi's residents in profound ways. For those living in contested spaces including in 'no-go areas' such as Lyari, people must restrict their movements to particular routes, limiting their exposure to public spaces both within and outside of their immediate locality. These 'bystander tactics' (Ahmad 2011) are intended to create a sense of security within an otherwise insecure environment. However, the unintended consequence of such tactics is both the shrinking space of what people think of as 'home' (Verkaaik 2009) as well as the reinforcement of growing social boundaries within the city.

My own research focuses on how fear and insecurity impact on the spatial negotiations of young Baloch men living in Lyari. I highlight the ways in which overlapping fears colour the experience and imagination of urban space by such marginalized groups, placing constraints on their movements and hence restricting their access to public space. Most research conducted on spatial restrictions has, for good reason, focused on the experiences of women as a marginalized group, highlighting how fear reproduces gendered spatial exclusions. This is true as much in Lyari as it is in other parts of Karachi, where women's mobility is restricted to differing extents by themselves and their families due to a variety of fears. However, along with women, the poor, children, and members of minority groups have also not been granted full and free access to the streets in most cities including in Karachi (see Ali and Rieker 2008).

> *My research explores how young Baloch men experienced spatial restrictions due to the presence of a variety of threats both inside and outside their locality.*

These young men are both the subjects and objects of fear in a context in which male, Baloch bodies have come to be framed as threatening by the state, rival political parties and the media.

Faheem's story demonstrates the shifting nature of fear experienced by Baloch men in Lyari. I met Faheem last summer in Dubai where he was working with a company that installed air conditioning in the high-rises and glittering shopping malls of the city. Faheem left Karachi a year earlier after spending several years moving between different areas of the city in search of stable employment—an experience common to many young men across the city. However, for Faheem the fear of violence further restricted his employment choices. After trying several jobs, Faheem found relatively stable employment working as a porter in a hospital. However, he was forced to leave this job when they moved him from the day to the night shift because he was afraid of travelling at night. This was during the period in which young Baloch men were being targeted by one of the most

powerful political parties in the city as part of a political turf war. Because Faheem knew several young men personally who had been killed, his fears were further heightened. He then opened a small shop in his own neighbourhood in Lyari, where he thought he would be safe from violence. However, soon after the local gangs started asking for *bhatta* (extortion money), which he could not afford to pay out of his meager earnings. Although Faheem felt that the local gangs were not particularly dangerous for him because they were boys from his own neighbourhood, he still chose to close down his business. In the end the pressure of finding stable employment and staying safe became just too great; Faheem asked his brother to help him get a job in Dubai:

> *I said however difficult it is, the difficulty I am facing here now, only I know that. I want to get out of here. I want peace. The kinds of things I am seeing here are making me feel more suffocated. Now I want to get out of here. I don't care what happens, how hot it is, if I have to work all day in the sun, I will do it.*

Although he was not particularly happy with his pay or working conditions and complained about the loneliness and impersonal nature of life in Dubai, Faheem felt that it was still better than living in a state of constant fear in Karachi. Many other young men in Lyari and in similar localities across the city dream of following in Faheem's footsteps in order to escape a city that has become unlivable for them.

The experiences of men like Faheem not only increase social divisions within the city, they also reinforce the power of local strongmen, whether these are political parties or criminal gangs, to act as protectors of their locality against rival parties and various branches of the state. These groups often provide access to essential material and social services not being provided by the state in exchange for loyalty and of course *bhatta.* This has led to Karachi being increasingly divided into conflicting 'turfs' between rival groups, who are often linked to political parties, vying for control of greater and greater parts of the city. However, these local strongmen are often themselves sources of insecurity/fear as they frequently engage in acts of violence in order to reinforce their power. Hence the everyday practices produced by fear and insecurity have very real impacts on reinforcing the social/spatial boundaries within the city, thus creating the possibility of further violent conflict. The case of Lyari, where residents must carefully negotiate between rival gangs, political parties, and state security forces, serves as a prime example of this phenomenon. However, similar processes can be identified in localities across the city and indeed in cities across the world.

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Mumbai (1992-93) and Ahmedabad (2002), a tale of two cities: Narratives of violent and victimized women enduring urban riots in India

Atreyee Sen
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Brief extract from a forthcoming publication

Over the past decades, the rapid rise of Hindu nationalism or Hindutva in India has placed women at the centre of its violent socio-political rhetoric. Whether it was the vituperative speeches developed by powerful women renouncers urging Hindu men to be challenge 'the Muslim threat', or the role of Hindu nationalist social workers in facilitating conversions to Hinduism in rural areas — the imagination of Hindu nationalist women as extraordinary 'home-grown terrorists', or ordinary foot soldiers, has captured the attention of the nation. Muslim women are also placed at the heart of the debate around Hindutva terror, as they become the primary targets of rape and killing when communal antagonism eventually spills over into rioting. Religious organisations and political parties come forward to support, speak for and protect the rights of both groups of women. For example, the Shiv Sena, the dominant Hindu nationalist political party in Mumbai, played a key role in criticizing the actions of the anti-terrorist squad, as the latter arrested renouncer/Sadhvi Pragya in relation to a series of blasts that killed and injured numerous ordinary people. And the Tablighi Jamaat, a pietist Islamic movement, marginalized the moderate Barelvi's, and became deeply concerned with reforming women in relief colonies, especially those assaulted and widowed during the outbreak of riots in Gujarat in 2002.

This post will open a window into the short narratives of two women who became implicated in the Mumbai and Ahmedabad riots in 1992-3 and 2002 respectively. The authors, both anthropologists, have conducted long-term fieldwork in the slums of Mumbai and Ahmedabad where the experiences of inter-religious tensions continue to determine not only everyday interactions, but also the territorial reorganization of localities (Sen 2007, Jasani 2008). Without regurgitating issues around political mobilization of ordinary women, or reanalyzing minority women's victimhood, this post will offer two 'undiluted' case studies of (a) a Hindu woman rioter attacking Muslims in Mumbai, and (b) a Muslim woman confronted with Hindu mobs in Ahmedabad. The sequence of events described by the women highlights how the dread of Hindutva-related processes on the ground defined notions of safety and solidarity amongst both casualties and perpetrators of violence.

The two voices of women occupying these contested spaces further reveal how women's experiences of suffering and loss during the eruption of religious

hostilities are intimately related to their domestic space, family relations, bereavement, mobility, their socio-economic position within urban ghettos, the integrity of female bodies, etc., over and above women's disillusionment with the state, secular and faith-based organisations.

A brief description of the 'riot moments'

In December 1992 and January 1993, large-scale communal riots broke out in Mumbai, which left over a thousand people dead and several others injured. Following the organized destruction of the Babri Masjid by Hindu nationalists in Ayodhya, small groups of angry Muslims held low intensity protests in Mumbai (in December). The Shiv Sena, a right-wing political party, which had established a strong base in Mumbai through an anti-migrant, anti-Muslim agenda, initiated a massive backlash against local Muslims. The ensuing violence involved arson, destruction of property and indiscriminate attacks on people. The rioting dispersed from slum areas into *chawl*s and apartment blocks, and in most localities entailed the systematic targeting of Muslims who comprised nearly 20% of the city's population.

Members of the Shiv Sena's women's wing, the Mahila Aghadi, took to the streets in droves, and their open participation in the riots shocked and disappointed the secular women's movement in the city.

The women rioters on the other hand brought the relatively marginalized Mahila Aghadi into the forefront of nationalist politics in Mumbai. In 1999, Sen conducted research among Aghadi members in a riot-affected Mumbai slum. She documented the slum women's rationale for politically organizing themselves around Hindu nationalist ideologies, and investigated the ways in which their recruitment into the Mahila Aghadi subsequently led to poor women's contribution to communally charged public protests, street fights and open

looting.

A decade later, in February 2002, massive riots broke out between Hindus and Muslims in Gujarat, a state with a controversialHindu nationalist leader at its helm. This time the outbreak of violence was sparked off by a debatable attack on an express train carrying large numbers of Hindu nationalists, which left a number of women and children dead. Over the next three months, the riots spread quite intensely through Ahmedabad, the capital of Gujarat, where raging Hindu mobs burned down Muslim housing estates, destroyed mosques and religious shrines, and raped and killed scores of Muslim men, women and children. At the end of what several scholars and political commentators described as a ‘genocide’ or a ‘pogrom’, thousands of people were dead, mostly buried in mass graves, several others were injured, missing or lay unidentified in city morgues. In 2003, Jasani conducted research on the displacement of riot-

affected Muslims in Ahmedabad, a chunk of her research being based in the ghetto of Naroda Patiya, where 97 people were killed on 28th February, 2002. She studied the Muslim community's engagement with reform initiatives offered by Islamist organisations, and underlined the agency of both men and women in re-aligning their public ethics according to their engagement with the shifting city-scape.

> *Even though the character and culture of the two urban riots were contrary, Sen and Jasani found a number of commonalities: such as the complicit nature of the state, changes in the spatial construction of the ghettoes, the taciturn relationship between migrant slum economies and urban violence, the role of the Hindu and Muslim political mafia in sustaining communal tension, the sordid nature of the violent conspiracies, the well-coordinated and perfectly pre-planned aspects of the supposedly 'spontaneous riots', amongst others.*

Most the informants that the authors interviewed with during their fieldwork eventually identified the riots as dramatic episodes, which altered their familiarity with the cities they came to inhabit as their home. But most significantly, the authors uncovered the constant desire of women and children, moving swiftly between discourses of victimhood and agency, to give prominence to their individual and shared experiences of the riots. Emphasis on dominant political histories of communalism in India (cf. Jaffrelot 2007, Van der Veer 1994, Ludden 1996, Pandey 1993) has tended to marginalize the fragmented and fractured experiences of people living with everyday communal tensions. By drawing the reader into the gritty reality of slum life, this chapter is an attempt to fill that gap by offering the testimonies of two women who were struggling (in their own words and on their own terms) to comprehend and survive urban riots.

A glimpse of the women's narratives and urban riots

Radha, 40, Mahila Aghadi cadre and (calendar) factory worker, resident of a Bandra slum, Mumbai

I had been an active member of the Shiv Sena for many years, well before the riots. The Mahila Aghadi (when it was formed in 1985) gave me so much support. When I was not well or when I was not working, the Aghadi members in my locality got me grain and they looked after my children, they warned by husband to look after me… To you this may not be related to the riots, but I tell you, this is how we slum women gained each other's trust. So when the riots happened, we could 'show our daring' together, otherwise real courage cannot be found in 'hi hello' relationships.

During the first phase of riots we heard so much 'news'. You think it's gossip and stories that travel on air. But we lived through the riots in December, we remember clearly what happened to us. I don't care much about Babri Masjid but I care about my friends and family right here, right now. We were angry in the slums. Did you ever hear about the dead bodies of Hindus that were found in a ditch nearby?… Many Aghadi women went out into the streets. But I was scared at that time, so I stayed at home. The women said, 'Radha, show *himmat*.' But I thought I should protect my children at home, since they were stuck in there… But I told my husband so many times: 'I cannot do anything. Why

don’t you do something?’ He barked at me: ‘What can I do? I am hoping that the riots will settle down, and we don’t have to relocate to Thane in search of work. Why come all the way from the village in search of work and then have everything ruined by riots?’ I remember I murmured to myself: ‘We will have work if the Muslims are not taking our livelihoods away, ask them to make money in their own land (Pakistan).’ You tell me, I have two sons, will any Muslim ever give them a job? No… my anger became more intense — at the loss of Hindu lives, income, son’s education, temples, safety of our neighbourhoods — I was seething.

> *We women discussed these losses all the time. Many Aghadi women had gone out of the house and joined night patrols and protection teams. And here I was twiddling my thumb when the Aghadi had already done so much for me.*

We had a brief respite between the two phases of the riots. Everything was getting back to normal again. The Muslims probably thought quietness was a sign of weakness. So once again, there were attacks on us. Then these bastards burned down Radhabai Chawl, just because there were Hindu families living in a Muslim gully. So many Hindu people were trapped inside, so many people perished. My Aghadi friends said: ‘Radha, your name is in that *chawl*.’ That is all they said, I promise you. Then there was the Suleiman Bakery shooting which everyone was talking about. Muslims stood on the rooftop of the bakery and shot at Hindu policemen with automatic weapons. And the policemen were trying to fight back with their old guns from the time of English rule! The Muslims were trying to show us what? That they have guns? They have manpower and rape-power? No one looked into these cases because the Muslims were attacking Hindus…

I don't remember the exact day but it was in the second week of January. The local women said there were tensions in the street and they were going to check out the scenario. We could see the fire and smoke from our area. The skies were completely grey. 'You coming, Radha?' they asked tentatively. My husband said: 'No. No.' I said: 'Wait a moment. I will put on my thick shoes. My feet may get cut from broken glass on the street if I wear *chappal*s.'… We crossed the edge of the slum and stepped onto the main street. The air was foggy from smoke and heavy dust. The tar from the road was also burning and the smell was so pungent, we could barely breathe. There were a few policemen running around, they said we should to cover our noses with wet cloth otherwise our throats would sting. The road was full of broken glass and rubble from damaged shanties… I felt I was in some other neighbourhood, this was not my street. We saw a minibus coming which was filled with men with their pristine white knitted caps.

> *When they saw us they looked away thinking: 'What will a bunch of women do to us'? They see us everyday: cooking, cleaning looking after our families, being polite to them in the bazaars while shopping, how can we hurt them?' Paravi, one of the younger women, picked up a stone and threw it at the bus and smashed the windshield…*

We all picked up whatever we could and started throwing them at the bus. The policemen were startled and came running towards us. They thought we were being attacked. But when they saw we had the stones in our hands, they left in a hurry. When the riots happened in December, the overworked policemen were out on the streets for hours, their feet were swollen in their boots. We slum women would take them buckets of water to dip their feet in, and they could barely get them out of their shoes, poor things. One of them told me: '*Tai*, I remember you came with water. I am leaving, but you be careful.' In the meantime, the bus

swerved and came to a stop. The men tried to rush out, but we kept throwing stones at them… I lifted my sari above my knees and ran after them, I was beyond shame. They were bleeding and trying to cover their faces with their hands, but we kept going…

> *One of the girls said 'Next time, we have to carry sticks. This was only a start. We were unprepared so we had to make do with whatever we found on the street. Next time we will be more equipped.' And we were.*

Afshan Bibi, 40, mill worker, resident of Naroda Patiya, Ahmedabad

I have lived with my family in Naroda Patiya for almost ten years. My father moved here from Karnataka to work in the mills. He was a joiner in Telco mills. We grew up in Gomtipur, the suburban mill area, and moved to Patiya as the *basti* was moving due to overcrowding and no work. I worked on a thread assembling machine and went to work as normal on the morning of 28th February. I realized that the riots had started in the afternoon when some VHP (Vishwa Hindu Parishad, a conglomeration of Hindu nationalist organizations) goons came looking for Muslims working in the factory. The owner shut the factory door and told them that it was closed. By then, rumors had spread that riots had started in Naroda Patiya.

I was worried about my children as my 16-year-old is disabled and would not be able to escape if our house was attacked. I could hear screams outside the factory saying '*maari nakho*' (kill them), '*kaapi nakho*' (cut them). I was terrified to leave the factory, but needed to get out to see if my family was safe. I covered my head and wore a *bindi* (vermillion mark) and started walking towards Patiya… On my way, I saw piles of burnt bodies and pools of blood everywhere… I went back to the factory and spent the night there. The next morning, I went to Shahibaug camp and registered details of my family. I had also heard from people at the camp that Naroda Patiya was badly affected and that rioters had played with the *izzat* (honour) of our girls. I was worried about both my daughters.

I could not leave the camp as the city was not safe. All I saw was hoards of wounded people, raped women and mutilated bodies being brought into the camps. My fellow campmates warned me against getting out, as the city was full of men in khaki *chaddas* (shorts), saffron vests and black bands on their forehead. There was curfew and I knew that the dead in the riots were being buried at a *samshan* (burial ground) near Shahibaug… On making some inquiries, I found out that the inmates of Naroda Patiya were at Shah Alam camp. I made my way to the Shah Alam Camp in a *sanstha* (NGO) van, and found out that I had lost 7 members of my extended family including my own daughter. One of my daughters was in Vadilal hospital fighting 80 percent burn injuries…

Jai Bhavani, a local VHP leader, who led the mob along with a police official, assured the Muslims that arrangements had been made for them towards the *maidan* (open ground). As the group of ninety people (mostly women and children), were going towards the ground, two mobs attacked them from an open alley.

> *The wall of the ST (State Transport) workshop prevented them from fleeing and they were all trapped in a small corner near a water tank. The attackers*

> *climbed on the roofs of the houses and started dousing them with kerosene and throwing burning tyres at them. It was at this time that young girls were pulled out of the group, raped and then murdered. Fifty-eight bodies were recovered from this site, 27 survivors of this incident were then taken to the Civil hospital or VS hospital at about 7:30 p.m. My daughter was one of them.*

I do worry about her as she has almost blocked the incident. Yes, so I was telling you, as soon as I got to the camp, I asked to be taken to Vadilal to see my daughter. When I got there she was unrecognizable. Her face and her body on one side had been burnt, including her private parts. The doctors were convinced that she would not survive the burn injuries. She was breathing heavily and was not conscious…

What to tell you *bibi*, it was like hell. I also had to answer questions from the *akbharwale* (journalists) as my daughter Shabbo was the only young girl who was saved from the lot that were burnt in Naroda Patiya. Everybody wanted a piece of her while she was fighting death for three months in hospital… My husband had fled with my two sons during the violence, and Shabbo along with her sister were left behind. We found no trace of her sister. We suspect that she was dumped in the well close by. The bodies in the well were mutilated by the time they were dug out. I am sure she was in there, as Shabbo was found not far from the well… We had seen riots in the past, but things would calm down in a week or two. This is the first time that the rioting has continued for so long and has taken place in such organized fashion. This has become a scary city to live in. But, we don't have any other options as we grew up here. This is home and we cannot go anywhere else.

Concluding comments

The two narratives brought forward by the co-authors, though collected at

different points in time and from different perspectives, show that women's accounts of riot situations *can be* placed on a continuum, and they raise difficult questions about gender and communal conflict in post-colonial Indian cities. Desecration of religious symbols, the role of rumors, state inactivity, the imagination of 'pre- and post-conflict' lives, the fear of losing employment in the communally divided city, battered masculinities and femininities, and migrant vulnerability in working class areas are some of the themes that bind together women's memories of violence.

> *For example, in both narratives, women used the tropes of motherhood and dread of losing their children in order to rationalise their acts of courage; whether it was Radha stepping outside her house into the heart of a volatile street to ward off so-called rioters, or whether it was Afshan Bibi leaving the safety for her factory and striding into a riot-torn alleyway to hunt for her children.*

Both women eventually tried to fathom how riots changed their emotional engagement with their city, and altered their attitude towards the make-shift corners that housed their dreams and aspirations. While Radha intended to remain aggressively prepared to counter communal tensions in her slum, Afshan Bibi and her ravaged daughter retreated from a terse public sphere and endeavoured to find safety within the confines of a temporary shelter.

Women's recollections of the riots also challenge simplistic constructions of 'perpetrators' and 'victims' in representations of communal violence — they underline the complex nature of riots and the problematic position of ordinary women within situations of social disorder. The use of conventional binaries, especially in the media (including violence and peace, good and evil, Hindu and Muslim, majority and minority), tends to cluster riot experiences into well-defined categories, thus pre-empting the possibility of developing comparative images of the riots and their impact on poor women. On the basis of the case studies provided above, the authors have attempted to make a case for holistic constructions of womanhood during and after communal conflicts. For instance, *both* Radha and Afshan Bidi lamented being fastened to weak and inept men who were incapable of defending their families in situations of adversity. In the end, the onus continued to lie on the two ghettoised women to act as saviors, whether through aggression or emotional anchorage, and retain their protective role in conditions of poverty and violence.

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