



Scholarly Podcasting Book: Invitation to a Public Mass Peer Review

Ian M. Cook
March, 2022



I (Ian, member of the Allegra Lab editorial collective) ‘wrote’ a book called **‘Scholarly Podcasting: Why, What, How?’**. It’ll come out in autumn. I was motivated to write it by the desire to do academia a bit different. In line with this, I’m opening up the manuscript to a public mass peer review.

If you have any interest or expertise in this or a related topic and if you fancy



giving about an hour or so of your time then I **would really appreciate your input by March 27th.**

I will write about this public mass peer review experiment for Allegra once it's over.

Instructions and the document [here](#)

2084

Sara Emilie Lafontaine
March, 2022









PART I

Two Years Ago

It was a hot day in July, and clocks were striking eight. It had been fifteen years since the Pacifying Police Units (UPPs) swamped the streets of the Outer Party Neighborhood - fifteen months since the conflicts occurred between the Inner and Outer Parties - fifteen minutes until he would sign away what felt to be his freedom. Fifteen minutes until the Inner Party - he mentally recoiled in disgust - might launch question after question, minute after minute. Even at this time of



morning, he could feel the heat itching to blister his skin. His stuffy black blazer choked him as a nearby billboard flashed the Inner Party slogan:

TECHNOLOGY IS POWER. SECURITY IS SAFETY. SMART IS GOOD.

Technology is Power, he mused. *Of course it was*. The Inner Party claimed they all had it, just as they claimed the electric currents that ran through the meager walls of their homes in the Outer favelas did not steal information or provide the government with a tool for constant surveillance. But even then, walking on the street, he felt it. Not only from the watching eyes which peered at him through the windows with a mixture of curiosity and distrust, but also the hidden cameras and posters with the Inner Party's slogan that littered the city. *Rather, Technology is Abusive*, he thought, and immediately chortled. *Yet here I am, petitioning for a job with the Inner Party to get out of this God-forsaken place. How ironic.*

The crisp air slapped him across the face as he strode into the towering black building, his palms sweating. Sculptures of affluent Inner Party members made him feel small, distracting him from the hundred UPPs that lined the walls to protect their closely guarded treasure - the home of the smart grid. Their eyes drilled into him from behind their masks, their electric guns filling his ears with a faint *buzz*. The lone man awaiting him looked like one of those sculptures, a powerful apathetic being, a twitch of his eye the only indication he had registered his presence. Two shadows fell into step behind him. He swallowed nervously. *To have all that power and control... I will never.*

He was not allowed to speak; He briskly followed the man walking through a maze of corridors. The walls, screens upon closer observation, droned on and on with a message from the Inner Leader, "Technology is Power. Security is Safety. Smart is Good. Through your work in the Smart grid, you are helping us create a Powerful, Safe, *Good* society for all. You are Valuable and Important. We need You." He briefly paused, *But do they really need us? My entire life in the Outer Party was* - he cut himself off mid-thought - it would do no good to have these



thoughts here. He should be grateful he was able to learn skills through practicing with illegal electrical connections and coding - not that he would tell the Inner Party that.

The man in black suddenly disappeared. He stared into the room. The cables atop the singular chair watched him in anticipation of the truths he would say, but of which they already knew.

I can do this.

PART II

Three Months Ago

It was a rainy day in November, and clocks were striking thirteen. He stood in the street, rain soaking through his clothes, feeling tired beyond exhaustion. Eyes glared at him through the windows, what once was curiosity was now a burning suspiciousness for the work that he completed emotionlessly for the Inner Party. "Traitor -", they called him, the words spat from their mouths. "No longer good enough for us *Outer* people?" He no longer tried to respond. He simply lived day by day. Wake up. Walk to work. Work. Walk back. Avoid UPPs. Avoid the Outer Party protests. Avoid the almost-done construction of the Wall being built near the Smart grid headquarters. He had long accepted he was constantly being watched. *And yet, he thought, I have never felt lonelier.*

He wandered about aimlessly. Today was the Day of Celebration. It was the only holiday created by the Inner Party to celebrate *their* successes in power, technology, and the Smart grid development. And as a worker on the Smart grid, he was entitled to attend the celebration, although it was deep in the Inner Party neighborhoods. He crouched over to read a soggy, crumpled paper by the flooding sewer drain, wrinkling his nose at the rotten smell.



ATTENTION

JOIN THE PROTEST
ON THEIR
DAY OF CELEBRATION

THE INNER PARTY
IS WRONG.

TECHNOLOGY ABUSES US.
SECURITY CONTROLS US.
SMART ENDANGERS US.

WE STAND AGAINST

- INCREASING INEQUALITY
- INNER PARTY CONTROL OVER ALL
- LOSING OUR RIGHTS
- PACIFYING POLICE UNITS
- RISING ELECTRICITY COSTS AND DEBT

O.P.

A protest, he thought numbly. *The Inner Party might be inherently wrong, but I live better off than most of the Outer Party.* But he was not surprised. Resistance had been growing recently with increasing electricity costs for the Smart grid, and Outer Party workers were drowning in debt to the Inner Party. He shook his head. *But what choice do we have?* The Inner Party had implemented the grid everywhere and required it be on at all times. Full paychecks went towards electricity bills and attempts to boycott electricity had ended up with UPPs swarming the City. He glanced around the street, rain blurring his vision. The presence of UPPs had somewhat reduced today to provide more security at the



celebration. *Might as well check it out.* He would stay hidden, but his mild curiosity and apathy for his life won out.

* * *

He arrived just as it happened. He could sense the tension - palpable in the air with UPPs holding a shield wall, facing sheer numbers from the Outer Party. The Outer Party brandished street weapons in the air, chanting words madly into the frigid downpour. The Inner Party huddled in their town hall, surrounded by perfectly manicured lawns and landscape. The rebels suddenly charged the UPPs. Taken by surprise, the UPPs were overcome by the crowd, slipping in the mud and rain. As they fell, their weapons were distributed amongst the Outer Party rebels. A feeling of euphoria washed over the crowd, for if they succeeded on this day, perhaps they could regain control over their rights.

But then they arrived. Hundreds more UPPs appeared from shadows, their electric guns bright flashes of yellow amidst the dark torrential waves of rain. The Outer Party, far from their neighborhoods, had no choice but to surrender, and within an hour, the UPPs had obtained control.

All of this he watched from the shadows. Confronted by the actions of his fellow Outer Party and the decisive response of the UPPs, he trembled.

The future... MY future... What does this mean for us all now?

PART III

Today

It was a cold day in February, and the clocks were no longer striking. Three months ago, they had stopped, not that it mattered. The constant *buzz* in his room alerted him to the fact that the cameras - the "security" - were on at all times, and the screen in his room never shut off. The time was always shown. Day after day. Minute after minute. 21:35...21:36...21:37.

He watched the minutes pass. They haunted his days since he and all other



individuals associated with the Outer Party had been fired from their jobs in the Smart grid. *Valuable... Important... sure. Just until they decide we're too much of a liability.* The Inner Party had strengthened UPP presence in the favelas with the intention to make it "safer" for society, but he knew their goal was to protect their infrastructure and revenue. A curfew aimed to address unpredictable violence erupted in the streets. And although he could talk to his neighbors, the Inner Party had integrated secret UPP members into housing complexes to arrest those involved in the protest, sowing distrust and fear. The four walls of his room seemed to press in on him constantly, suffocating him and his will.

He groaned. Even worse so, he had missed the meal provisions that day. The Inner Party had been providing small meal kits, although barely enough to stave off hunger. And it was cold. The currents from the walls gave off some heat, but it was too expensive to keep the heater running. He reached over for another blanket, suddenly frustrated.

Repression. Repression always wins. For what do we have? Our brains? Our hands? Our hearts? What use are they if we cannot use them?

What's the point of life if it's just to live in constant fear and surveillance?

His body shook violently, his vision closing in on him. Nausea turned his stomach ill. He grasped a pillow, panic rocking through his body.

Even my name. Do they really feel they will lose control over us by giving us names?

He was terrified the Inner Party would witness him struggling.

Meaning. Control. Rights. A Name.

And yet we have none of these things.

He was spiraling.



I do not want to be called OP-2084.

* * *

And still, uncaring, the Inner Party Wall stood in the frigid night, a silent barrier. The billboard continued its mocking, the slogan scrolling across the screen:

TECHNOLOGY IS POWER. SECURITY IS SAFETY. SMART IS GOOD.

Explanatory appendix

This short story is partly based on Francesca Pilo's 2021 article "The smart grid as a security device: Electricity infrastructure and urban governance in Kingston and Rio de Janeiro" (*Urban Studies*, volume 58, issue 16, pp. 3265-3281), and inspired by elements of George Orwell's *1984*, including the first sentence, three-part linear structure, Inner vs. Outer Party concept, slogan concept, and the recurring theme of surveillance. Pilo' (2021) describes how the implementation of smart grids is "used as a security device", reshapes spatial inequalities, and is a tool of governance. The slogan developed by the Inner Party is inspired by the way the government of Rio de Janeiro used smart grids to address urban violence, linking the introduction of 'Pacifying Police Units' (UPP) in 2008 to smart grid systems implementation in order to reduce the visibility of drug trafficking in low-income and high-risk areas. Pilo' (2021) explores how these systems have weakened consumers' rights, generated mistrust, and increased political concern. In Rio de Janeiro, the military was previously placed in charge of security, inspiring the political rebellion in the short story, and smart grids emerged "as a governance tool to protect infrastructure and revenues... and to navigate complex relations marked by socio-economic inequalities and changing attempts to gain territorial control" (Pilo', 2021: 3277).

This story therefore explores a moment in a man's life whose "name" is revealed to be OP-2084. He obtains a job at the Inner Party's smart grid headquarters to escape the lower socioeconomic confines of the Outer Party. After several years, a



violent protest and conflict erupts between both Parties. The Inner Party places restrictions on the Outer Party and the man is fired, leading to him experiencing hopelessness, a loss of control and meaning, and conflict with his identity. The name OP-2084 is a homage to the title of *1984* in its purpose as a future warning, and it demonstrates how the man, marked by socioeconomic inequality, was not important enough from the Inner Party's perspective to be given a name. Furthermore, Orwell's *1984* warns of the dangers of government. This story takes a dystopian perspective to warn about the future role of technology in governance, how its use as a security tool could lead to power imbalances, and emphasize how communities must retain their rights even with new technology implementation.

The slogan and constant surveillance further demonstrate the risks of technology. Like surveillance, the concept of time in the story never ceases, except the clock stops striking when technology has assumed its ultimate role as the tool of power. The smart grids themselves are powerful in their ability to provide electricity and be used by governments or corporations to manage their interests and implement security policies. "Security is Safety" is a way in which the Inner Party promotes the UPPs as providing security, when in reality a holistic approach is needed. This story aims to call attention to potential technology risks and emphasize socioeconomic gaps must be addressed equitably.

Featured [image](#) by [Lukas Bato](#) (courtesy of [Unsplash](#))

This post is part of our second Academic Fiction thread - see [Dennis Rodger's introductory post](#).



'Call to Arms: Silver and Lead' Campaign Review

Tanner Gonzales
March, 2022



'Call to Arms: Silver and Lead' campaign review

Posted December 10, 2034 by Julie Annie (staff writer at Génial Gaming)



Answering the Call to Arms (yet again)

It's almost the end of the year, so readers will know what that means: it's time to review the latest yearly instalment of the 'Call to Arms' franchise. Last month marked the release of 'Silver and Lead,' the franchise's 8th game. As long as Hacktvision keeps making these games, we will keep providing readers with the information they need to know in order to answer one of life's biggest questions: is it worth putting this game on my Christmas Wishlist? A review of the game's multiplayer will be out soon, but in the meantime, we've played and reviewed the campaign of 'Call to Arms: Silver and Lead' for your consideration.

(spoilers ahead)

A Story in Three Parts

The game's campaign is split into three separate acts, the first of which introduces you to generic action hero and protagonist Eric Masterson, a character and story structure that should feel familiar to devotees of the 'Call to Arms' franchise. The story of Masterson, then only a police officer, begins in a small town in southern Texas in the mid-1990s. After being exposed to escalating drug-related gang violence which claimed his sister's life, Masterson is inspired to join the DEA, vowing to do his part to keep his community and his country safe. After a quick tutorial mission, the campaign's first act begins against the backdrop of the war on drugs during the mid-2000s. Masterson has just been selected to join a team of DEA agents sent to the state of Michoacan in Mexico to support the government's fight against the drug cartels. After scoring a few victories against some cartel henchmen as part of "Operation Michoacan", enemies begin to appear with better weapons and equipment. The justification for the increasing difficulty is presented in-game as a sort of escalating arms race between the cartels on one side and the increasingly militarized police on the other. **Over the course of the first act, Masterson's team is called in on a couple of occasions to restore "law and order" to communities that have been taken**



over by vigilante “self-defence groups.” It is never really made clear exactly what their grievances are with the Mexican government (they’re not the cartels from the previous missions, after all), not that the player is given any real choice one way or the other. Confusingly, in several missions towards the end of the act, the player fights alongside self-described “self-defence groups” *against* local community police forces. The last mission of the first part of the campaign takes place outside a sprawling hacienda near a mining facility that has been ambushed by a local cartel. If you can prevent them from making off with too much plunder from the nearby mines, the player is rewarded with a cutscene of Masterson being personally congratulated by the owner of the hacienda (an almost comically over-the-top stereotype of a member of the Mexican business elite). Masterson then gets shot in the shoulder by a bloodied left-for-dead cartel henchman in a final act of vengeance; the screen fades to black, and act one comes to a close.

Act two of ‘Silver and Lead’ sees Masterson leading a U.S.-Brazilian police exchange in the early 2010s, carrying out missions with the Brazilian UPP in the favelas of Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, and Sao Paulo. After taking time off to recover from his injuries, Masterson steps off onto an airstrip outside of Salvador and is quickly escorted to the local office of the UPP to be briefed on his mission. The powers that be have decided that the rampant insecurity in Brazil’s favelas has gone on long enough and that the time has come for a new approach to the problem. **Gameplay in this act is much more tense and slower-paced with the player moving through densely-packed favelas street by street.** Despite this, Masterson and his team still rack up an impressive body count from mission to mission. The enemies here run the gamut of narcos to street militias. Some missions have optional objectives to capture “high-value targets” alive to be turned over to the UPP. What happens to the targets you capture (or why you need to take them alive) is never explained, but given some of the background historical information on the topic we assume it isn’t pleasant. Completing all of the optional objectives will give the player bonuses moving into the second act’s final mission. Masterson and the UPP must do one final cleaning out of the favelas in Rio de Janeiro ahead of the rapidly-approaching 2014 Olympics. The player’s



perspective switches between UPP officers providing overwatch support in the cable cars and forces on the ground working together to purge one last meddlesome street militia from the area. The cutscene that rounds out act two shows a very smug-looking Masterson enjoying a well-earned vacation at the Rio Olympics.

The campaign's third act takes place in Bolivia in the late 2020s in the early days of the military dictatorship. Gameplay shifts away from the running-and-gunning of the previous parts of the campaign and towards top-down strategic management of security forces across several different theatres from Santa Cruz to the Andes. Masterson has been sent to Bolivia ostensibly to support the new government in its struggles against "anti-establishment radicals and drug traffickers," but it should be pretty clear to the audience that his mission isn't all it seems to be. From the get-go, Masterson is put in contact with local CIA assets who enable him to just barely stay one step ahead of the enemies of the state. The first missions of the third act take place in Chapare where Masterson is called to direct a series of joint U.S.-Bolivian counternarcotics operations. After mopping up some drug traffickers in the outlying areas, attention shifts towards the "criminal elements" operating in the city of Cochabamba, although it should be fairly clear to the audience that security forces are largely just targeting a particularly well-armed segment of the urban poor. It is then revealed to Masterson by figures from the military junta that the city's criminals have been receiving arms from an underground "Evista" militia. The act's final missions centre on the hunt for the militia's radical leadership, culminating in their final stand in the salt flats of Potosi. The campaign goes out with a literal "Bolivian Army Ending" which rather dramatically extinguishes the left-wing insurrection that, besides undermining the junta's political legitimacy, can be inferred to have been highly disruptive to the government's lithium extraction efforts.

The Final Verdict

It's not clear if the developers wrote the campaign as an over-the-top satire of the "War on Drugs" and U.S. attitudes towards Latin America, or if they're pushing



the same decades-old essentializing, jingoistic, “red scare” messages they expect will play well with American audiences. The game comes dangerously close to self-awareness in its concluding cutscenes. After returning from Bolivia and preparing to enter early retirement, Masterson finds himself walking past the presidential portraits hanging in the White House, mumbling to himself about how little things have changed during his career – it’s as close as the game gets to recognizing some of the driving factors of the conflicts it fictionalizes.

This game’s campaign stands out from previous instalments in the franchise in one key area: there is no singular antagonist to tie the campaign together. The haciendas of Mexico, the favelas of Brazil, and the barrios of Bolivia are shown to be run by the same vaguely-defined corporate interests, morally bankrupt politicians, and criminal strongmen. It’s also worth pointing out here that the supermajority of the goons and henchmen that Masterson fights over the course of the campaign appear to be ethnically indigenous or Afro-Latino. Other ‘Call to Arms’ games have featured memorable characters, but Masterson and his teammates largely fall flat or are characters we’ve seen a hundred times before. Many of the officers sprinkled throughout the campaign (and even Masterson himself to some extent, really) follow the same formula: **a young man from the fringes of a community wracked by insecurity becomes a trigger-happy trooper with a hero complex** whose impacts on the community turned out to be questionable at best in the final calculus.

Even though the campaign presents a fictionalized take on militarized urban policing, the campaign reflects a very real cycle of violence, corruption, and exploitation, much in the same way that the game developers at Hacktvision seem stuck in a loop of turning out the same uninspiring shoot-em-ups year after year. We give ‘Call to Arms: Silver and Lead’ a 5.2 out of 10.

Do you agree with our score? Let us know what you think on social media or in the comment section below the review.



Explanatory Appendix

The text above reimagines elements of John Gledhill's book *The New War on the Poor: The Production of Insecurity in Latin America* (London: Zed, 2015) as a Call of Duty-esque video game using an IGN-esque review of its story as the framing device. The first act of the campaign reflects Gledhill's perspective on primitive accumulation and class relations in Mexico: collective lands pass into private and concentrated ownership by force deployed under the pretext of the war on drugs, and said force enables local politicians and foreign businesses to exploit natural resources. The final mission involving the hacendado, his mines, and the cartels was written to underscore this nexus. This act of the campaign was also written to reflect both the 'autodefensas' that are incorporated into the class structures of Michoacan as well as those that refuse to cooperate with state and federal forces, and illustrate the complex linkages between the licit and illicit economies. The Brazilian segment of the campaign review is meant to reflect Gledhill's perspective that despite the intent to take a new approach ("intelligent" militarized policing) the results are still comparable to the "bodycounting anti-crime politics in Mexico" and serve to safeguard commercial interests (Masterson's vacation connects the tourism sector to securitization as a prerequisite stage, for example). The Bolivian part of the campaign applies many of these themes to a region outside Gledhill's experience. **The war on drugs is again brought out as a key element of narratives of securitization**, and references to the CIA, "Evistas," left-wing insurgents, and military dictatorships are meant to echo ideological narratives of securitization floated during the height of Operation Condor. I specifically chose to include Cochabamba here because the city was the site of the "Water War" of 1999 and 2000 - the protests surrounding the privatization of Cochabamba's municipal water supply are meant to connect to the forcible opening of Brazilian favelas to electricity providers as described by Gledhill. The act's ending in Potosi is intended to highlight the use of force to enable primitive accumulation by exploitation of Bolivia's vast lithium deposits. See Elon Musk's 25 July 2020 tweet regarding Bolivia ("We will coup whoever we want! Deal with it.") for the inspiration for this act.



The review of the campaign was also written with nods to themes referred to by Gledhill throughout his book, namely: machismo as a strong current in militarized urban policing (which I attempted to caricature by portraying Masterson in the same vein as the macho protagonists from the actual Call of Duty games), the inability for the Global North to take any responsibility for these problems (see Masterson’s concluding remarks), the racialization of securitization (the choice of majority-mestizo Bolivia, for example), and the “structural... but flexible” links between politicians, organized crime, and securitization (“there is no singular antagonist to tie the campaign together”). Finally, Julie “Giuliani” Annie’s opinions of the campaign should not necessarily be taken as indicative of my opinions of Gledhill’s book, but rather aim to satire Call of Duty’s commercialization of securitization.

Featured photo by [Sam Pak](#) on [Unsplash](#).

This post is part of our second Academic Fiction thread – see [Dennis Rodger’s introductory post](#).

Morumbi and Paraisópolis: A Four-Act Play

Feng Xinqi
March, 2022



Dramatis Personae

Heitor: a 13-year-old boy

Mr. Gomes, his father: a waste handler, working at a garbage dump

Ms. Gomes, his mother: a dry cleaner, working from home

Mr. Barbosa, his uncle: a groundskeeper, working for Belmond Copacabana Palace

Arthur: a 12-year-old boy

Mr. da Silva, his father: head of a Notary Office



Ms. da Silva, his mother: a housewife

Security Guard

Act 1

Scene 1: Belmond Copacabana Palace, Morumbi. Outside the building, alongside the green lawn.

(Mr. Barbosa and Heitor, with their garden tools.)

BARBOSA: Heitor, remember to behave yourself. Your job does not come easy. If you make a mistake, both of us will be kicked out.

HEITOR: Yes, uncle. I'll work hard as a bee. But uncle, look, such beautiful green lawn! I wish I could play football on it!

BARBOSA: Heitor! I told you to behave yourself! Now, stop daydreaming and start to work

(Mr. Barbosa walks away. A few minutes later, a football falls from the balcony of the nearby residential building and lands in front of Heitor.)

HEITOR *(looking up in the sky)*: Where is this football from?

(Arthur comes down from the building, searching for his football.)

HEITOR *(approaching Arthur, with the football in hand)*: Is this yours? It almost hit me.

ARTHUR *(getting the football from Heitor)*: Yes! Sorry! I was kicking the football on my balcony, and it fell down.

HEITOR: Never mind. Why don't you just play it in the park? I always play there.



ARTHUR: I can't, I have to take a violin lesson one hour later. I don't have time to go to the park, so I can only play football at home. Why do I never see you in the park if you play there often? Do you mean the park near Albert Einstein Israel Hospital?

HEITOR: No. I don't live here. I work here in the summer. I help my uncle with gardening and earn some pocket money. I play in the park in Paraisópolis, our Comunidade.

ARTHUR: Where is Paraisópolis? I've never heard of it.

HEITOR: It's not far away. In fact, it's near Morumbi, your home.

ARTHUR: Really? OK, I'm out of touch. Can we be friends? My name is Arthur. We can play football together afterwards.

HEITOR: Sure, we are friends now! My name is Heitor.

ARTHUR: Do you want to come up for a cola?

HEITOR: My uncle wants me to work. But, well, let's have a cola anyway.

Scene 2: Belmond Copacabana Palace, Morumbi. Inside the building.

(Heitor and Arthur in the hall of the building. Heitor has garden tools in his hands)

SECURITY GUARD *(to Heitor)*: Boy, do you work here? Show me your identification tag before you go in.

ARTHUR: He is my friend.

(The Security Guard nods. Heitor and Arthur walk to the elevators.)



HEITOR (*pointing to the tags on the wall*): Why are there tags for the elevators?

ARTHUR: The “social” one is for our friends and us. The “service” one is for the servants. Our cleaners, cooks, and maids use that one.

(The elevator arrived, Heitor and Arthur walked in.)

Scene 3: Belmond Copacabana Palace, Morumbi. Inside the building. Arthur’s home.

(Heitor and Arthur have a lot of fun playing together. One hour later, Heitor leaves. He sits down to have lunch with his parents)

DA SILVA: Where is your friend from? Why does he bring garden tools with him?

ARTHUR: Heitor is from Paraisópolis.

DA SILVA: Paraisópolis? The slum? People from Paraisópolis are thieves, beggars, and drug dealers. You should stop playing with them.

ARTHUR: Dad, Heitor is my friend. He is a good person.

Act 2

Scene 1: A hut in Paraisópolis. Heitor’s home.

(The same day. Ms. Gomes is cleaning clothes under a dark lamp. Mr. Gomes and Heitor are sitting at the table. They are surrounded by recyclable waste collected from the dump.)

GOMES: Heitor, it is your birthday today! Guess what your mom and I got for



you? A Madrid shirt!

HEITOR (*taking over the gift*): I can't believe this! I love you, mom and dad! I'll put it on tomorrow to play football with my new friend.

Act 3

Scene 1: The security checkpoint at the park near Albert Einstein Israel Hospital

(*One day later. Heitor is waiting. Arthur approaches.*)

ARTHUR: Hey, Heitor!

HEITOR: Hey, Arthur! I've been waiting for a while. The park is surrounded by high walls, and the security officer won't let me in without you since I do not live here.

ARTHUR: Now, we can go in. (*Touching Heitor's shirt*) Wait! You wear a limited-edition Madrid shirt? I also have one! It's the same as yours! (*Surprised*) Wait! It is mine! Look, my name, Arthur da Silva, is embroidered on the collar! My mom always asks our tailor to embroider our names on the collars or cuffs, so they are unique in the world.

HEITOR: What are you talking about? I don't know why there is your name on my collar. It's a gift from my parents. I just got it last night.

ARTHUR: Last night? I knew it! You must have stolen it from my bedroom yesterday! How dare you!

HEITOR (*angrily*): How dare you call me a thief!

ARTHUR (*angrily*): I trusted you. I thought you were my friend. My dad was right:



you people from Paraisópolis are all thieves!

HEITOR: From now on, we are not friends anymore!

(Heitor leaves.)

Scene 2: A hut in Paraisópolis. Heitor's home.

(Heitor is crying. Ms. and Mr. Gomes are comforting him)

HEITOR: Dad, where did you get this shirt? Why is my friend's name on it?

GOMES: I found it in a garbage bag at the dump. I cannot afford a Madrid shirt.

GOMES: Yes, your dad got it from the dump, and I cleaned it. You know, many things in our home are from the dump.

HEITOR: I see. Arthur misunderstood the situation.

Act 4

Scene 1: A hut in Paraisópolis. Heitor's home.

(A few days later. Heitor is doing homework. Ms. Gomes is cleaning a trench coat. Mr. da Silva is organizing the waste he brought from the dump.)

GOMES *(holding a diamond necklace)*: Oh my God. Look what I've found!

GOMES *(surprised)*: A necklace! Where is this from?

GOMES: I found it in the pocket of the coat that I am cleaning. It must be the



possession of a lady living in Morumbi. You know, all the clothes I clean are from Morumbi.

GOMES: Yes, because your work is outsourced by a chain laundry shop, and they only accept clients from Morumbi and provide them with “high-quality service”.

HEITOR (*looking at the coat Ms. Gomes is cleaning*): I seem to have seen this coat somewhere. Oh! I remember. I saw Ms. da Silva, Arthur’s mom, wearing it. Is there a name on the collar of that coat?

GOMES (*checking the collar*): Yes, it says Maria da Silva

HEITOR: Then it must be hers. Give the necklace to me. I’ll return it back tomorrow.

GOMES: But you said Arthur called you a thief?

HEITOR: Yes, he did. Although Arthur and I are not friends anymore, we should show them we are honest people.

GOMES: You’re a good boy, Heitor.

Scene 2: Belmond Copacabana Palace, Morumbi. Outside the building, alongside the green lawn.

(Heitor is waiting. Arthur sees him and approaches.)

ARTHUR: What are you doing here?

HEITOR (*Showing Arthur the necklace*): Arthur, I think this is your mom’s. My mom is a dry cleaner. She found it in the pocket of a coat. I know that coat is your mom’s because I found her name on the collar.

ARTHUR (*Taking over the necklace, surprised*): That’s unbelievable.



HEITOR: Besides, I know why there is your name on my shirt. My dad got it from the garbage dump. You must have thrown it away.

(Heitor leaves. Arthur is stunned.)

Scene 3: Belmond Copacabana Palace, Morumbi. Inside the building. Arthur's home.

(Arthur enters. Mr. da Silva is reading the evening newspaper. Ms. da Silva is watching TV.)

ARTHUR *(Holding the necklace)*: Mom, is this your necklace?

DA SILVA: Yes. Why do you have my necklace?

ARTHUR: My friend, Heitor's mom, is a dry cleaner, and she found it in your coat that you sent to be cleaned. Heitor returned it to me today.

DA SILVA: Oh, I must have accidentally put it into the pocket and forgotten about it. Do you mean your friend from the slum returned it? I'll have to check with the jeweller to see if this is really my diamond necklace and not a fake. And I will complain about this laundry. How dare they let someone living in the slum clean our clothes?

ARTHUR: And my shirt. Have you thrown away my Madrid shirt?

DA SILVA: Your Madrid shirt? I threw it away because you've spent a lot of time playing football. I want you to spend more time practising the violin!

(Upset, Arthur rushes downstairs to find Heitor, but Heitor has gone...)



Explanatory appendix

This short story is inspired by Teresa Caldeira's 1996 article "Fortified enclaves: The new urban segregation" (*Public Culture*, volume 8, issue 2, pp. 303-328). Caldeira investigated gated communities fortified enclaves, in São Paulo, Brazil, and compared São Paulo with Los Angeles. In my short play, I focus on the psychological reasons that lead to the creation of walled communities and the effects they cause on the communities. I especially tried to convey an idea that the original article did not elaborate on: although the fortified enclaves are segregated from the lower-class communities, their operation and function are, in fact, dependent on people living in poverty.

There are two psychological reasons why the upper and middle-class might want to be segregated from other communities. On the one hand, the wealthier demand "total security". In urban space, especially in cities with high levels of inequality, there often exists a widespread perception that insecurity comes from low-income classes. For example, in the play, Mr. da Silva wants to stop Arthur from playing with Heitor because he believes that people from Paraisópolis are 'thieves, beggars, and drug dealers'. Similarly, the security guard requires Heitor to show an identification tag before he can enter the residential building, and he cannot access the park near Albert Einstein Israel Hospital due to the security officer there not letting non-residents in. Those all show the urban fear of the rich and their desire for a sense of control and protection over their surroundings. On the other hand, gated communities are also somewhere where the wealthier display their higher status. Segregation also means social distinction, and fortified enclaves minimize the contact among people of different classes, ethnic, and racial backgrounds in ways that reinforce difference. There are for example two elevators in the residential building, separate for residents and their servants. At the same time, however, they are in the same hall, and the residents and servants are still not strictly segregated, which demonstrates how the primary intent is to show status rather than security. In depicting these elements, my play seeks to highlight how there is very little to celebrate about gated communities in terms of their effects on cities, as they only reinforce and normalize social inequality and



spatial segregation between different communities. The last point I wanted to elaborate on in my play is that although the more affluent communities are gated, their relationship with the lower classes is not entirely cut off. In the play, the clothes of the da Silvas are sent to the high-end laundromat, and the laundromat hires low-cost labour, including the workers in the slums. Besides, the waste produced by the affluent is often re-used and recycled by the poor. Consequently, although the de Silvas do not want to have any contact with the Gomes, they are still inextricably linked to the Gomes, and in many ways, dependent on them.

Featured Image: Svein Holo, Samfoto, NTB on [NDLA](#).

This post is part of our second Academic Fiction thread – see [Dennis Rodger's introductory post](#).

A ballad of Kochi

Parvati Dhananjayan
March, 2022



Come oh villagers, come to the port

Carry your sickles and scythes, sticks and rocks

Come to the port, our city has fallen!!

Our little city by the sea has been tainted.

Do you remember our lost glory?

Our blood, our toil and sweat?

The fields we worked in day after day and night after night,



The crops we so carefully tended, while our children slept hungry.

Load the ships! Load them all! They said,

So we did! One after another, crops after crops.

There goes our pepper, our cardamoms and our cinnamons,

to lands far off, people who knew not of us but of our *Janmis* [\[i\]](#).

We imagine the Greeks, the Romans and the Arabs

of lands beyond our sea, grinding, sprinkling pepper

their fishes and meat smells of us, the sweat and tears

of the black haired, dark skinned who worked the fields.

Chinna heard, *Chella* say, *Karutha* heard from our little master,

men of lands where our spices rest, Write stories.

We shall be remembered in history! Exotic land and Exotic people.

History is for the rich. The poor! We live in the present.

Carrying gold and silver coins, one day the ships returned

Flocked like a litter of puppies waiting for their mother's milk, we waited.



Neither gold nor silver this time, not even bronze or copper

More of our crops they asked for, next time! They promised.

Two ships came the next day, three the day after, five in a week's time.

Like the crisp blue sky after the rain the south west wind brings, men of shirts and pants as white as the milk, our *janmi* drinks, They came.

long pointy sticks slung on their backs, young, old and bald men.

Guns! They were called, those long pointy sticks. Unloading iron boxes, they looked not at us, Our curious eyes were invisible to them. The sound, of loud trumpets and soldiers, the Raja had arrived, glistening with pride, blessed be his land by the sight of the mighty white traders.

Years passed, more of them came, more of their ships left but not our silver and gold. The young *Parangis* [ii] walked our streets, ate our fruits, raped our girls and yet fathered none of their children, loads and loads of our pepper and coir went, all these years, no silver, no gold.

The Parangis left. News came from Calicut, they had lost a war. Then came



the Dutch, they too packed their bags in no time, one day, our village woke up;
men clothed in red and white, they talked of their kings and queens in London,
We have neither kings nor queens now, just *janmis* who lick their boots.

It didn't matter what the color of their uniforms were, they all looked
the same; white and indifferent. They did not see us, but we did.

Chella heard, *Chinna* say, *Karutha* heard from our little master;
Different they were; the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British.

Not paddy, more spice! Pepper, cardamoms, cinnamon and coir,
They told us over and over again, so we did. More spices.

Lands of our fathers were taken from us to feed armies and build empires,
the dark skins were left curled into a coma without only our labor.

'We want liberation, we demand freedom'; cried the young and the old.

Tales of many a Bhagat Singhs, Nehrus and Gandhis in cold prisons;
for freedom, for Swaraj floated through our little cochin.

We still worked the same fields, day in and day out.



What good is freedom to us without our lands?

What will we do with an independent country if no roof protects
the wrath of the monsoon and the anger of the sun, our tiny huts?

How free are we? Farmers with no land, Fishers with no sea.

An independent nation of the same old upper caste government,
lands for the ones who wield power and the ones who own wealth.
who are we, if not broken promises inherited from our forefathers
one day, for sure! But today; landless, homeless and jobless.

The city grew, the ports expanded yet Mother Sea quenched not our thirst.

Many a generation of *Moopans* [iii] came; their stiff shirts and ironed *Mundus* [iv]

“The port needs workers, yet not everyone can work”, blood and sweat again,

The survival of the strongest; Get the coin and the work is yours.

Sleep remained stranger to this night as our men fought;

Fathers over sons and brothers over brothers; A coin.

“Grant us a *Chappa* [v] O! Benevolent *Moopa*, let not our children go hungry.”

A monopoly of violence reigned this night, men like hungry hounds fought.



Sickles, hammers and red flags were flung; were to be taken back
our ancestors land and the sea that wailed in the clutches of money.

One, two, three! The shots were fired; there biting the dust
in a graveyard of buried hopes, lay our sons and men.

Amma heard, *neeli* say, *Moidu* heard from our little master,
engulfing our homes from the hinterland, one after another
the monster of a harbour, in the dictatorship of speed
Traders, businessmen and landowners; Building a city.

The struggles of years gone by keep us alive,
a dream of a better home, a brighter kitchen and better jobs
remains unattended, while by leaps and bounds, the world
around us grows; of foreign capital and private funders.

The Dalit lot of us, the lower castes and working class
starved out of our little patches of land, sold to men
in their Monday suits who came with tractors and cranes,



and at a breakneck pace, shattered everything we once called home.

Queen of the Arabian Sea, they called it

But queens had a tradition; cries of the poor will be unheard.

Amma heard, *neeli* say, *Moidu* heard from our little master;

'Kochi was growing, but it had no place for us'.

Generations of dark skinned, untouchable outcastes,

left with nothing more than *Poramboke Lands* [\[vi\]](#),

not a weed would grow, no toil or sweat would make it bloom.

No pages yellowed by age would remember us, left to fend for ourselves.

Buildings and high-rises sprung up along the coast,

Apartments, companies and shopping centers

on our wastelands we stand and watch; a city

on the boneyard of our paddy fields and huts.

They let more of us go to the swamps each day,

lands for the airport, lands for the metro



'Corruption' bellowed the middle class,
care not of corruption do we, but of our survival.

Money flowed left and right, but none came to us
nickels and dimes in the name of compensation
to the hinterland, diurnally the city materialized
Fort Kochi and Mattancherry have become old cities now.

Malu heard, *Maina* say, *Achu* heard from our little master,
Kochi and its backwaters are in need of us now.
To clean their malls, wash their cars, drive their autos,
load their ships and mint more money; so we went.

Companies from far away America hoisted their flags,
computers, machines, clothes and food chains;
Our *Kanji* and *Kappa* [\[vii\]](#) was replaced by Pizza and burgers
People of our little Kochi now preferred American food.

Mattocks and spades were rested, from our wastelands



we went, soldiers of a lost battle in their colored uniforms,
the glistening pride of Kerala sang out to us
The blues cleaned, the khakis rode and the reds waited tables.

On and on we went, bearing the burden
from outskirts, from across the backwaters, from drenches
by bus, by ferries and on foot; a *thorthu* [\[viii\]](#) on our foreheads,
a city we built; roads, bridges and metros.

A marvelous wonder, the breathtaking beauty
we hatched in her arms; the old and the new,
one stone a day, piece by piece we machined;
Kochi is not the old Kochi anymore.

An empire for software companies and info-parks
assembled on our weary spines
Malu heard, *Maina* say, *Achu* heard from our little master,
Still, we have no right to this city.



No feet of land to call our own, neither boats nor buildings
would crumble these ivory towers, when we cease
tales of all sturdy cities that grew, while our streets shrank
Yet, we toiled for a city that will never call us its own.

Our city has not fallen, not yet
I carry it, like my mother did, like her mother did
The city needed us and so do we,
but still, we have no claims in it.

Explanatory Appendix

My poem is inspired by David Harvey's 2003 essay titled 'The Right to the city' (*International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, volume 27, issue 4, pp. 939-941). Harvey, through his essay, traces the transformation of cities as a socio-political phenomenon and the importance of granting human beings the right to make and remake their cities. This poem is a take on urban transformation of the city of Kochi in Kerala, India, through the lens of the working-class population majorly consisting of people from the Dalit castes and other minorities, that draws on a variety of historical sources including Justin Mathew's essay "Badge of Labour: Marginal Lives of the Labouring Poor of Cochin" (Kerala Council for Historical Research, <http://kchr.ac.in/articles/199>, n.d.), and K. A. Babu's unpublished dissertation, *Diciphering Belongingness in Kochi City; Cinematic Representations of the Urban* (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, 2021).

The poem is written in the form of narrative poetry that typically traces a story.



Popular examples of narrative poetry are *The Iliad* by Homer or *The Canterbury Tales* by Chaucer. This poem is divided into three parts; The First section talks about the colonial times when the city of Kochi; then centred around the port of *Muziris* fell under the imperial powers of first the Portuguese, then the Dutch and finally the British. The first section describes how the peasants were kept in the dark by not providing them with adequate compensation for their labour. The second section deals with post-independence era, where these Dalit laborers continue to make their ends meet with the Kochi harbour as their centre of activities. This section highlights the *Chappa Sarmam* (Chappa Revolt) of 1953, first urban uprising in south India against the oppressive labour recruitment practice in Mattancherry (Now a part of Old Fort Kochi). The contractors called *Moopans* recruited labourers from colonies by throwing *Chappas* (small sealed coins) on the ground. Whoever picked the *Chappa* would get the job for the day. The second section also describes the shift brought by the liberalisation reforms of late 1990's when thousands of Dalit families were forced to sell their lands to private contractors and were displaced off to wastelands in the outskirts of the proposed city. The third and final section deals with present times where members of these families who live in *Poramboke Lands* come to the city on a daily basis to work in malls, software companies and other establishments as unskilled workers.

The poem repeatedly mentions 'Our little master', whose identity is not specified. The little master is a symbolic representation of the different sources from which the people learn about the changes happening around them. The identity of 'the little master' remains unknown to both the reader as well these communities. It also depicts how the news travelled; from oral exchanges and overheard conversations. The poem tries to trace how the present generation, like their ancestors, were denied claims to the city they helped build and the intricate relation between their dependence on the city and city's dependence on them.



Footnotes

[i] Aristocracy of Kerala who owned lands. Otherwise called Landlords.

[ii] Local name for the Portuguese.

[iii] Local name for labor contractors.

[iv] A type of garment worn by men around their waist. Traditionally white in color.

[v] Coins with sealed emblems used for labour recruitment.

[vi] Wastelands/ Lands that doesn't come under revenue generating lands.

[vii] Rice porridge and Tapioca; a traditional food combination of Kerala, especially the working class.

[viii] A thin towel, typically used in households of Kerala.

Featured image by [Fsquares \(The Ibrahims\)](#), courtesy of [Wikimedia Commons](#).

This post is part of our second Academic Fiction thread - see [Dennis Rodger's introductory post](#).



Academic Fictions: 2022

Dennis Rodgers
March, 2022



Last year, the Allegra Lab began a thematic thread showcasing a selection of the wonderful “academic fictions” written by students as an assignment for the course on “Cities, Conflict, and Development” that I teach at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, in Geneva, Switzerland. Inspired in particular by the anthropologist Margery Wolf’s famous 1992 book, *A Thrice-Told Tale*, where she presents and analyses the differences between a short story, fieldnotes, and a social science article that she has written about the same events that took place during her research in Taiwan, I had set students the task to choose an article from the course syllabus, and to re-write it as a 1,500-



word short story or poem, along with a 500 words appendix explaining how and why they went about writing their short story or poem.

The idea of the exercise was to experiment with a different form of representation and explore how to best convey a point or particular experience. Fiction is arguably a critical medium in this respect, for several reasons. On the one hand, as Michel Foucault pointed out in his famous essay “What Is an Author?” (1984), those texts that we today categorize as “literary fiction” – stories, poems, plays – were in fact once accepted as the primary media for the expression of essential truths about human dilemmas and understandings of the world, in the same way that in this day and age positivist scientific discourse is received as authoritative *pro forma*. As such, it is perhaps not surprising that some of the most powerful works of social science, such as Sir Thomas More’s famous *Utopia* (1516), for example were written as “a fiction whereby the truth, as if smeared by honey, might a little more pleasantly slip into men’s minds” (More, 1964: 251). On the other hand, historically the role of literature has always been not only “to delight” but also “to teach”, as was pointed out by the Roman poet Horace over two thousand years ago. Seen from this perspective, the distance between fiction and social science is not necessarily all that great.

I am extremely pleased that the Allegra Lab has accepted to continue last year’s thematic thread and showcase a series of new original and evocative student assignments from this year. These include a poem, two short stories, a (fictional) gaming review, a play, and an epistolary fiction. As with the assignments presented last year, the starting point for each of these is an academic article from the course syllabus, and more specifically some element of the latter that struck the contributors to this thread as either particularly important or, alternatively, sub-optimally represented in the original article. In different ways, their contributions seek to put these forward more vividly, more revealingly, more forcefully, or from a different angle, in order to make us think and re-think about them. In all cases, however, the reader is transported, challenged, and made to think about critical urban issues, examples, and representation in new ways.



Pieces showcased:

[‘A ballad of Kochi’](#) written by Parvati Dhananjayan

[‘Morumbi and Paraisópolis: A Four-Act Play’](#) written by Feng Xinqi

[‘Call to Arms: Silver and Lead’ Campaign Review’](#) written by Tanner Gonzales

[‘2084’](#) written by Sara Emilie Lafontaine

[‘Dear Yaye’](#) written by Larissa Mina Lee

[‘Bend like a Willow Tree’](#) written by Emmeline Rumpf

Featured image by [STS Stanz Jasta crew](#), courtesy of [Flickr](#).

Call for Reviews: Life at the edges in a changing world

Allegra
March, 2022



Since the Covid-19 pandemic started more than two years ago, time has been put on hold and precarity has become an even more common feature of life globally. The inspiration for the title of this new call for reviews comes from this somewhat bleak realization : after the pandemic comes the war and a widely shared feeling of being pushed at the edges in a rapidly changing world. The books selected here examine the experiences of those living at the margins and who never enjoyed the comfort and stability of the privileged few. They also explore forms of care, solidarity, reparations that have emerged in response to exclusion in the hope of finding some creativeness for imagining a more optimistic future. If you are interested in reviewing one of these books, get in touch with us!

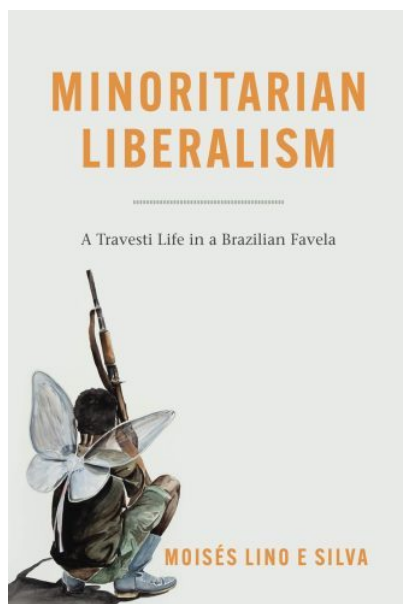
How to Proceed:

As we receive many requests for reviews, please send an email to



reviews@allegralaboratory.net indicating which book you would like to review, your postal address, and 2-3 sentences explaining why you should be reviewing the book. Please explain how the book relates to your own research or interests. We will get back to you once we have selected the reviewers.

Lino e Silva, M. (2022). *Minoritarian liberalism: A Travesti life in a Brazilian Favela*. University of Chicago Press.



A mesmerizing ethnography of the largest favela in Rio, where residents articulate their own politics of freedom against the backdrop of multiple forms of oppression.

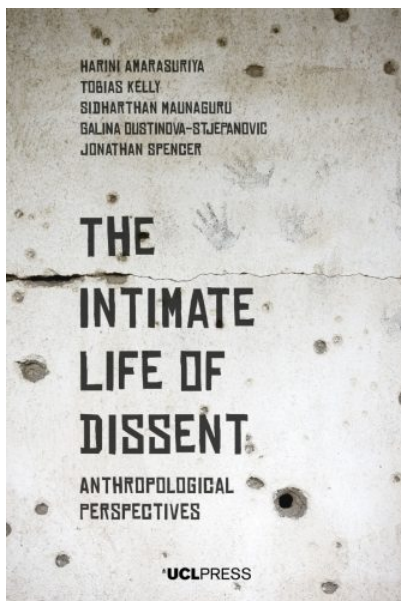
Normative liberalism has promoted the freedom of privileged subjects, those entitled to rights—usually white, adult, heteronormative, and bourgeois—at the expense of marginalized groups, such as Black people, children, LGBTQ people, and slum dwellers. In this visceral ethnography of Rocinha, the largest favela in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Moisés Lino e Silva explores what happens when liberalism is challenged by people whose lives are impaired by normative understandings of liberty. He calls such marginalized visions of freedom “minoritarian liberalism,” a concept that stands in for overlapping, alternative modes of freedom—be they queer, favela, or peasant.

Lino e Silva introduces readers to a broad collective of favela residents, most intimately accompanying Natasha Kellem, a charismatic self-declared travesti (a



term used in Latin America to indicate a specific form of female gender construction opposite to the sex assigned at birth). While many of those the author meets consider themselves “queer,” others are treated as “abnormal” simply because they live in favelas. Through these interconnected experiences, Lino e Silva not only pushes at the boundaries of anthropological inquiry, but also offers ethnographic evidence of non-normative routes to freedom for those seeking liberties against the backdrop of capitalist exploitation, transphobia, racism, and other patterns of domination.

Amarasuriya, H., Kelly, T., Maunaguru, S., Oustinova-Stjepanovic, G. and Spencer, J. (2021). [*The Intimate Life of Dissent: Anthropological Perspectives*](#). University of Chicago Press.

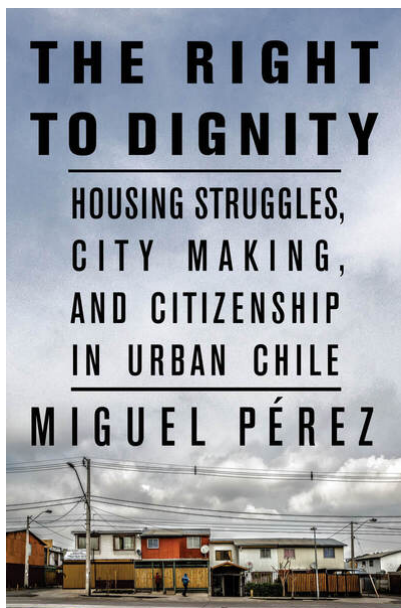


The Intimate Life of Dissent examines the meanings and implications of public acts of dissent, which, the authors argue, are never simply about abstract principles, but also come at great personal risk to both the dissidents and to those close to them. Dissent is, therefore, embedded in deep, complex, and sometimes contradictory intimate relations. This book puts acts of high principle back into the personal relations out of which they emerge and take effect, raising new questions about the relationship between intimacy and political commitment. It does so through examinations of practical examples, including Sri Lankan leftists,

Soviet dissidents, Tibetan exiles, Kurdish prisoners, British pacifists, Indonesian student activists, and Jewish peace activists. *The Intimate Life of Dissent* will be of interest to postgraduate students and researchers in anthropology, history, political theory, and sociology, as well as to those teaching introductory undergraduate courses on political anthropology.



Pérez, M. (2022). [*The Right to Dignity: Housing Struggles, City Making, and Citizenship in Urban Chile*](#). Stanford University Press.



In the poorest neighborhoods of Santiago, Chile, low-income residents known as *pobladores* have long lived at the margins—and have long advocated for the right to housing as part of *la vida digna* (a life with dignity). From 2011 to 2015, anthropologist Miguel Pérez conducted fieldwork among the *pobladores* of Santiago, where the urban dwellers and activists he met were part of an emerging social movement that demanded dignified living conditions, the right to remain in their neighbourhoods of origin, and, more broadly, recognition as citizens entitled to basic rights. This ethnographic account raises questions about state

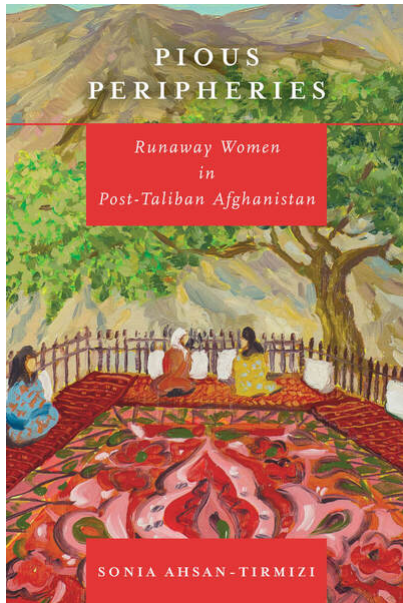
policies that conceptualize housing as a commodity rather than a right, and how poor urban dwellers seek recognition and articulate political agency against the backdrop of neoliberal policies.

By scrutinizing how Chilean *pobladores* constitute themselves as political subjects, this book reveals the mechanisms through which housing activists develop new imaginaries of citizenship in a country where the market has been the dominant force organizing social life for almost forty years. Pérez considers the limits and potentialities of urban movements, framed by poor people's involvement in subsidy-based programs, as well as the capacity of low-income residents to struggle against the commodification of rights by claiming the right to dignity: a demand based on a moral category that would ultimately become the driving force behind Chile's 2019 social uprising.

Ahsan-Tirmizi, S. (2021). [*Pious Peripheries: Runaway*](#)



Women in Post-Taliban Afghanistan. Stanford University Press.

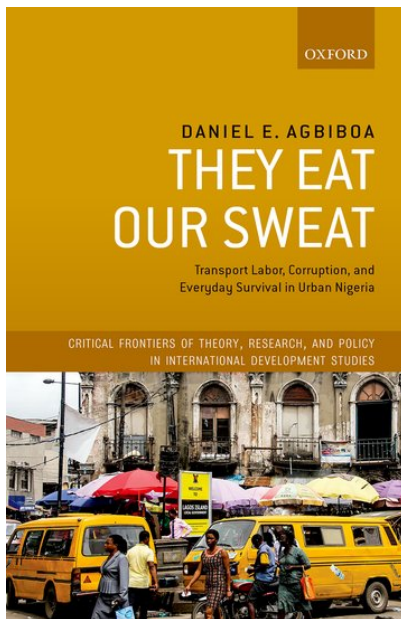


The Taliban made piety a business of the state, and thereby intervened in the daily lives and social interactions of Afghan women. *Pious Peripheries* examines women’s resistance through groundbreaking fieldwork at a women’s shelter in Kabul, home to runaway wives, daughters, mothers, and sisters of the Taliban. Whether running to seek marriage or divorce, enduring or escaping abuse, or even accused of singing sexually explicit songs in public, “promiscuous” women challenge the status quo—and once marked as promiscuous, women have few resources. This book provides a window into the

everyday struggles of Afghan women as they develop new ways to challenge historical patriarchal practices.

Sonia Ahsan-Tirmizi explores how women negotiate gendered power mechanisms, notably those of Islam and Pashtunwali. Sometimes defined as an honour code, Pashtunwali is a discursive and material practice that women embody through praying, fasting, oral and written poetry, and participation in rituals of hospitality and refuge. In taking ownership of Pashtunwali and Islamic knowledge, in both textual and oral forms, women create a new supportive community, finding friendship and solidarity in the margins of Afghan society. So doing, these women redefine the meanings of equality, honour, piety, and promiscuity in Afghanistan.

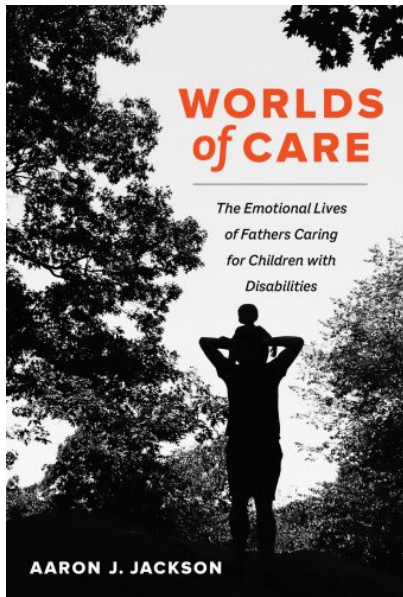
Agbiboa, D. E. (2022). *They Eat Our Sweat: Transport Labor, Corruption, and Everyday Survival in Urban Nigeria.* Oxford University Press.



Accounts of corruption in Africa and the Global South are generally overly simplistic and macro-oriented, and commonly disconnect everyday (petty) corruption from political (grand) corruption. In contrast to this tendency, *They Eat Our Sweat* offers a fresh and engaging look at the corruption complex in Africa through a microanalysis of its informal transport sector, where collusion between state and non-state actors is most rife. Focusing on Lagos, Nigeria's commercial capital and Africa's largest city, Daniel Agbibo investigates the workaday world of road transport operators as refracted through the extortion

racket and violence of transport unions acting in complicity with the state. Steeped in an embodied knowledge of Lagos and backed by two years of thorough ethnographic fieldwork, including working as an informal bus conductor, Agbibo provides an emic perspective on precarious labour, popular agency and the daily pursuit of survival under the shadow of the modern world system. Corruption, Agbibo argues, is not rooted in Nigerian culture but is shaped by the struggle to get by and get ahead on the fast and slow lanes of Lagos. The pursuit of economic survival compels transport operators to participate in the reproduction of the very transgressive system they denounce. *They Eat Our Sweat* is not just a book about corruption but also about transportation, politics, and governance in urban Africa

Jackson, A. (2021). [Worlds of Care. The Emotional Lives of Fathers Caring for Children with Disabilities.](#) University of California Press.



Vulnerable narratives of fatherhood are few and far between; rarer still is an ethnography that delves into the practical and emotional realities of intensive caregiving. Grounded in the intimate everyday lives of men caring for children with major physical and intellectual disabilities, *Worlds of Care* undertakes an exploration of how men shape their identities in the context of caregiving. Anthropologist Aaron J. Jackson fuses ethnographic research and creative nonfiction to offer an evocative account of what is required for men to create habitable worlds and find some kind of “normal” when their circumstances are anything but.

Combining stories from his fieldwork in North America with reflections on his own experience caring for his severely disabled son, Jackson argues that care has the potential to transform our understanding of who we are and how we relate to others.

Zitcer, A. (2021). [*Practising Cooperation: Mutual Aid beyond Capitalism*](#). University of Minnesota Press.



From the crises of racial inequity and capitalism that inspired the Black Lives Matter movement and the Green New Deal to the coronavirus pandemic, stories of mutual aid have shown that, though cooperation is variegated and ever-changing, it is also a form of economic solidarity that can help weather contemporary social and economic crises. Addressing this theme, *Practicing Cooperation* delivers a trenchant and timely argument that the way to a more just and equitable society lies in the widespread adoption of cooperative practices. But what renders cooperation ethical, effective, and sustainable?

Providing a new conceptual framework for cooperation as a form of social practice, *Practicing Cooperation* describes and critiques three U.S.-based cooperatives: a pair of co-op grocers in Philadelphia, each adjusting to recent growth and renewal; a federation of two hundred low-cost community acupuncture clinics throughout the United States, banded together as a cooperative of practitioners and patients; and a collectively managed Philadelphia experimental dance company, founded in the early 1990s and still going strong. Through these case studies, Andrew Zitcer illuminates the range of activities that make contemporary cooperatives successful: dedicated practitioners, a commitment to inclusion, and ongoing critical reflection. He asserts that economic and social cooperation must be examined, critiqued, and implemented on multiple scales if it is to combat the pervasiveness of competitive individualism.

Practicing Cooperation is grounded in the voices of practitioners, and the result is a clear-eyed look at the lived experience of cooperators from different parts of the economy and a guidebook for people on the potential of this way of life for the pursuit of justice and fairness.



Yonucu, D. (2021). *Police, Provocation, Politics: Counterinsurgency in Istanbul*. Cornell University Press.

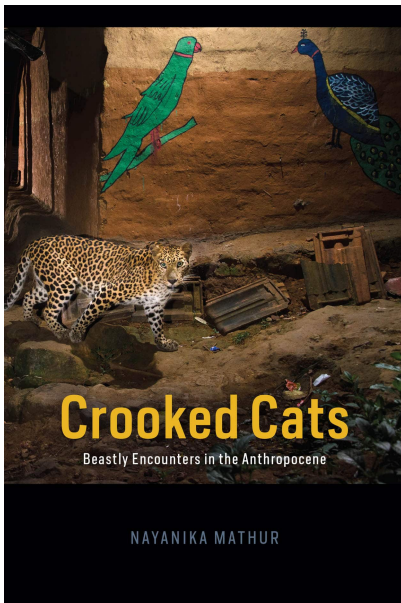


In *Police, Provocation, Politics*, Deniz Yonucu presents a counterintuitive analysis of contemporary policing practices, focusing particular attention on the incitement of counterviolence, perpetual conflict, and ethnosectarian discord by the state security apparatus. Situating Turkish policing within a global context and combining archival work and oral history narratives with ethnographic research, Yonucu demonstrates how counterinsurgency strategies from the Cold War and decolonial eras continue to inform contemporary urban policing in Istanbul. Shedding light on counterinsurgency's affect-and-emotion-generating

divisive techniques and urban dimensions, Yonucu shows how counterinsurgent policing strategies work to intervene in the organization of political dissent in a way that both counters existing alignments among dissident populations and prevents emergent ones.

Yonucu suggests that in the places where racialized and dissident populations live, provocations of counterviolence and conflict by state security agents as well as their containment of both cannot be considered disruptions of social order. Instead, they can only be conceptualized as forms of governance and policing designed to manage actual or potential rebellious populations.

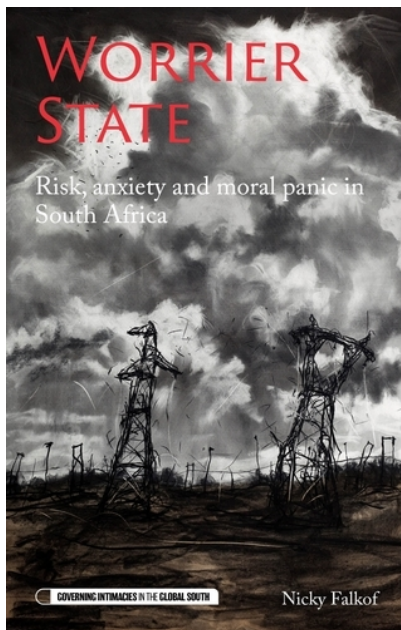
Mathur, N. (2021). [*Crooked Cats: Beastly Encounters in the Anthropocene*](#). Chicago University Press.



Big cats—tigers, leopards, and lions—that make prey of humans are commonly known as “man-eaters.” Anthropologist Nayanika Mathur reconceptualizes them as cats that have gone off the straight path to become “crooked.” Building upon fifteen years of research in India, this groundbreaking work moves beyond both colonial and conservationist accounts to place crooked cats at the center of the question of how we are to comprehend a planet in crisis.

There are many theories on why and how a big cat comes to prey on humans, with the ecological collapse emerging as a central explanatory factor. Yet, uncertainty over the precise cause of crookedness persists. *Crooked Cats* explores in vivid detail the many lived complexities that arise from this absence of certain knowledge to offer startling new insights into both the governance of nonhuman animals and their intimate entanglements with humans. Through creative ethnographic storytelling, *Crooked Cats* illuminates the Anthropocene in three critical ways: as method, as a way of reframing human-nonhuman relations on the planet, and as a political tool indicating the urgency of academic engagement. Weaving together “beastly tales” spun from encounters with big cats, Mathur deepens our understanding of the causes, consequences, and conceptualization of the climate crisis.

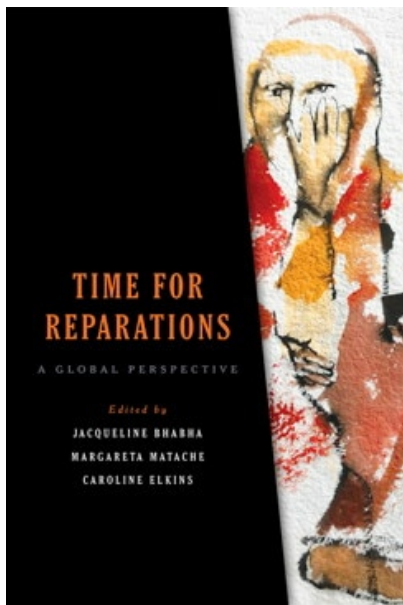
Falkof, N. (2022) [Worrier state. Risk, anxiety and moral panic in South Africa](#). Manchester University Press.



Risk, anxiety and moral panic are endemic to contemporary societies and media forms. How do these phenomena manifest in a place like South Africa, which features heightened insecurity, deep inequality and accelerated social change? What happens when cultures of fear intersect with pervasive systems of gender, race and class?

Worrier state investigates four case studies in which fear and anxiety appear in radically different ways: the far right myth of 'white genocide'; so-called 'Satanist' murders of young women; an urban legend about township crime; and social theories about safety and goodness in the suburbs. Falkof foregrounds the significance of emotion as a socio-political force, emphasising South Africa's imbrication within globalised conditions of anxiety and thus its fundamental and often-ignored hypermodernity. The book offers a bold and creative perspective on the social roles of fear and emotion in South Africa and thus on everyday life in this complex place.

Bhabha, J., Matache, M., Elkins, C. (ed.) (2021). [*Time for Reparations: A Global Perspective*](#). University of Pennsylvania Press.

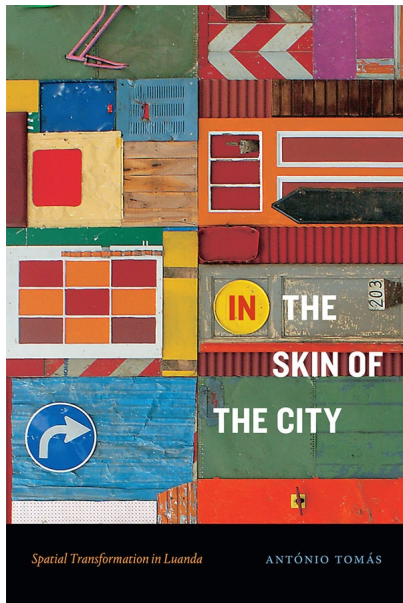


In this sweeping international perspective on reparations, *Time for Reparations* makes the case that past state injustice—be it slavery or colonization, forced sterilization or widespread atrocities—has enduring consequences that generate ongoing harm, which needs to be addressed as a matter of justice and equity.

Time for Reparations provides a wealth of detailed and diverse examples of state injustice, from enslavement of African Americans in the United States and Roma in Romania to colonial exploitation and brutality in Guatemala, Algeria, Indonesia, Jamaica, and Guadeloupe. From many vantage points, contributing authors discuss different reparative strategies and the impact they would have on the lives of survivor or descent communities.

One of the strengths of this book is its interdisciplinary perspective—contributors are historians, anthropologists, human rights lawyers, sociologists, and political scientists. Many of the authors are both scholars and advocates, actively involved in one capacity or another in the struggles for reparations they describe. The book therefore has a broad and inclusive scope, aided by an accessible and cogent writing style. It appeals to scholars, students, advocates and others concerned about addressing some of the most profound and enduring injustices of our time.

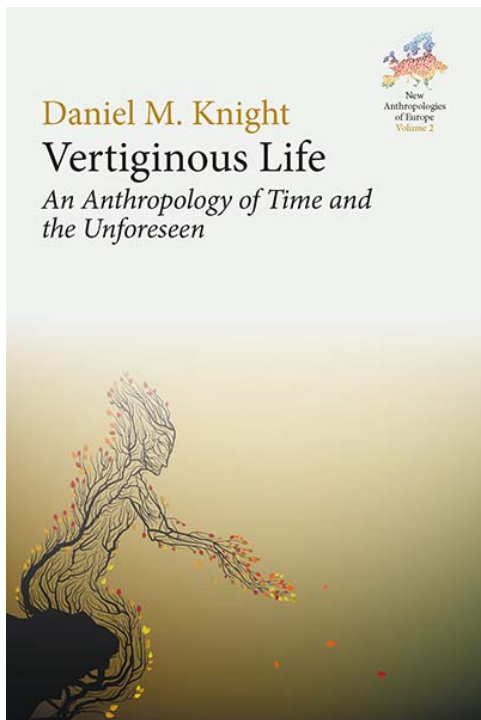
Tomás, A. (2022). [In the Skin of the City: Spatial Transformation in Luanda](#). Duke University Press



With *In the Skin of the City*, António Tomás traces the history and transformation of Luanda, Angola, the nation’s capital as well as one of the oldest settlements founded by the European colonial powers in the Southern Hemisphere. Drawing on ethnographic and archival research alongside his own experiences growing up in Luanda, Tomás shows how the city’s physical and social boundaries—its skin—constitute porous and shifting interfaces between center and margins, settler and native, enslaver and enslaved, formal and informal, and the powerful and the powerless. He focuses on Luanda’s “asphalt

frontier”—the (colonial) line between the planned urban center and the ad hoc shantytowns that surround it—and the ways squatters are central to Luanda’s historical urban process. In their relationship with the state and their struggle to gain rights to the city, squatters embody the process of negotiating Luanda’s divisions and the sociopolitical forces that shape them. By illustrating how Luanda emerges out of the continual redefinition of its skin, Tomás offers new ways to understand the logic of urbanization in cities across the global South.

Knight, D. M. (2021). [Vertiginous Life. An Anthropology of Time and the Unforeseen.](#) Berghahn.



Vertiginous Life provides a theory of the intense temporal disorientation brought about by life in crisis. In the whirlpool of unforeseen social change, people experience confusion as to where and when they belong on timelines of previously unquestioned pasts and futures. Through individual stories from crisis Greece, this book explores the everyday affects of vertigo: nausea, dizziness, breathlessness, the sense of falling, and unknowingness of Self. Being lost in time, caught in the spin-cycle of crisis, people reflect on belonging to modern Europe, neoliberal promises of accumulation, defeated futures, and the existential dilemmas of life held captive in the

uncanny elsewhere.

Allegra [review guidelines](#):

All reviews should be completed within two months of the receipt of the book.

We use British English (i.e. use -ise and not -ize word endings). We encourage clear expression and simple sentence structures especially if English is not your first language.

Word limit: 750-1500 words.

Font: Times New Roman.

Size: 12.

Line Spacing: 1,5



No footnotes.

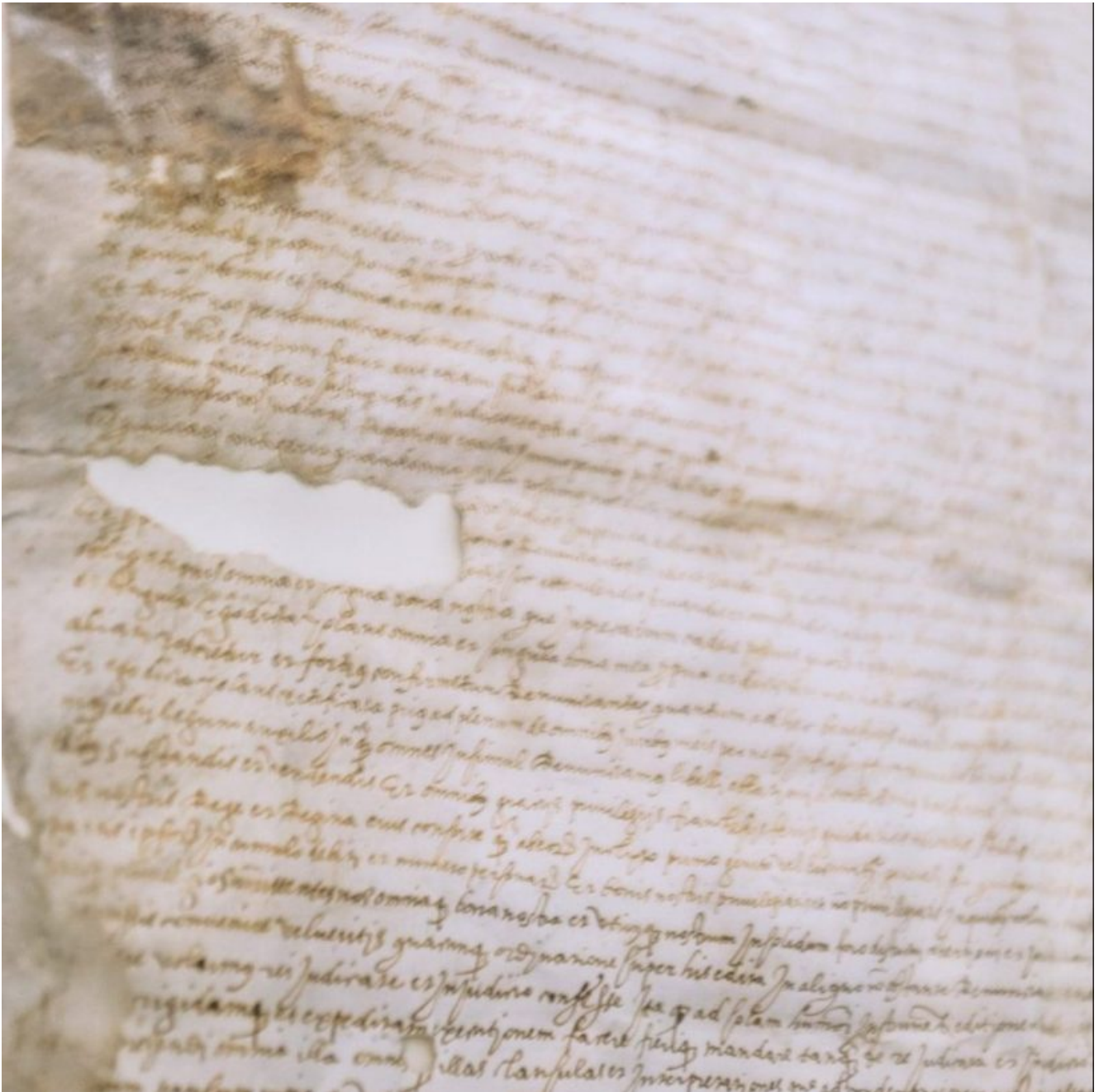
If you cite other authors, please reference their publication in the end.

When submitting the review, do not forget to include your name, (academic) affiliation (if any), a photograph of yourself and a short bio of 2-3 sentences.

Featured Image: Photo by [Abhishek Pawar](#) on [Unsplash](#).

On the use and abuse of networks in academia

Allegra
March, 2022



Like most anthropologists, we have been watching events unfold at Harvard University's anthropology department over the past weeks: [accusations](#) of abuse; [letters in support of the man accused of abuse](#), followed by the oh-so-predictable [retractions of signatures from that letter](#) of support after [the filing of the lawsuit was published](#); [letters in support](#) of the survivors; therapists handing over private patient notes to the university administration, and lots of hand-wringing. Like most, we are disappointed and outraged, but not surprised. It feels hard to remain



optimistic about academia when faced with the sordid details of the case and the apparent institutional complicity in hushing it up. It is not like this did not happen before. Abuse of power in academia is both long-standing and deep-rooted, and pointing it out is still usually taken as 'fouling the nest', with all the usual negative consequences for one's career.

Harvard is by no means a new or isolated case (nor is this a [problem](#) in anthropology only). We all know or know of academics who have been accused of sexual abuse, or of abuse of power and bullying, who are not only still in their jobs, but also publicly fêted by their former students and colleagues. Moreover, academic precariousness makes it difficult to speak up. The insidious power of academia and its [prestige economy](#) is precisely to keep us bound up in [relations of insecurity that feed and reinforce these hierarchies](#). We, too, have felt the pull of charismatic elders, the glow that comes from being among the chosen disciples. In other words: **We are made to [lean into our own abuse](#), for that is the price of receiving a degree, getting a recommendation for a job, forging a future.**

And so we watched with admiration and in solidarity all the courageous women academics who dared to speak up. Behind closed doors, some will doubtlessly say that the women who came forward ought to have had the wherewithal to withstand and rebuke their abusers (or [punch](#) them in the face). And yet, how many of us — women academics, and others whose bodies and presence in the world are maligned and subjected to scrutiny and violence because of their [gender identity](#), sexuality, ethnicity, [class](#), [health](#), or [\(dis-\)ability](#) — must submit daily to such forms of abuse because we have no recourse to the same power as our abusers.

If we only seek to take out the big wo/man at the top, it leaves the structures in place that put them there and continue to shield them. Tackling those structures means looking at how power and networks of dependency and obligation are woven into academic systems, and how we can collectively create new networks and structures less predicated on hierarchy and exploitation. If the problem is



structural, remedies must be structural, too. **The responsibility to redress the problem must therefore lie with all of us who work in, and professionally identify with academia.**

The 'all of us' is misleading, though — those carrying the fight forward at the moment are also the most vulnerable in this system: not the tenured stars who signed the initial letter of support, but the precariously employed. Again: hierarchies and abuse should concern all of us, but impact some of us more unequally than others. Also, while there's a lot of finger-pointing against US universities going on at the moment, let's not forget that stifling hierarchies, networks of dependency, and abuse of power are also rife within European academia, with even much less of a public debate going on (though there is a bit of movement in some aspects, see [#ichbinhanna](#) in Germany).

After all this, is it maybe too optimistic to still think of anthropology as a way of life? That if we practice a discipline which strives to be predicated on trust-building, that we can trust other anthropologists? That the careful ethical considerations which are never far from our thoughts in the field might also permeate our offices and classrooms? Unfortunately, we know that, often, the self-proclaimed radical leftists are the ones who get their students to buy them dinner, that those who shout the loudest about justice are the ones quietly removing graduate students from grant applications they worked on, or that they who publicly stand against violence against women are the ones firing their protégées for getting pregnant. Are we maybe too invested in the idea that anthropology should be a basis from which to build a better world? But if not for that, what else is anthropology for?

How can we contribute to form a larger, more resistant core, and create networks of support and solidarity, especially for those most vulnerable to (sexualised, gendered, classed, racialised) abuse? At Allegra, we address and embrace our Allies here on this platform through [care reviews](#), open calls for contributions, and collaborative ways of working together. We still believe anthropology can be retooled and remade, and become the vanguard of radically rethinking what



academia is and what it does in the world.

But beyond fuzzy and warm aspirational words of solidarity and support, what can we do?

We suggest three areas of intervention. Firstly, we need to admit anthropology has a problem with power and abuse. This reckoning entails investing in robust reporting and accountability measures, not only within our institutions, but our professional associations as well (we'll be watching EASA's newly formed [Integrity Committee](#) closely). It also means talking about cases of abuse openly. When controversy erupted on #anthrotwitter a few years ago in relation to the formerly open access journal [HAU](#), we felt the need to [discuss, analyse and reflect](#). That debate made it clear that dysfunctional and harmful structures had been entrenched that went beyond one 'problematic' individual. We need trustworthy whistleblowing mechanisms and public debate.

Secondly, we need to address the way anthropology produces knowledge. A start is reflecting critically about citation practices, as [others](#) have [eloquently](#) argued, but we need to start citing differently in practice as well. This might mean pushing back against reviewers and editors who demand proper deference to the canon, and it might also mean pushing ourselves to think beyond our 'go-to' references, and it will definitely take a long time for closed circles of citation to be broken, but it's vital if we are to break free from the rockstar academic cults that have arisen. Related to this, we also need to think about [open access](#) beyond questions of 'green and gold' access, and embrace the freedom and integrity that open access promises. This, of course, is also a struggle: publishing in 'high impact' journals is often demanded by university administrators and ranking systems. But again, the symbolic power wielded by a handful of journals is part of what enables power to be used unjustly in anthropology and beyond.

Thirdly, we need to change the way more senior anthropologists recommend those junior to them for jobs and grants. What the Harvard case has underlined again is the weight of networks and patronage, especially in a small field such as



anthropology (and kudos to [those](#) who [did the legwork](#) and analysed this properly). One particularly twisted academic instrument that ensures that silence prevails is the recommendation letter. Granted, at MA and PhD level a recommendation letter can help candidates with less linear academic trajectories gain access to study programmes they might otherwise not. But at post-PhD level the weight of obligations kicks in — a letter here serves not just to filter out ‘good’ candidates from ‘bad’ in a tightening job market, but it also demonstrates the ‘academic pedigree’ of each candidate and perpetuates networks of obligation and dependency — as exemplified in Paula Chakravartty’s scathing [account](#) of her experience at NYU. Our esteemed professional associations, EASA, ASA, GAA, AAA, and WCAA, IUAES, and all others, could discuss at their next meetings how letters of recommendations for (post-PhD) job hires are enabling toxic patronage, relations of dependency, and exclusionary networks that are unjust and constrain academic diversity — and even pass a motion condemning their use?

We need to keep asking the right questions and reflecting on this thing called anthropology, and the standards of practice, ethics, and care we should rightfully demand of it and its practitioners. We need a different anthropology. One that confronts abuse and abusers, that creates knowledge democratically, and that celebrates great scholarship not accrued fame.

We remain, despite all, radically optimistic.

Who gets to be ‘Myanmar’ at the ICJ?

Judith Beyer
March, 2022



The Myanmar military will appear at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague on 21 February 2022. Their main interest does not lie in defending the country against genocide allegations.

In the case of The Gambia vs Myanmar currently pending at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), Myanmar has been accused of having violated the UN Genocide Convention of 1948 by committing serious crimes against the Rohingya, a predominantly Muslim ethnic group. In 2017, 800.000 Rohingya fled Myanmar to neighbouring Bangladesh in an effort to escape the military's atrocities. In a clearance operation that can be compared to similar events occurring in the mid-1970s and in the 1990s, the army killed men, women and children indiscriminately and committed acts of sexual violence, torture, beatings, and arbitrary detention. The UN created an [Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar](#) in September 2018 that has since then amassed evidence of the army's atrocities. In March 2019, The Gambia, through its membership in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) [called upon Myanmar](#) "[t]o honor its



obligations under International Law and Human Rights covenants, and to take all measures to immediately halt all vestiges and manifestations of the practice of . . . genocide . . . against Rohingya Muslims“ . In June 2019, the country filed a case at the United Nation’s top court. When the case was opened in November 2019, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi had decided to face the lawsuit herself, thereby continuing a long-standing tradition in the country that aligns [her personal aura as “Mother Suu”](#) with the well-being of the entire nation.

The army’s attempted military coup of February 2021

The case did not proceed after the Myanmar military attempted a coup on 1 February 2021. That night, Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint were arrested and have since been accused of corruption, violations of the telecoms law, a state secrets act as well as covid-19 regulations. They are currently facing several years of imprisonment. The generals declared the November 2020 parliamentary elections as fraudulent and put a state of emergency in place. Senior General Min Aung Hlaing is now heading the country. But not only the State Counsellor and the President, but the entire population of Myanmar has been held hostage: since February 2021, over 1.500 people have been murdered, thousands have been [arrested](#) and 450.000 people have become [internally displaced](#), adding to the already high numbers of IDPs. Many activists, especially of the younger generation, have been forced into exile, others have joined the People’s Defense Forces (PDF), a newly-formed civil army that is now fighting alongside the already existing ethnic armed groups in this multi-ethnic and multi-religious nation-state. The junta has at no point achieved full control of the country. The nation-wide [Civil Disobedience Movement \(CDM\)](#) that formed immediately after the power grab is forced to operate largely underground as is the actual legitimate government of the country.

The National Unity Government

Members of the parliament elected in November 2020 formed the National Unity Government (NUG) while in hiding, now operating from undisclosed locations.



They have established working relations with many states and international organizations, including the UN, where Ambassador U Kyaw Moe Tun supports the NUG and has been able to continue representing his country even though the military fired and charged him with high treason. While the military regime has received backing from China and Russia, most other countries have cut diplomatic and also economic ties with Myanmar under the current leadership. The question of who is representing Myanmar in the international community is a contested one which needs to be kept in mind when the case in The Hague continues on 21 February 2022.

Trying to benefit from a genocide accusation

Historically, the army has shown no interest in complying with international legal norms. The “rule of law”-paradigm has been a particular red rag for the Generals. Still, the Myanmar military will likely send delegates to attend the upcoming proceedings in The Hague. At the same time, the National Unity Government (NUG) has declared that United Nations Ambassador U Kyaw Moe Tun is the only person authorised to represent the country in The Hague. On 15 February 2022, they even announced that the preliminary objections by the Myanmar state party in 2019 to the lawsuit should be withdrawn, thus encouraging the efforts to proceed with the case. They also introduced a new legal team of international legal experts that would work with the NUG and Myanmar’s Ambassador to the UN in representing Myanmar. But still now, it is unclear which side will represent Myanmar in front of the ICJ—the NUG or the junta. It seems more likely that the generals will eventually be able to do so. Fittingly, one might say, as they are also the ones directly implicated in the crime. However, for the generals, defending the country against the genocide accusation is largely a means to an end. In contrast to Aung San Suu Kyi’s appearance in December 2019, it will not be about personal aura: they will use this opportunity to conduct themselves as the legitimate representatives of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on a global stage. One should not fall for this trick, or not again: Already in April 2021 the military managed the feat that a general participated in an online-event of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), thereby bypassing the UN Secretary



General's own advice not to cooperate with the junta. Lt.-Gen Than Hlaing was understandably content and expressed his "[pleasure in having this opportunity](#)".

As things stand now, the generals are likely to appear at one of the key institutions upholding the rule of law internationally. The ICJ is one of the principal legal organs for investigating violations of the 1948 UN Genocide Convention, to which Myanmar is a signatory. To invite the junta to represent the country means to offer them the chance to use the court as a platform for strategic litigation where no longer the crime, but the performance of legitimacy will be key: When the ICJ reopens the case against Myanmar, the Rohingya genocide is not a primary concern of the generals. Rather, it is to be 'Myanmar'. The ICJ has a historical opportunity to avoid such an ethical, political and legal failure.

Who cares? Peer-review at Allegra

Allegra
March, 2022



At Allegra, we believe and know from our own experience that the fresh eyes of our peers can help us improve drafts, weed out waffle, strengthen an argument, and find new sources of inspiration. Yet we do not believe that the anonymity of the peer review is universally conducive to good academic practice.

Many of us came through institutions that inculcated competition and the struggle over supremacy in weekly colloquia; we have experienced how lack of care for others' work not only creates a corrosive atmosphere among colleagues, but also eventually alienates people from their own work: if you expect others to treat your work like you treat theirs, of course you will seek to play it safe, build in protections, and lose all sense of exploration, playfulness, and curiosity in your writing. In this collective post we'd like to introduce our readers, Allies and Allies-to-be to what we have come to call "care review".



Peer review and its flaws

The double-blind peer review system, the supposed gold standard of academic publishing, is, in fact, a relatively new system that became dominant from the 1950s onwards. One of the supposed benefits of the system is that it generates trust in the final product: we should trust that the work published that has gone through double-blind peer review has been quality-controlled by scholars with expertise in the field, who by dint of their blindness, would be *unable* to be biased or play favorites. Spelled out like that, it sounds funny, especially for a (still smallish) discipline like anthropology where the chances that, as expert reviewer *au fait* with current research in your field, you might easily identify the author(s) anyway.

This system also assumes that the only thing a reviewer could be biased about was the person of the author, and ignores the power structures that govern academic careers and scholarly knowledge production. Reviewers might guard the gate on other grounds (simple pettiness, or more likely their assumptions about authors' institutional affiliation, imputed 'standards' of proficiency in English, and, by extension, authors' race, gender, ethnicity, etc.). Another key problem is gatekeeping in the narrow sense: those best qualified to evaluate a paper might well also have the strongest interest in defending their expertise by setting up obstacles to others who might encroach upon their turf.

There have been plenty of complaints about this system, including that it is rarely genuinely 'blind', that the shield of anonymity tends to amplify negative qualities in reviewers (we can be really horribly mean to each other), and that terrible articles still get published (*TWQ*, here's [looking](#) at you). Peer-review can be extremely painful at times, especially for authors who have poured their energy and their heart into a text for months, sometimes years, and who find their piece torn apart by not-always-very-empathetic [reviewers](#) — so much so that the proverbial 'Reviewer 2' has spawned [memes](#) and an FB [group](#) dedicated to their downfall. It can also be painful for reviewers, who volunteer to squeeze these tasks into their always overstretched schedules, to be filed under 'academic



service', but seldom rewarded and soon forgotten.

Introducing care review (the philosophical why)

Since its inception, Allegra has drawn its inspiration from feminist ethics - you may have noticed the 'pink' colour that still dominates the design of our website, a legacy we are unlikely to jettison in the future. We conceived this space as a place of care and mutual support, principles we found radical in the context of the neoliberal university that emphasizes continuous but often [fruitless](#) competition and reproduces the dominant model of the lonely academic alpha (often but not always male) superstar as a result.

Blindness in reviewing often leads less to 'objective' quality control, but to some kind of textual social distancing in which we lose track of the people who poured their heart (and work and time and knowledge and passion) into a draft paper. An ethics of care changes that, we believe. Because care matters to us, we wanted to revisit the paradigm of double-blind peer review, and offer something better suited to who we are and our vision of the university.

This is why we opted for a 'care review' model at Allegra. The idea behind this is that we take away the needlessly negative and daunting aspects of submitting a text to an academic outlet - the stress, anguish and loneliness - and replace it with a constructive, open, and productive process through which both reviewer and reviewee come to feel emboldened and respected.

Nuts and bolts of care review

Any submission (individual post or thread) that lands on an editor's desk, and anything we think has merit and is a good thematic fit, we will either farm out to another editor, or provide some editorial feedback ourselves. Once a version of a text exists that we think is worthy of somebody else's time, we find an external peer reviewer, drawing on our own extensive networks, the assembly of former authors, or other not-yet-Allies, whom we invite into the fold by asking them to



review a text for us.

And here's the kicker: *author and reviewer will not be hidden from one another*. To work 'non-blind' means that people with related expertise and shared knowledge or approaches get connected, and that both have a chance to benefit from a genuine peer-to-peer collaboration, actively disregarding the hierarchies which are automatically established in a blind peer-review procedure, and not just — and this is important — between reviewers and authors, but also between authors and us editors: we'll not just send you snippets of what we think you should take away from the review process; we allow it to unfold on its own terms, without hiding behind formal procedure.

We feel that this is the best way to foster collegiality and trust. As anyone who has ever been in a trusting relationship knows that trust is predicated on vulnerability (on openness, on willingness to be affected) on all sides. We are able to trust our friends, partners, children, teachers and fellow members of the Allegra editorial collective because we reveal something of our vulnerabilities and foibles to one another, safe in the knowledge that we will not be demeaned, destroyed or judged. This has served us well so far, and we have had no complaints - and in some cases, we have genuinely stimulated subsequent cooperations between reviewers and reviewees.

Calling it 'care review' might seem a bit corny, but we are not too proud not to be corny if it is for the good fight. Yet, it changes the triad of publishing — author, editor, reviewer — into a collective, three people who are all invested in making something better. If you commit to do a review, you commit to care about the outcome, and if we commit to publishing something, we commit to the outcome just the same.

This, we hope, can also change the way in which reviewers view the task (and the feedback we get from our reviewers would confirm that hunch). Often, when asked to peer review a piece, we bury it at the bottom of a long to-do-list — teaching, marking, writing, descaling the kettle. When we finally open the draft,



we're already a bit annoyed that we have to do this rather than work on 'our own thing'. So what we are trying to foster here is a sense of mutual care for a piece. Care review should ideally not be a burden, but rather a (critically rigorous and serious) joyful and creative task.

Care review should ideally not be a burden, but rather a (critically rigorous and serious) joyful and creative task.

Challenges and open questions

At the same time, there is no guarantee that non-blind peer review might not also reproduce inequalities related to gender, race, institution, national/global positionality, the level of seniority, and other biases. Not all hierarchies constitutive of neoliberal academia are solved through non-blind peer review. Our experiences have been very positive so far, but the system still could be exploited by people acting in bad faith, or biases could be perpetuated despite increased transparency.

So, the final word has not been spoken about non-blind peer-review, but that is fine, because the main outcome is the emergent process itself and the kind of cultural transformation we think can result from it. The process is meant to open a genuine dialogue where the back-and-forth between author and reviewer leads to mutual enrichment, a change of opinions, and learning. By committing to non-blind review, we also want to re-open the question of what the genuine benefits of blind review are. Even if you want to continue with blind review, our challenge is that this practice, which can lead to so much dismay and frustration, better be carried out ethically, and in the spirit of an open, frank conversation.

Invitation

Imagine this: you meet the person who carefully reviewed your submission to Allegra at a conference, workshop, or when [dancing at the disco bumper to bumper](#). You thank them for the time they took to carefully read and make



improvements on your piece. They reiterate what they thought was unique and interesting in your piece. Through this, we may actually get to know who our peers are.

Featured image courtesy of [Михаил Секацкий](#), *Unsplash.com*.

Heritage out of Control: Introduction

Çiçek İlengiz
March, 2022



Stirring the debates on what is worth preserving, what is dismissible and what needs to be dismantled, heritage has become a hotspot for political discussions as well as academic debates. [The current debates](#) on [decolonization of space](#) highlight that heritage is not only a reference point for establishing or contesting shared understandings of the past and present. It also frames the possible futures that we dare to imagine. Those working in the field of heritage commonly share the understanding that heritagization operates as an upholder of distinctions that are key to modern governmentality. [Rooted in imperial, colonial and national legacies](#), heritage regimes manage the codes of belonging (Butler, 2006) by reifying distinctions between the secular and the religious as well as the local and the global. While critical heritage studies are growing as a field, analyzing [the tension between the official and unofficial attributes to heritage sites](#), they mostly concentrate on spatiality and materiality of heritage.



Focusing on the absences, affective dissonances and the silent consensuses, the [Heritage out of Control: Waste, Spirits and Energies Workshop](#) held in May 2021 aimed at rethinking the place-oriented, static and secularized notions that abound in debates on heritage. This thematic thread emerged out of four overlapping questions that brought the three of us together: Under what circumstances does waste become heritage, and heritage becomes waste? How does the intimate relationship between spirits and energies operate in relation to the abstract public that heritage presupposes? Can spirits, rituals, energies be imagined as heritage? What unfolds from seeking answers to these questions in relation to the focus of heritage studies on materiality and spatiality? Engaging these questions, we aimed to explore the beyonds and the in-betweens of the tangible-intangible divide according to which heritage has predominantly been categorized and kept under control by heritage actors as well as scholars. The workshop proved to be a venue to disassemble the illusion of control by exploring the destabilizing power of what we call the ‘undesirables’ of the carefully curated heritage space, namely [waste](#), [spirits](#), and [energies](#). With a focus on the ‘undesirables’, we aim to see what happens when the narrative of control is destabilized. Turning our attention to the potency of non-humans and matter, we intend to offer a perspective on heritage beyond anthropocentric as well as Eurocentric mechanisms that create the illusion of control. While our main focus on these ‘undesirables’ allows us to destabilize the official genealogies and lineages that bolster our notion of inheritance, we also attend to [negative](#) and [difficult heritage](#) to deepen our understanding of the multiplicity of temporalities that inhabit material space.

We start the thematic thread with an experimental blogpost by artist Vibha Galhotra and writer Fouad Asfour, whose work blurs the boundaries between text, image and performance. Wrapped in a story of speculative fiction, they engage with the pressing issues of today’s climate crisis and the endeavours of interplanetary escape. Their work revolves around the question of how today’s waste turns into future heritage and monuments. In her post, Anne Berg asks uncomfortable questions about the legacies of the Nazi’s obsession with waste



recycling and the neglect of these legacies in current Holocaust remembrance in Germany. Berg examines how waste-recycling was crucial to enable and maintain the Nazi regime, highlighting the intimate connection between genocide and garbage. With a glance at today's zero-waste movements, Berg has two warnings for us: not to forget the (global) system's reliance on inhumane waste labour and not to fall for 'green fantasies' suggesting that recycling would suffice to counter the climate crisis instead of radical systemic changes. Regina Bendix turns to the explosive legacies of World War II via unexploded bombs that continue to be found in today's Germany. Bendix examines how the temporal grounding of war-waste in the present defies its definition as heritage, rather than constituting an 'authentic' reminder of war and violence. She further explores how the unexploded ordnance disrupts the prevalent idea of having mastered and controlled the difficult heritage in challenging sanitized forms of remembrance. Katarzyna Kwapisz Williams reflects on the difficult experience of dealing with human bones in post-war Poland. Unsettling the notions of home and identity, such an unexpected and ambivalent encounter with the bones of the former enemy reminds not only of its lingering presence but also the blurry zone between waste and heritage. With an emphasis on the invisible death of people with disabilities, Leyla Safta Zecheria engages with the transformation of Orthodox Christian cemetery in Ruși into a negative heritage site commemorating the crimes of state-socialism. Revealing the limitations of the critical engagement with the past, she puts forward the continuing haunted legacies of silencing certain layers of structural violence by making others visible.

Disturbing the conceptual dichotomies that form the notion of the museum, Birgit Meyer illustrates the proximities between heritage and waste. Analyzing how Christian heritage turned into waste and discarded objects became worth preserving as heritage objects in the Netherlands and Ghana respectively, Meyer asserts that as a container category, heritage absorbs sacred waste. Engaging further with contestations of secular representation regimes in museums, Çiçek İlengiz's post analyzes the intertwined relationship between processes of heritagization, culturalization and spiritualization of religious places through the



case of the Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi's love pilgrimage. She reconstructs the link between inheritance and heritage by investigating the role of sensing in relating to intangible world heritage. She argues that focusing on energies that a material place inhabits assists us in conceptualizing models of inheritance that are not bound to shared geographical and historical references. Challenging further the regimes of musealization, Annika Kirbis traces the transition of pasts previously considered disposable to heritage. Along the example of the musealization of migration (hi)stories in Vienna, she examines the emerging ethical concerns and dissonances among the various stakeholders. Highlighting the limitations of an additive approach that aims to *include* neglected pasts, Kirbis argues for the importance to simultaneously examine established heritage narratives that have rendered migration (hi)stories disposable in the first place. Engaging further with the non-human actors in heritage-making, Adeline Masquelier's post examines how even a refused past can be inherited. Focusing on the destruction of a pre-Islamic icon in Niger, she argues that our understanding of heritage must make room for the ways in which the past is alive.

Mirroring Masquelier's insistence on heritage to account for ways of making the past alive, Eva Ambos shows how gods are brought to life through what she calls "heritage-ritual". The ritual, which is organized, mediatized and consumed by Sri Lanka's State functionaries for the blessing of politicians, materializes the otherwise invisible gods by creating a temporary space for them in *kohómbā kankāriya* ritual. Contrary to the assumption of states' standing interest in being ritually blessed, Mariam Goshadze's intervention demonstrates rejection by the state of similar rituals. She focuses on a 2009 presidential order that banned indigenous religious leaders from performing their usual libation and prayer during the national celebration of Ghana's Independence Day. Both essays demonstrate how a particular notion of state politics, religion, culture and history shape heritage (un)making. Nathalie Koenings and Paulina Kolata continue engaging with the non-human, albeit from a different angle. Here, indifference towards spirits and objects that were once revered sets heritage in motion. In Pemba (Zanzibar), jinns have become unruly free-floating spirits, yet are rooted in



history and materiality. Instead of looking at jinns as merely intangible heritage, Koenings suggests understanding them as matter - or even archives if, as she argues, Pemba's history can be studied through jinns. In Japan, individuals in rural Hiroshima hand over their private inheritance to Buddhist temples and thereby transform the objects' meanings and status as heritage. Kolata illustrates that heritage takes on a new life where what is individual becomes communal. Looking at what is out of control in heritage-making, our thread initiates theoretical, epistemological and methodological debates on materiality and spatiality that compels us to reconsider the boundaries of belonging that are reinforced by heritage.

Reference

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Feature image Lodhi Gardens, New Delhi by Vedant Mehra.

Heritage out of Control: Don't



trash my holocaust

Anne Berg

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It was an ordinary, unseasonably cool, summer day in a sleepy town just forty minutes outside of Berlin. Oranienburg once was home to Sachsenhausen concentration camp, one of the [second-generation camps](#) the Nazi regime established in 1936. In their first iteration, camps such as Dachau and Sachsenburg functioned primarily as holding pens for individuals kept in *Schutzhaft* [protective custody] and contained mainly political prisoners and suspect individuals interned during the first months and years after the Nazi assumption of power in January 1933. Only in 1936, in the context of rearmament and in preparation for conquest, were camps built as and transformed into labor



camps which in turn became central nodes in the political economy of the regime. Now, one finds *Gedenkstätten* at many former camps: places for commemoration, research and education. At the Memorial and Museum Sachsenhausen, I was sitting on a concrete bench waiting for the archives to open. I noticed an inconspicuously designed trashcan, built into the bench, tactically submerged and artfully disguised, yet visible enough to prevent the accumulation of visitor rubbish.

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The many sites of torture and murder that the Nazi regime bequeathed to the Federal Republic of Germany were preserved not to inspire heritageization, but *Aufarbeitung* and *Bewältigung* of a burdensome past. Since the first Historian's Debate ([Historikerstreit](#)) of the late 1980s, [rightwing pundits and politicians](#) have been critical of what they describe as *Schuldskult* or an obsession with collective guilt. Instead, they insist that Germans had done penance enough and often pointed to other genocides to relativize the Nazi crimes. My interest here is quite different. Rather than suggesting that Germans ought to be absolved from their responsibility to engage with the Holocaust, I suggest they might want to move beyond the rather scripted responses that characterize German *Betroffenheitskultur*. By forcing into view the trashcans of the Memorial and the waste regime that Nazism espoused, I suggest that memory has failed to account for some uncomfortable continuities that locate the Holocaust along a continuum of violence endemic to carbon capitalism, a continuum that stretches from the slow violence of everyday toxic exposure and labor exploitation to torture, physical destruction and indeed genocide.

History, much like the architecture at Sachsenhausen, is layered. The design of the [Gedenkstätte](#) is superimposed onto the structures of the camp. The architecture of the memorial follows a [particular design](#) - the barriers to our understanding that wall off history from the present, they are made concrete



here: cement walls become permeable to visitors who walk through the gaps. Carefully, meticulously, the Gedenkstätte is designed to elucidate the violence that took place, attempting to make it accessible, stacking shock against empathy. I am not an architect. I read structures as I read historical documents. Hence, I got stuck on the trashcan. Masking the mundane functionality of the infrastructure of waste removal, the designers of the memorial seem to have carefully thought about waste. The trashcans are visible enough to guarantee the conscientious disappearance of unwanted substances; they nonetheless blend nearly seamlessly into the Gesamtkunstwerk of the memorial.

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The camp, in turn, was designed to inflict violence, wall it in, surveil it from above and hide it from the outside world. Neither the bench nor the trashcan were part of the architecture of the camp. Both were built for visitors, to enhance the experience of a museum designed to frame the past and impart lessons for the future. The eagerly professed “never again” rings hollow in its germanocentrism. Historians know that history doesn’t repeat itself, yet somehow, when it comes to the Holocaust, some historians betray their training. As [Peter Novick](#) convincingly argued, to use the Holocaust as a benchmark and evaluate other atrocities as to whether they are “truly holocaustal” or merely “genocidal” undergirds the self-congratulatory complacency that marks Western democracies. This “[catechism](#)” is nonetheless eagerly professed and now viciously defended by what historian Dirk Moses refers to as the “high priests” of German memory culture.



Did the architects of the camp think about waste too? Those are not questions that historians are supposed to ask, nor is the Gedenkstätte prepared to answer. The horrendous crimes committed by the Nazi regime and a memory culture that emphasizes atonement for those crimes make it almost sacrilegious to talk about such mundane things as garbage. Asking

questions about garbage, I force into view some of the uncomfortable connections that firmly ground the Nazi regime in the history of Western-style modernity. I scoured the remaining physical structures at the Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen for cues of the former camp's waste management infrastructure. I spotted a little brick house for garbage cans outside the main wall, but inside the camp only the structures of the memorial give indication that anybody here has been actively concerned with garbage. Taking the inconspicuously designed trashcans at the Memorial and Museum Sachsenhausen as a pivot point, I ponder the presumed unspeakability of a particularly uncomfortable juxtaposition of garbage and genocide.

It would be redundant, if not grotesque, to have waste baskets on an active landfill.

When I looked through the maps and sketches for the camp construction, I found little indication that waste disposal infrastructure had been part of the design for the camp. There was no mention of dustbins in the barracks, permanent disposal sites or incinerators as were customary in hospitals and prisons. Designed to hold tens of thousands of prisoners at a time (ultimately 200,000 people were interned in Sachsenhausen between 1936-1945), one would assume that waste and sanitation infrastructure would have figured centrally in the planning; after all the



planning was conducted by a regime obsessed with cleansing and sanitization. What few plans of the original designs I discovered made no note of it. The sketches and maps (some drawn by prisoners) merely indicated locations for latrines and washrooms. Most camps were not connected to sewer systems; *Scheisskommandos* (shit-commandos) would empty the overflowing latrines and makeshift pits that graced the camp grounds and cart the excrement beyond its walls and barbed wire. From their earliest iterations, camps were imagined as rubbished spaces, sites for disposal, containment, and, as I will explain below, recycling. It would be redundant, if not grotesque, to have waste baskets on an active landfill. Rubbish bins are an unremarkable norm in the administrative offices both at modern waste disposal facilities and the Nazi camps.

As if to make up for the absence of waste and sanitation infrastructure inside the camps, the Nazi authorities plastered the camps and ghettos with exhortations about personal hygiene and *Reinheit* (cleanliness). Warnings about lice and admonitions about hand-washing graced the walls of the washrooms in Auschwitz. Never mind the mud-coated floor and the putrid water that was to save diligently washing inmates from certain death. As [Primo Levi](#) writes

The rites to be carried out were infinite and senseless:

every morning one had to make the 'bed' perfectly flat and smooth;

smear one's muddy and repellent wooden shoes with the appropriate machine
grease,

scrape the mud stains off one's clothes (paint, grease, and rust-stains were,
however, permitted);

in the evening one had to undergo the control for lice and the control of washing
one's feet;

on Saturday, have one's beard and hair shaved; mend or have mended one's rags;

on Sunday undergo the general control for skin diseases and



the control of buttons on one's jacket, which had to be five.

Unlike the Gedenkstätten, the Nazi camps were rubbished spaces, and managed accordingly. The presence of wastes (from human excrement over ordinary rubbish to piled up corpses) was an everyday feature of camp life - the camp a place to contain and disappear what the regime designated as "offal". What is more, most camps served as crucial nodes in the recycling infrastructure of the Third Reich, as the bales of clothing, crates of dentures and gold teeth, and mounts of glasses, shoes and human hair discovered by the liberating Allies indicate. Captured on film and in countless photographs, the piled-up stuff quickly morphed into illustrations for the scale and magnitude of the Nazi crimes. Their connections to what [I have elsewhere called the Nazi waste regime](#) - an entire administrative complex designated to extract, collect, and recycle material remainders of all imaginable kinds - were quickly lost from view and subsequently forgotten.

The Nazi regime had zero tolerance for waste. In 1936, Hitler placed the economy on a war footing with the expressed goal to be ready for armed conflict by 1940. It is in this context that the regime attempted to target wastes on a systematic and comprehensive scale. Recycling became more widespread. Inside the Reich, an army of volunteers collected paper, textiles, bones, and scrap metal; later, practices of scrapping and salvaging were readily put in place in the occupied territories as well.





Camps often functioned as massive waste-relay and refurbishing stations that would return “precious” resources to the war economy. Materials collected in the occupied territories were recycled by camp inmates. Prisoners sorted woollens and textiles, metal household wares, shoes and musical instruments. They disassembled used or broken machinery, separating the different metals according to their alloy composition, washed and mended civilian clothing and military uniforms, and turned rags into yarn and paper - they unrubbished the Nazi mess.



Accordingly, camps across the Reich morphed into sweatshops for resource extension. Textile and shoe recycling, both for “in-house” use and for export, were key industries in Sachsenhausen. When it came to

shoes, the camp commander took a “scientific” approach and subjected shoes to torturous durability tests in order to determine the effectiveness of various “improvements.” As [Anne Sudrow has shown](#), prisoners were assigned to a special shoe-runner commando. The prisoners were forced to test-march the shoes fashioned in the camp for 35 kilometers a day, baking in the hot sun or enduring icy cold and schlepping heavy loads along a circular track that mimicked the challenges the shoes would have to weather in quarries and mines, swamps and marshlands. Like the Scheisskommandos, the shoe-runner commandos served as a punitive assignment, reserved for those who were accused of theft or other



violations of camp rules.

Waste labor in and beyond the camps cemented the logic of a racist system. As [Joshua Reno insightfully argues](#), waste and garbage are not *only* ontological categories. Scat or other forms of metabolic waste provide the ontological basis for a category onto which wastes, garbage, rubbish and so forth are mapped. What qualifies as reusable resource and what as waste are the result of historical processes, of ascription. Waste is pushed into rubbished spaces. Trashcans and waste workers disappear them. Across political regimes, across modes of production and forms of rule, proximity to wastes codes sub-status.

What qualifies as reusable resource and what as waste are the result of historical processes, of ascription.

When I walk around places like Sachsenhausen, I can't help but see traces of the history the museum does not show. The modern containers beyond the grounds of the former camp complex only heighten my sensibility for waste. Just beyond the walls of the former camp there are containers for paper waste and receptacles for old clothes and worn shoes. The continuities are uncomfortable, but they are continuities nonetheless. I am not suggesting that contemporary recycling practices are somehow tainted by the fact that the Nazis recycled, too.

Instead, I see continuities of erasure and fantasy. While we tend to champion zero waste politics as progressive, waste management and recycling are inherently conservative practices. They preserve and reproduce the existing social order by removing and reusing that which would otherwise spill into our "civilized" public and private spaces. What is more, we continue to witness the [erasure of the waste workers](#) and the [constant violence of waste labor](#) - now not in concentration camps but in the informal and formal economies of recycling that rely on the labor of predominantly poor, "expendable" populations. This violence is both slow and fast as it powers [our green fantasies](#), fantasies that enable our continued overconsumption and our convictions that we are going to recycle our way out of



the current climate pickle.



Asking questions about garbage and genocide then is not about trashing, sullyng, or diminishing history - any history - but to help us navigate the multi-faceted continuities and ruptures that render the past both a foreign country and part of our everyday present. Asking questions about garbage draws attention to the processes through which systems reinvent and reproduce themselves. Asking questions about garbage and genocide underscores the historical *Verwandtschaft* between systems that rubbish on an industrial scale - whether they do so in a holocaustal, genocidal or putatively democratic fashion.

IMAGES:

1. Submerged trashcan (photograph by author)
2. Garbage houses (photograph by author)
3. Marker for shoe-runners-track (photograph by author)
4. Recycling container (photograph by author)
5. Containers for clothing and shoes (photograph by author)