Overheard and misunderstood: calling in as social media practice

David Leins
January, 2019

In the days leading up to the 2018 AAA annual conference, Allegra Laboratory

published an open call on Twitter for "a post on the conference, a panel, a discussion, or something you overheard in the corridors of the convention centre." Allegra was called out for this post by several anthropologists, one of whom was Dick Powis, a graduate student at the Washington University in St. Louis, a co-founder of Footnotes Anthro, and driving force behind #hautalk. The conversation that took place provides us with an opportunity to examine the ways in which anthropologists engage in social justice efforts on social media, specifically the practice(s) of calling in/out. As a communications professional who has worked on the periphery of anthropology for several years — as a web producer for *American Ethnologist*, a once-hopeful applicant to PhD programs, and a communications specialist at the Arab American National Museum — I hope to offer my perspective as a social media writer and an outsider, looking in. I am calling for anthropologists to add *calling in* to their social media practice as they work towards equity and justice in their research, politics, and careers. For an excellent summary of calling in, see "Calling In: A Quick Guide on When and How" by Sian Ferguson.

Following Allegra's call for submissions, the ethics of their request were promptly called into question. The reactions, though limited in number, were strongly worded condemnations of the final line in the tweet: "…something you overheard in the corridors of the convention centre." The tweet began innocuously enough, with Allegra calling for "a post on the conference, a panel, or [a] discussion…" Powis' response was part critique, part public shaming. The quoted tweet began with "Mind your own business," and was punctuated at the end with a simple phrase, "Gross." The question is, did Allegra's tweet evoke a light-hearted attempt to catch readers' interest, or, a blatant disrespect for privacy and consent? The reactions were generally divided along continental boundaries — North American anthropologists were calling Allegra out and their European counterparts were coming to the blog's defense. Like most conflicts, this one seems to have deeper roots than a single conference, tweet, or blog post. As one anthropologist told me when asked about the interaction, many North Americans find European anthropologists to be class reductionists who are less concerned with matters of

identity politics than their North American counterparts.

While public shaming is an effective tool for rallying like-minded individuals, it can similarly alienate potential allies.

> *Despite the difference between North American and European perspectives, anthropologists are still peers. Is the divide in the field so great that it is no longer worth a persuasive effort to critique each other without public shaming?*

If we cannot make a good-faith effort to practice healthy, productive debate amongst ourselves, how can we expect to challenge oppressive behaviors outside of our professional circles?

A key feature of calling out is that an individual with *less* power is holding an entity with more power accountable. Allegra holds power as a leading anthropology blog that is widely read, but its team includes individuals who would hardly be considered senior academics, many of whom are part of the academic precariat. Powis, though a graduate student, also has power as a co-founder and frequent contributor to several anthropology blogs and a leading voice on #anthrotwitter. If Powis' goal was to garner public support rather than change the behavior of Allegra, then his strategy worked well. It may also have further escalated existing tensions between some North American and European anthropologists. I wonder, however, how a good-faith effort to call in, rather than call out, would have affected the trajectory of the conversation.

The only way to know the original intent of a post is to ask the intent directly. In my experience as a communications professional, calling out is not an effective way to change the behavior of the person or publication in question.

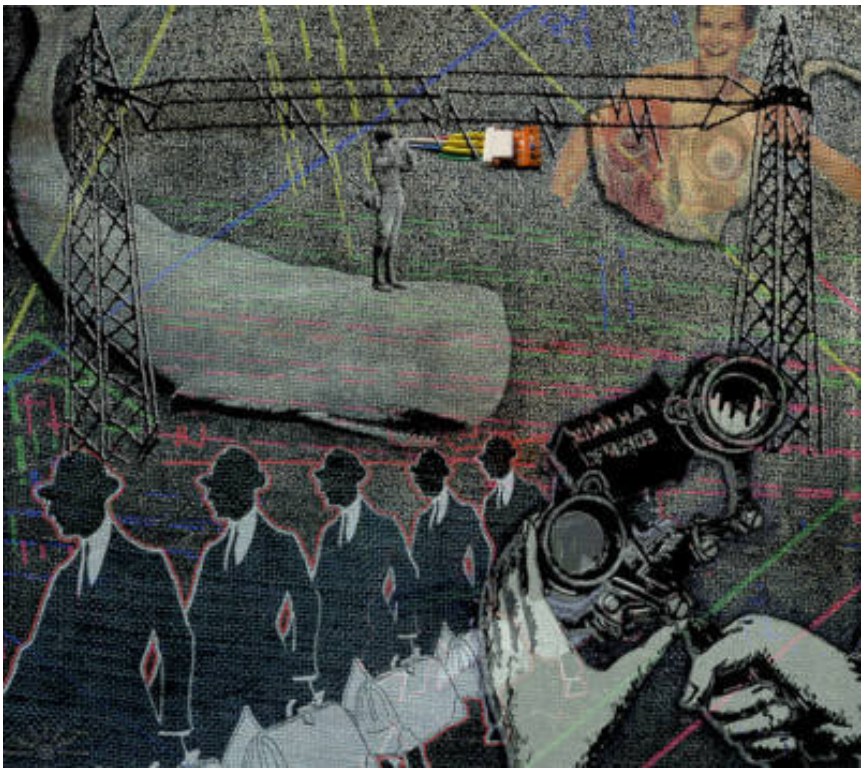


Photo by AK Rockefeller (flickr, CC BY-SA 2.0)

By the same token, Allegra had ample opportunity to respond in good faith and clearly state if their post did or did not mean what it seemed to. If their tone was meant to be lighthearted, but was misinterpreted, Allegra should have said so. If they *did* mean to ask for pitches based on overheard conversations, then they should have come out and said so clearly and definitively. Leaving the intent of the tweet obscured does not add to their credibility in the matter. As a publication that holds a great deal of power, and as the original poster, Allegra is responsible for all of its (mis)communications. Taking a defensive tone and side-stepping the core issue is not likely to instill trust or confidence.

In my work managing social media for the Arab American National Museum, I have made mistakes, often poorly wording statements in an attempt to either make a tweet more interesting or cutting down a statement that exceeded Twitter's character limit. When publicly called out in good faith, I found that responding with an apology and willingness to accept criticism did in fact bring the conversation to a positive and constructive conclusion. There are other times I

have received critiques in the form of direct messages on Twitter and Facebook. These efforts to call in often yielded better results than simply rewording a tweet — they also brought about small but important changes in museum policies and programs. My advice to any anthropologists who are writing for social media — as individuals or on the behalf of a publication — is to make a good faith communication effort *before* resorting to public shaming, and to respond to all critiques with humility and respect.

Though widely read in the discipline, only a relatively small number of academics write, edit or work for blogs like Allegra Laboratory and Footnotes Anthro. These blogs often serve as examples of how to produce anthropological writing that ties research to social justice in ways one cannot in a traditional journal. Those who are closely connected to this space hold power, and with that power, a responsibility to honor the diversity of experience among anthropologists.

> *When we give up on productive dialogue, we contribute to an us vs. them mentality, abandoning the real value in this online community.*

Embrace the differences, call potential allies in, and keep fighting the good fight. If anthropology has a place in social justice, it will need to make space for mistakes and misunderstanding. Please, when appropriate, call in.

Featured image by Elena Koycheva on Unsplash.

AAAs in the Anthropocene #AmAnth2018

Nayanika Mathur
January, 2019

This meeting was, for me, overshadowed – and somehow defined – by the #CaliforniaWoodfire smoke. I was flying in from smoggy, post-Diwali Delhi or what was in mid-November the most polluted city in the world. By the time I got to San Jose, northern California had achieved this dubious anthropocenic distinction! It became hard, from a certain vantage point, to tell San Jose and Delhi apart. Masks, streaming eyes, coughs, light-headedness, headaches in both cities. Everything was hazy and blurry. The smoke hung over the meeting as if

willing anthropologists to articulate what Tsing et al. have described as ‘arts of living on a damaged planet’.

If the Anthropocene makes us rethink place, then the smoke also showed connectedness. Delhi and San Jose are 12,401 km apart but they felt and tasted the same with their acidic air; the wildfires were over 150 miles North from us but we still were reeling under its effects. Smoke crept into the dystopic convention centre; arguably the worst I have ever been in. The exhibition halls, in particular, were sinisterly grey and vacant with no sound-proofing in the makeshift booths making us all straining to hear the presentations as voices boomed in from all corners.

But where was everyone??

Beyond that, there was a maze-like quality to the space where we hunted – through the smokiness – to locate venues. The city and the AAA felt empty. “Where is everyone?” was a question that so many people asked. Were the anthropologists not there (I doubt it looking at the number of panels and contributors in the programme) or was this an effect of smoke and space? The emptiness of SJ was compounded by a certain flatness in the air. In lieu of the normal buzziness/neurotic energy of the AAAs, it felt oddly depressed. “America is depressed” said a friend.

What was the trendy trend at this AAA?

What was the trend at this AAA? Again, something we all wondered about as we darted between panels and coffees. While ‘Anthropocene’, ‘affect’, ‘ethics’ featured prominently in panel titles and papers, I personally couldn’t identify an overt trend or turn at this meeting, the heavens be thanked.

The potential for a more politically self-aware

anthropology?

What I did think was most interesting about this AAA was how it appeared simultaneously depressed and political at the same time. I often lament how a-political anthropology can be; how pre-occupied with esoteric turns and parlour games it so often is; it's distance from messy reality and political changes. Much of this type of anthropology is predicated upon an active politics of exclusion – it can only be theorised and practiced by certain types of anthropologists and them alone. At #AmAnth2018 this entire edifice felt challenged for, in my experience of the AAAs, the first time.

The challenge, as I read it, came from distinct sources. E.g., it was reflected in the choice of Dolores Huerta as opening keynote; Emily Martin with her call for "a fiery presence of Anthropology" as the distinguished lecturer; panel by David Harvey on anti-capitalist thought. The @PoliticalLegal discussion on anthropology confronting its trolls and the graduate workshop on 'rumour and conspiracy'; discussions of anthropology outside academia; space was finally given to talks and panels on #MeToo in academia.

> *There was a very welcome focus on the craft of ethnography itself. Several fantastic panels on the limits of ethnography, the ethnographic effect, anthropology and wonder/imagination/boredom/time, etc. A distinct effort was made to rethink and strengthen anthropological methods.*

Some more experimental panels that approximated performance art such as the ones on 'Touch' where audiences had to touch all sorts of things and the @culanth 'Lights Out' panel that was conducted entirely in the dark and, I believe, included yoga poses, meditation & baby cries!

I attended panels that studied and queried the North/South distinctions and foregrounded the need to decolonise the academy. Some great panels undertook close analyses of perplexing native thought and practice in the North – e.g. US climate denialism and life in Silicon Valley.

Academic Precarity and #hautalk

There was much discussion on precariousness in academia & the ways in which higher education/critical thought is currently under attack. Almost every conversation I had with doctoral students or early career academics was tinged with anxiety about 'What Next?'. So many conversations with tenure-track Profs and tenured Profs were about the lack of support in their Universities. Most noticeably, women recounted disturbing tales that ranged from Title IX cases to toxic masculinity to the stubborn refusal to accommodate partner hires.

> *Of course, #hautalk came up constantly with a fabulous panel featuring all the people I only knew thus far as Twitter handles. Discussion focused on race, citations, elitism, which voices come to occupy the centre of the discipline and what we can do to radically change that now. With some notable exceptions, there were lesser manels than normal.*

On a more personal note, I absolutely loved the serendipitous bumping into of friends/colleagues who are now scattered all over the globe. I also met many grad students with thoughtful and deeply engaged projects. There is a peculiar thrill one gets in meeting authors of books one admires as well as discussing details of forthcoming books by sparkly young anthropologists. A whole new generation of anthropological scholarship is being born before our very eyes!

Overall, left smoky San Jose totally exhausted, but also with a re-ignited passion for anthropology as a discipline; a craft; an ethical mode of inhabiting this world; as potentiality. Signing off with what else but a #caticon from San Francisco airport where I flew back to the UK in a plane full of fellow-anthropologists.

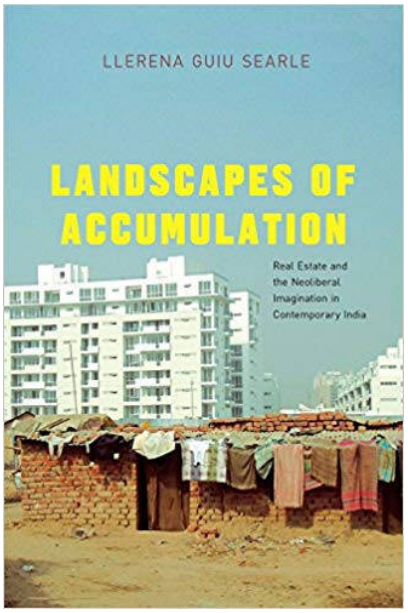
Featured image (cropped) by romana klee (flickr, CC BY-SA 2.00)

December Podcast Round Up

Ian M. Cook
January, 2019

All I want for 2019 is anthropology. In my ears. By way of a discussion with an author about their new book. I hope that’s what you also want for the New Year because that’s what we have served up for you in collaboration with New Books in

Anthropology.



Landscapes of Accumulation. Real Estate and the Neoliberal Imagination in Contemporary India
by Llerena Searle
(University of Chicago Press 2015)
Few who have visited India in the past two decades will have failed to noticed the sudden and spectacular urban transformation that has taken place in many of its cities. Gated residential complexes with tennis courts and indoor gyms, glitzy office buildings, gleaming five-star hotels, and of course air-conditioned malls have become ubiquitous as the new face of a "new" India, often understood as symbols of a long-awaited global modernity. Getting behind the glittery facade, Llerena Searle's new book *Landscapes of Accumulation: Real Estate and the Neoliberal Imagination in Contemporary India* (University of Chicago Press, 2015) shows that these buildings are not built to service consumer India; they are built for real estate developers and international investors for whom Indian real estate has become a profitable speculative gamble. Indian land and buildings are no longer local resources for production or use; they are turning, or more accurately being turned, into internationally tradeable financial assets. How this happens, by whose effort, and against what frictions is the story that the book tells. Searle shows that it is through the narrative of a rising Indian middle class that investments are solicited and a real estate boom created. Through ethnographic attention to the practices and labors of real estate producers, Searle offers an innovative, sophisticated and refreshingly human story of the making of neoliberal India, a story has ultimately shows that the new landscapes that are cropping up all over India are landscapes first and foremost of accumulation. This book will be of interest to readers in urban studies, economics, anthropology, and of course South Asian Studies.

Interview by Aparna Gopalan
Listen **here**!

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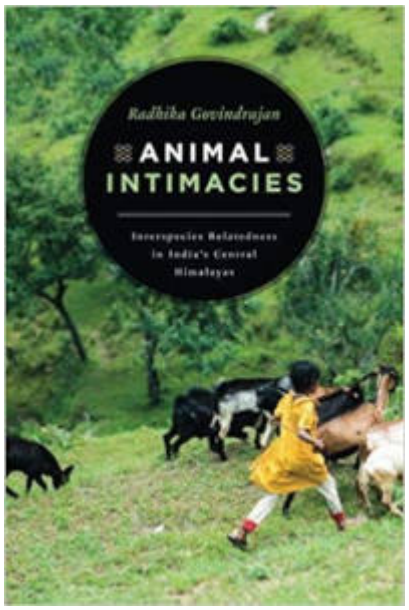

Animal Intimacies. Interspecies Relatedness in India's Central Himalayas
by Radhika Govindrajan
(University of Chicago Press 2018)
In what is sure to become a classic, Radhika Govindrajan's *Animal Intimacies: Interspecies Relatedness in India's Central Himalayas* (University of Chicago Press, 2018) mobilizes the thematic of "interspecies relatedness" to explore a variety of human/non-human animal encounters in contemporary India. *Animal Intimacies* is a path paving work that combines theoretical innovation and playfulness, ethnographic depth, and profound attunement to capturing the aspirations and tragedies of everyday life through the art of narrative. By exploring complex modes of relatedness that bind humans with non-human animals ranging from cows, goats, pigs, and bears, in such varied conceptual and political arenas as animal sacrifice, animal protection, the law, and sexuality and queer desire, this book brings into view a vision of love and intimacy that exceeds and subverts the colonizing grammar of often assumed hierarchies like human/animal, state/citizen, and love/violence. Focused on the state of Uttarakhand, *Animal Intimacies* mobilizes the theme of interspecies relatedness, with much aesthetic poise, to both uncover and bring into question the operation and cooperation of anthropomorphism, the insidious fantasies of modern state sovereignty, and the

enduring violence of patriarchy. In addition to its astonishing erudition, *Animal Intimacies* is also written with breathtaking clarity and lyrical panache. It will also be a delight to teach in undergraduate and graduate seminars on modern South Asia, theories and methods in anthropology and Religious Studies, Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and Animal Studies.

Interview by SherAli Tareen
Listen **here**!

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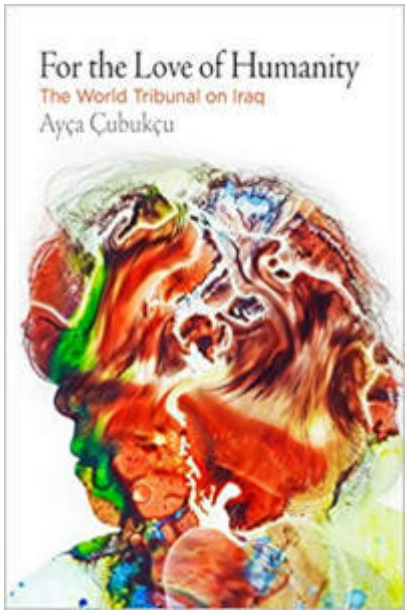

For the Love of Humanity. The World Tribunal on Iraq

by Ayça Çubukçu
(University of Pennsylvania Press 2018)
Harkening back to the tribunal on Vietnam once convened by Bertrand Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre, the World Tribunal on Iraq (WTI) emerged in 2003 from the global antiwar movement that had mobilized against the invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq by a US-led coalition. This decentralized, transnational network of antiwar activists attempted to document and give grounds for the prosecution of war crimes committed by the allied forces. Ayça Çubukçu's *For the Love of Humanity: The World Tribunal on Iraq* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018) is a remarkable investigation of the WTI, combining extensive ethnographic fieldwork with close readings of political and legal theory. Çubukçu provides on the ground accounts of the debates and discussions within the WTI, reading them with and as

examples of political philosophy in action. The book engages with urgent questions about the challenges and potentials of horizontal, network forms of political action, transnational politics across differences, and perhaps most fundamentally, with the challenges any anti-imperialist politics faces today. Through her careful, incisive analysis, Çubukçu convincingly shows that the language of law and global human rights was not merely cynically appropriated by those who pushed for the war on Iraq. Instead, in complex ways, the ideals of international law and human rights underwrote both the arguments for the war in Iraq and the anti-war praxis of the WTI. The book thus complicates any attempt to, as the author puts it, simply counterpose "law's empire" with "empire's law", raising critical questions about the relationship between law, human rights, imperialism, and cosmopolitanism. Required reading for those interested in the contradictions of imperialism and anti-imperialism today, Çubukçu's study attests to the promise and peril captured in the phrase "the love of humanity".

Interview by Kamran Moshref
Listen **here**!

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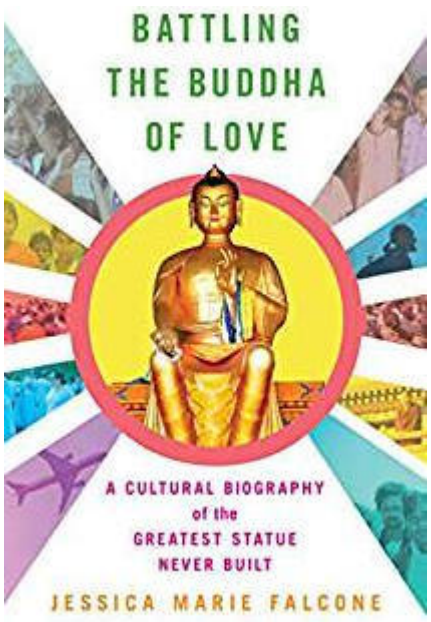

Battling the Buddha of Love. A Cultural Biography of the Greatest Statue Never Built
by Jessica Marie Falcone
(Cornell University Press 2018)
What can we learn from the anthropological study of projects that are never realized, or of dreams that are never fulfilled? In her new book, *Battling the Buddha of Love: A Cultural Biography of the Greatest Statue Never Built* (Cornell University Press, 2018), Dr. Jessica Marie Falcone takes her readers on a transnational journey to explore the history of a giant Maitreya Buddha statue that the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT) planned to build in Kushinagar, India. As the title of the book suggests, that statue was never built, as the project became mired in controversy and local opposition. This book traces both the FPMT's efforts to rally their transnational network of Buddhist students and practitioners around the statue project and the determined resistance efforts of local Indian farmers who were determined not to give up their land without a fight. Along the way, Dr. Falcone offers compelling insights into the concepts of temporality and futurity, grassroots activism in the face of a transnational organization, and the ethics of engaged anthropological practice.

Interview by Dannah Dennis
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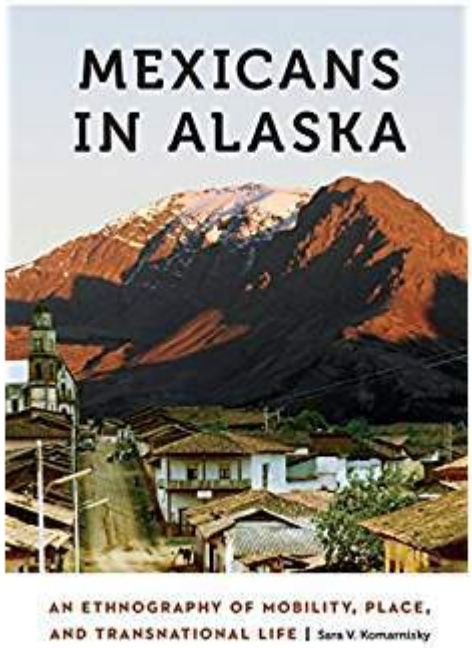

Mexicans in Alaska. An Ethnography of Mobility, Place, and Transnational Life
by Sara Komarnisky
(University of Nebraska Press 2018)

"There are Mexicans in Alaska?" This was the response Sara Komarnisky heard repeatedly when describing her research on three generations of transnational migrants who divide their time between Anchorage, Alaska and Acuitzio del Canje, Michoacán, Mexico. In her multi-sited ethnography, *Mexicans in Alaska: An Ethnography of Mobility, Place, and Transnational Life* (University of Nebraska Press, 2018), Komarnisky explores these migrants' experiences of mobility—across space and time—and the processes by which they get used to this transnational way of life. This engaging book offers a persuasive case for reimagining how we think about immigration, identity, and national boundaries.

Interview by Carrie Lane
Listen **here**!

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#EVENT: 70

utopia3
January, 2019

Utopia3 and the International History Department – Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva present:

70

On 10 December 1948, the 58 member states that then made up the General Assembly of the United Nations, adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.The Declaration recognizes the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

> *Seventy years after its adoption this document, translated into over 500 different languages and celebrated every year on 10th December, continues to be regularly ignored by many governments around the world.*

On 8 June 1949, English novelist, essayist, journalist and critic George Orwell published *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In it "Human Rights" become a lure of the imagination when a dictatorship suppresses the freedom of expression, by carefully monitoring all thoughts, by meticulously degrading all social ties, all notions of history and memory.

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights and 1984* are two texts of great significance for the second half of the 20th century and beyond; two texts of radically different nature. But they do have *a lot* in common: they have inspired many people who fought (and still fight) for justice and freedom around the world.

> *What would happen if we combined them? What shape would a reflection on the past, present and plausible futures take, then? And how might contemporary art in its broader manifestations, or pop-culture, connect human rights with the issue of denial of the most basic freedoms? How would art and culture experience and connect with these issues of crucial importance to all of us?*

utopia[3], a Geneva non-profit association set up a joint venture with the International History Department of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies with the aim of exploring these questions, their most obvious, surprising and completely unexpected inter-connection and mediations.

> *Together we created 70, a non-profit combined event scheduled for November 2019 at the Graduate Institute in Geneva.*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ri1WDvG8Ts

During a weekend, this event of a new kind, at the crossroads of academic research and contemporary avant-gardes, will establish a dialogue between human rights, art and pop culture, questioning the sociocultural, historical, economic and political heritage of the "human rights" concept. The program includes conferences, an exhibition gathering 70 unpublished works of 70 famous artists, a sales auction of the exhibited works, the inauguration of a new model of circular economy and concerts.

On 5 December 2018, the project was unveiled through the teaser, shown as part of the symposium "The UD HR at 70" organized at the Graduate Institute shortly before the conference given by Philippe Sands.

70 actively seeks participations, supports, contacts. More information: www.utopia3.ch

Featured image (cropped) by Mr TT on Unsplash.

Managing Ambiguity

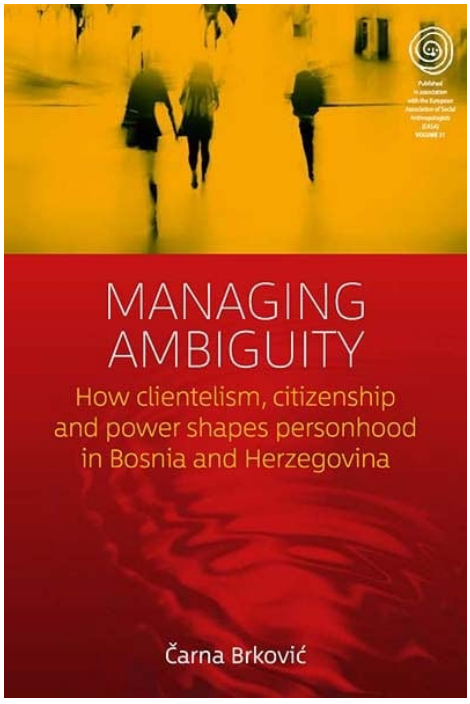
Monika Milosavljević
January, 2019

In her book, *Managing Ambiguity, How Clientelism, Citizenship and Power Shape Personhood in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Čarna Brković writes in a style comparable to E.E. Evans-Pritchard. The author paints vivid ethnographic scenes

of a border-town in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Her confident, clear style avoids any confusion, which is generally rare, not only among contemporary anthropologists, but also among archaeologists. Too often are texts overburdened with self-reflexive analysis, leading to a jumbled message. The clarity of writing in *Managing Ambiguity*, by contrast, is a breath of fresh air as it works toward reestablishing a seemingly lost confidence in anthropology.

> *Beyond academia, the book's general framework encompassing health and social care will be of interest to a broader public concerned with the states emerging from former Yugoslavia.*

Through the ever-present theme of civic vulnerability arising from the social transition processes after the collapse of Yugoslavia, the author delves into the history of social care in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and its subsequent changes. The author pays particular attention to these developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina. While the there are numerous reasons for these shifts, those meriting special mention are the rise of global neoliberalism, the civil/ethnic war and the subsequent presence of the international community in its context.



The rich social context of Bosnia and Herzegovina is the backdrop to the book's central concepts of "veza" or "štela". These are general terms connoting an informal network of personal and professional relationships based on social obligation. "Veza" itself literally translates to bond, connection, relation or tie, while "štela" literally means "a fix" in the sense of adjusting the outcome to be in one's favour. The words are used to describe a system of social connections used as a key to open closed doors. Among the numerous challenges of everyday life, this system becomes evident when "štela" is called upon concerning

matters of life and death.

Brković illuminates this phenomenon exclusively in the field of social care, but the mechanisms that she describes could be applied to other social fields (e.g. scientific communities). She convincingly criticises the often-advocated, simplistic and essentialist explanations about the reasons for the existence of informal instead of regulated legal frames in this locale.

Informal practices are often expressed through sayings: “That is part of our mind-set” or “We possess a raja mind-set” (of the popular masses) to excuse behaviour falling foul of idealised, formal civic standards.

Instead, she points to similar phenomena such as the Russian blat (exchange of favours) and, based on a Foucauldian approach to power, raises questions about the true functioning of “veza.” She rejects the idea, present in public discourse, that the problem of clientelism will disappear the day the Western Balkan countries are adequately transformed, modernised, democratised and neo-liberalised.

> *The book centres on the blurred line between the public and private spheres, in the transferring of responsibility from state institutions to the local community for providing social care.*

In contrast to the state that is, at the very least, expected to provide equal rights for all its citizens according to the letter of the law, local communities provide assistance under a more uncategorised fashion. In this manner, social care becomes randomized and unpredictable, where one person will receive care while another will not. In the process of providing care for the most immediate and the most vulnerable, the local community follows distinct norms, which the book’s opening scene illustrates:

Zoran, a man of about thirty years, is calling the emergency services for an ambulance for his father, who has suddenly become ill. Despairing that the

ambulance would not arrive on time (if at all), Zoran begins to shout at the operator: “Do you know who I am? Do you know what I could do to you? I can get you fired!” Zoran is bluffing because false threats are, from his perspective, the only way to ensure a swift reaction – as he has no “veza.” In a similarly intense incident, a husband brings his wife to the hospital to give birth, carrying a gun and threatening hospital staff until his wife gives birth – since he had not secured a “štela”.

These images are but a glimpse of the phenomenon Čarna Brković terms “moveopticon”, as derived from Foucault’s concept of the panopticon. The disciplining and supervision are transfused into a more oppressive state where constant motion is necessary to survive, or to ensure the survival of those we hold dear. The coupling of incessant insecurity and being the constant subject of scrutiny is, in brief, objectified through attitudes about “what others would say” in relation to one’s personal network of interrelationships.

> *The significance of a third person — others known through superficial contact — is remarkably well presented through instances of successful or unsuccessful humanitarian actions. Certain goals, such as receiving expensive medical treatment abroad or obtaining a wheelchair for a person with a physical disability, may only be achieved with sufficient social capital.*

In this environment, the sole determinant for securing social care is if an individual knows another who either is or knows “heavy hitters”. These relationships based on mutual reciprocal exchange only worsen individual distinction by hierarchy. Those finding themselves in a position of power over limited services or goods gain even more power when they are distributed, lawfully or not. Whether the powerful or the powerless are observed, the ambiguity mentioned in the title suggests blurred lines between the state and its society. The ambiguity itself is oppressive, which aggravates social inequality more than it does to stabilize existing relations of social equality.

An additional value of the book is its ethical dimension. The writing forgoes ironic

distancing while showing deep respect for the people it observes. As a result, it is a testament to how far contemporary anthropology has moved from the time of Bronisław Malinowski. An increasing ethical orientation in anthropology and often seeks to make research provide more for the well-being of the community where the ethnography was conducted. The "anthropology at home" Brković's book embodies indicates that ethnicity is not the most significant social vector in a post-conflict society. This in itself is one the more encouraging conclusions of the study. Ultimately, *Managing Ambiguity* is an intellectually stimulating ethnographic read, allowing for outsiders to access social phenomena unfamiliar to them and for insiders to be aware of a phenomenon they would otherwise be inured to.

This review originally appeared in Serbian in Issues in Ethnology and Anthropology, Vol 13 No 3 (2018).

Brković, Čarna. 2017. Managing Ambiguity: How Clientelism, Citizenship and Power Shape Personhood in Bosnia and Herzegovina. New York: Berghahn Books. 208 pp. Pb: 120$. ISBN:978-1-78533-414-6.

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The Privileged Discomfort of Border Crossings

Nida Kirmani
January, 2019

As social scientists our work often directly grows out of our personal journeys—journeys that are physical, emotional, intellectual and political. However, this is rarely acknowledged. This lack of self-reflection likely springs from a tradition within the social sciences of exploring 'the other' rather than thinking critically about ourselves. Historically, social scientists have been trained to distance ourselves from our research subjects in order to maintain a guise of objectivity, which glosses over the tensions and discomforts within our own

research. However, since the 1970s many post-structural, postcolonial and feminist critics have argued that this distance masques the role of power in the production of particular kinds of subjects.

> *More recently, there has been a growing push to decolonize the academy, which is coming mostly from younger academics of colour who argue that racism, classism and sexism still plague the social sciences at every level (see Smith 2012).*

The experience of crossing multiple borders as a researcher has led me to continuously reflect on the power relationships that are often implicit but undiscussed or even forcibly silenced within academic research. This contribution is a modest attempt to critically think through the tensions and moments of discomfort in my own journeys as a researcher and to consider what these experiences might reveal about the problematics of academic production more generally. In exploring how my research shifts and is received as I move across various borders, I reflect on the nature of positionality, the politics of shifting locations, the binary between 'the field' and 'home', and the intellectual value of maintaining a sense of critical discomfort and self-reflexivity as a researcher. These reflections seem all the more urgent in the context of rising xenophobia and nationalism within South Asia and globally.

Growing up in the United States, the question of identity was a constant. Like all children of immigrants, I was regularly asked, 'Where are you from?'. The answer was always a source of great confusion to me. Both of my parents were born in the area surrounding Lucknow, but my father's family migrated to Pakistan at the time of Partition, and my mother's family remained in India. After the completion of my undergraduate degree, I followed the clichéd path of spending a year in India trying to 'find my roots' by working at a human rights organization. I left India at the end of that year with a heavy heart and returned to the United States a few days before 9/11—an event that would profoundly shape the course of geopolitics for the coming decades, but which would also influence the research

trajectories of many social scientists including myself.

At the heart of every social scientist's research is some kind of personal trouble. In 'The Sociological Imagination,' C. Wright Mills (1958) argues that sociology can help one overcome the traps in one's private life. For me as well, the necessity to overcome the sense of being trapped by borders and boundaries, has been a key concern of my research. After joining the University of Manchester as a PhD student, I returned to India to pursue my dissertation research on the question of Muslim women and insecurity in Delhi. Having been raised in a Muslim household while living in the 'Bible Belt' of the United States, my project was driven by my personal struggle to understand the process of religious boundary formation. It was also driven by my quest to understand the cleavages within the Subcontinent that led, at least partially, to the Partition that had divided my own family.

My work was a conscious effort to dispute the politics of unitary identities being propagated by right-wing forces in India and internationally following the Global War on Terror by presenting a more complex and nuanced understanding of religion as part of a complex and unstable process of identity-formation. My project aimed to unpack the overdetermined category of 'the oppressed Muslim woman', which had been deployed both by feminist researchers and by various powerful actors including the British colonisers, the United States, and the proponents of Hindutva, in order to further their own agenda. Presenting this research both in India and to European and North American audiences against the backdrop of growing Islamophobia in India and in Europe and the United States felt like an important political intervention at the time.

After completing my PhD research and without the prospect of a job in India, I moved back to the UK where I joined an international research consortium as a Research Fellow. I noticed how my own positionality changed as a researcher coming from 'the West' when I visited both India and Pakistan. I was often met with suspicion and at times outright hostility by my South Asian colleagues, which is something I had not faced when I had been based in India. While this was

challenging and at times seemed unfair, I later understood more where these sentiments may have been coming from. My position had shifted from that of a student to a researcher coming from the 'Metropole' to take knowledge out of the Subcontinent and share it with a formerly colonizing government.

However, my position within the North American and European academy was also circumscribed. Several scholars have pointed out the racial, class and gender-based hierarchies that operate within the Western academy (see Ahmed 2012; 2017). While there were some exceptions, for the most part the power to control and distribute funds, make decisions about the direction of the project, and extrapolate from the data to inform theory, took place in the United Kingdom, while the gathering of empirical data took place in the partner countries in Africa and South Asia. This became even clearer when I was involved in another UK-based research collaboration later while I was based in Pakistan. Again, the funding and direction for the project was coming from the UK while the empirical material was being provided by those located in the Global South. In both instances, the assumption was that theoretical expertise is located and generated in the Global North while empirical evidence comes from the Global South. There was often a subtle form of racism underlying these projects, which framed people like myself as 'native informants' and brought in white 'experts', who were generally much better paid than those based in the Global South, for guidance (see White 2006). When the research consortium wrapped up in 2010, I decided to move back to South Asia in order to be closer to 'my field' and my family, but this time, on the other side of the border in Pakistan.

A year after moving to Pakistan, I encountered what would become my field site for the subsequent six years—the area of Lyari in Karachi. I first visited Lyari in August 2012. The people I encountered during that first visit talked about how Lyari had been maligned by the media, how people in Lyari were discriminated against in employment, and how the area was politically marginalised in the city. These issues resonated with what I had explored before in my work on Delhi, namely the relationship between urban violence, marginalisation and gender (Kirmani 2013). I have continued to work in Lyari since this time, unpacking layer

by layer, the complexity of social life in this area. My work has focused on how people living in this stigmatised territory (see Wacquant 2007) experience not only different forms of violence but also how they engage in the politics of resistance and enjoyment in the context of their everyday lives.

> *Chua and Mathur (2018) question the anglophone tradition and ask, who is the 'we' of anthropology, in other words, what are the assumptions that underlie anthropology as a discipline in terms of who has the authority to produce knowledge and for whose consumption is it being produced?*

While these questions concerned me with regards to my research in Delhi, they have become of greater concern to me since I began my work in Lyari and pushed me to think more deeply about who our intended audience(s) are or should be as engaged social scientists. There are a few reasons for this. Despite the fact that I communicated with my interlocutors in Delhi in Urdu, a large number of them were familiar with English and hence, at least in theory could have access to my research publications even if academic language is itself often exclusionary. However, in Lyari the vast majority of the people with whom I interact have very basic or no knowledge of English at all and hence are not able to engage with any of my publications. I also often present my findings in places where the majority of my interlocutors could not imagine visiting. Even when I do present my research in Pakistan, it is mostly to elite, English-speaking audiences for whom Lyari is almost as foreign as it is to someone from another country. While I am experimenting with different mediums in order to communicate my research and include the voices of those living in the area more directly, for example working with documentary film and photography, the distance between those being researched and the audience for whom I am writing often seems too great to overcome.

Furthermore, the problematic division between 'the field' and 'home' (see Gilbert 1994; Gupta and Ferguson 1997), was not as apparent to me earlier in my career. My research in Delhi followed the classic model of academics based in the global

North who work on the Global South in that I gathered my data and then left 'the field' to reflect on my work and write within the European academy. Since moving to Pakistan and working in a field site that is also located in the same city where my family is based, the notion that one can just leave 'the field' in order to write and reflect has become largely impossible. In many ways, this experience has helped me realise the problematic nature of the field/home binary upon which much anthropological research is premised and which obscures the power relationships between the researcher and the researched and naturalises an essential difference between the self and the 'Other' (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 15). The fact that my family home is in an elite area that is just a ten-kilometre drive from that of my interlocutors makes the imbalances in our power and privilege impossible to ignore.

> *Unlike the white academic who imagines they can immerse themselves in their field when conducting research but has the luxury of removing themselves when they deem fit, I cannot just leave and go back to a separate life.*

While cultural identity has been emphasised as the key factor that distinguishes an 'insider' from an 'outsider' academic (Narayan 1993), the experience of working in lower to middle income areas in Delhi and Karachi has also made it very apparent that 'race' or ethnicity is only one amongst a host of factors that determine one's relationship with 'the field'. In Karachi, class divisions often seem overshadow all other forms of distinction but are also intertwined with them. The reactions of shock and awe that I face when I mention that I work in Lyari or the patronising attitude displayed by those living in the 'posh' parts of towns towards residents of Lyari is a testament to the deep class-based divisions within the city, which are often intertwined with and reproduced through ideas about ethnicity. My experience working in a stigmatised area for the past six years has made it abundantly clear that the boundaries of 'inside' and 'outside' work in complex ways and cannot be simplistically defined along unitary axes of nationality or race.

Mohanty (2003) argues for a feminist practice that crosses and challenges borders as a political project. This does not mean denying borders. Rather, it means acknowledging 'the fault lines, conflicts, fears and containment that borders represent' (*ibid*.: 2). Being a cross-border academic—both in the sense of crossing spatial and social borders—I have had the privilege of experiencing a constant sense of discomfort. I say privilege because these uncomfortable moments of border crossing have allowed me to understand certain power relationships more clearly than I would have had I remained in the same place throughout my life. These experiences have pushed me to question my relationship with certain dominant academic practices, which are dependent on maintaining a boundary between 'us' and 'them', 'the field' and 'home', in order to conduct research. This boundary is premised on and reproduces particular arrangements of power based on class, caste, race, ethnicity and gender.

> *Despite the decades of reflection undertaken within the social sciences, much work remains to be done in terms of questioning these dominant modes of knowledge production.*

Reflecting on my own personal journey has allowed me to bring into relief the role of social and political context on how research is produced and communicated both between the 'East' and the 'West' but also between the powerful, who tend to occupy academia, and the less powerful, who are most often the subjects of our research. Such personal reflections are not mere navel-gazing. Rather, connecting the personal, political and academic realms in our lives and reflecting on our own discomforts is necessary in order to expose the uneven dynamics of academic knowledge production; in the context of a rise in right-wing movements within South Asia and globally, this is both an intellectual and a political project in that such efforts help move us closer towards first understanding and eventually dismantling the hierarchies and borders that aim to order and divide the social sciences and society more generally.

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This essay is an early version of a book chapter coming out next year in a volume entitled *Negotiating Personal Biographies with larger Social Forces: Understanding Social Scientists of India* edited by Achla Tandon, Gopi Tripathy and Rashi Bhargava, Routledge India.

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PETITION: Against 'Race Realism'

Allegra
January, 2019

Justin Oakley and Michael Selgelid
Editors in Chief, Monash Bioethics Review

Monash Bioethics Centre
Menzies Building
20 Chancellors Walk
Clayton Campus
Monash University

VIC 3800

Sydney, 20 November 2018

Dear Professors Oakley and Selgelid,

We are writing to you as the Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association to express concern about the publication in the *Monash Bioethics Review* of an article entitled 'Defending Eugenics' by Jonathan Anomaly.

> *In our view, this article normalizes a practice that has been, and continues to be, associated with the discipline and punishment of racialised people since the 19th century when it was first suggested by Francis Galton, a 'race scientist' whose 'spirit' the author wishes to 'reclaim' in the interests of reducing the 'consequences of people reproducing at random.'*

The author attempts to avoid the charge of racism by arguing that the virtues of eugenics should not be tempered by the ends to which these ideas were put by the Nazis during the Holocaust. There are a number of problems with this proposition which we would like to outline:

1. It is impossible to dissociate an idea from the context in which it emerged and the practices which it led to. The very idea of manipulating the population in order to attempt to facilitate a 'eugenic utopia' comes to fruition within the context of European colonialism, and the increased power of European states to quantify and manage populations. The main targets were the poor, the disabled and those considered racially 'inferior'.
2. Anomaly's discussion of the Holocaust attempts to avoid racism by making the argument that it was 'dysgenic' to eliminate the Jews as 'arguably among the most intelligent and productive people of the twentieth century.' Such an argument, while attempting to avoid racism, still

operates with racially essentialist terms by generalizing about all Jews; it is notable too that Jews of colour are omitted from Anomaly's claims.

3. Anomaly clearly believes in race differences, arguing that it was only the 'the racist direction the eugenics movement took in the United States and Germany' that led scientists to 'deny that races exist.' It is our contention that it is impossible to disentangle the belief that the human population can be divided into so-called races from the injustices that continue to be associated with that belief. And in the specific case of the article, it is impossible, to argue that races exist while claiming that one's proposal to introduce eugenics into policy making is not racist.
4. Eugenic practices of the type discussed by Anomaly in the paper, are still in practice. The author believes that the language of eugenics was merely used to mask the 'morally abhorrent policies and pseudo-scientific claims' of the Nazis. However, eugenics principles were applied much more widely than that. In our context here in Australia, the Eugenics Society of Victoria was in operation until 1961. The practice of removal of Aboriginal children, which is still ongoing, reaching unprecedented levels today, has its roots in eugenics as its ultimate aim was the control of the Aboriginal population. The practices of forced sterilisation are still in use against Indigenous women in Canada for example. Dorothy Roberts has documented the extent to which the US welfare system has been restructured to inhibit the reproductive freedoms of poor Black women (https://penntoday.upenn.edu/research/revisiting-killing-the-black-body-20-years-later). Therefore, the policy proposals, presented by Anomaly, to improve what he calls the troubling 'current demographics of Western countries' are not mere hypotheticals.
5. In fact, Anomaly makes clear what troubles him when he remarks that pronatalist policies put in place by the Swedish state have resulted in higher births among those of Somali origin rather than 'native-born Swedes.' He also makes reference to 'impulse control' as hereditary, an argument also made by the conservative US publication, The National Review, which argued that Black children had less impulse control than

white children, thus justifying their exclusion from school. Therefore he cannot claim that racism does not motivate his argument.

At a time when so-called ‘race realism’ is booming, despite being thoroughly debunked by the great majority of scientists, the scholarly community must take responsibility for the ideas it endorses. There are serious questions to be answered about how an article that proposes that ‘future people would be better off if people with heritable traits that we value had a greater proportion of children’ passed peer review.

> *It is our view that there is absolutely no way of separating the notion of there being ‘more valuable heritable traits’ from the fact that modern western societies have associated value with whiteness, abled-bodiedness and prosperity to the detriment of racialised people, the disabled and the poor.*

We seem to have entered a phase in academia and public life where debate for its own sake has trumped any commitment to the principle of protecting those most vulnerable and creating the conditions for a more just society for all. As critical race scholars who are only too painfully aware of the practices to which ideas of race have been put, we suggest that it is never the time for an article that defends eugenics to be published in a reputable international scientific journal.

We hope that you will consider this letter and take the necessary steps to address the processes of peer review that led to this misguided decision.

Yours sincerely on behalf of the Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association

Alana Lentin
Associate Professor, Western Sydney University and ACRAWSA President (2017-19).

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Off the Beaten Track in Malta, Maritime Ethnographies and More

Allegra
January, 2019

The year is nearing it’s end, so now is as good a time as ever to start thinking about what to do in 2019. Whether you plan on going ‘off the beaten track’ in Malta raving about motorbikes among other things or you’re more of a boat person, security and morality will no doubt be high on your research agendas! Before switching off for the Christmas holidays, do consider attending the EHESS symposium on doing ethnography in the US.

As always, if you want your event to feature in our next events list or if you wish

to write a short report, don't hesitate to get in touch with our events assistant at events@allegralaboratory.net

Symposium: Les Etats-Unis comme terrain ethnographique

14 décembre 2018, EHESS, salle M. & D. Lombard
96 bd Raspail, Paris

Omniprésents dans le monde contemporain, objet d'attraction et de répulsion, saturés de stéréotypes, les Etats-Unis demeurent pourtant un objet d'étude en marge des sciences sociales. En dépit de la position hégémonique des anthropologues américains, ils sont de fait un « centre » déserté par l'anthropologie française et plus largement européenne. Cette journée d'étude invite à dépasser cette défection en réunissant des anthropologues et des sociologues étatsuniens travaillant sur les Etats-Unis avec deux objectifs : engager une réflexion sur la place des Etats-Unis comme terrain ethnographique ; offrir l'occasion aux étudiants qui souhaitent se spécialiser sur les Etats-Unis de participer à un débat sur les enjeux, les problématiques et les pratiques de l'anthropologie nord-américaine.[more]

La journée se déroulera en anglais.

Scholarship Call: [Off The Beaten Track: Summer School for Anthropologists]

Summer 2019, Gozo, Malta

This call is aimed at budding researchers with creative and open minds towards the challenges of applied research.

We offer a unique learning opportunity in a multidisciplinary research project on the isle of Gozo, Malta. Expeditions and the University of Leuven offer a 20.000 euro (±24,000 USD or ±160.000 CNY) scholarship fund to cover part or all of the tuition fee for the 2019 Malta Summer School. Scholarships are granted on a competitive basis, based on a research proposal.
Call directed at

- Undergraduate and graduate students
- PhD students
- Everyone with a genuine interest in cultural anthropology
- Previous participants of the project

Selection is not based on academic merit, originality or complexity. We aim for enthusiasm, dedication and creativity. In the past years also students who were not enrolled in an anthropology program received scholarships for the project. [more]
Deadline for application: 5 January 2019

Conference: Security and Morality: Critical Anthropological Perspectives

EASA Anthropology of Security Network

28-29 March 2018, University of Oslo, Norway

Security is omnipresent in today's politics and media; we are bombarded with images and narratives of proliferating internal and external security threats, conflicts, destabilization of international relations, chaos, and disorder. Many of these striking cultural products of the current politics of fear serve to legitimize new modes of surveillance, expansions of military and other policies in the name of security. 'Anthropology's concern with global/local articulations as well as its case-study approach, cross-cultural comparative engagement, and emphasis on the intersections of discourse and practice in specific historicized contexts … uniquely position anthropology to contribute to a critical study of security' (Goldstein 2010: 489). But anthropology also has a solid track record in dealing with issues of morality and ethics, especially over the last decade and is thus well suited to critically engage with the intersections of morality and security.

This conference sets out to investigate (1) the significance of diverse moral legitimizations and constructions of moral authority in security discourses and practices, (2) the lived experiences of morality and ethics related to security (Feldman 2016), (3) different forms of 'securitization of moral values' (Østbø 2017), and (4) the ethical problems related to anthropologists' own involvement in security institutions and to the larger structures of funding of anthropological research for security. This conference thus brings together the critical anthropology of security (Schwell and Eisch-Angus 2018, Goldstein 2010, Maguire et al. 2014) and anthropology of moralities, while also inviting others, from neighboring disciplines such as history, cultural studies or political science working on the same questions to join into the debate. [more]

Deadline for application: 10 January 2019

Workshop: [Maritime Missions: Religion, Ethnography and Empires in the Long Eighteenth Century]

May 24-25, 2019, German Historical Institute (GHI), Washington DC

“Maritime Missions” seeks to build on a recent upsurge in maritime history, today one of the most vibrant and multifaceted fields in historical research. Critical revisions in this field have brought the cultural historical perspective to the fore, highlighted the relevance of the maritime even to hinterland communities, engaged with postoonial analysis of maritime empires, and embraced interdisciplinary cross-pollination. While rich studies have onceptualized oceanic regions like the Méditerranée, the Black Atlantic, or the Pacific Sea of Islands as discrete but interlinked, this conference also seeks to explore the fluidity *between* these regions. Specifically, we will investigate how imperial maritime exploration, transoceanic networks, and global missions fostered the study of ethnography and race, and will also engage recent history of science scholarship that emphasizes globalization and encounters with and awarness of non-Western indigenous knowledge and cultures. In focusing on the emergence of ethnography out of religious as well as scientific missions in the imperial maritime world, the workshop will also contribute to the ongoing reevaluation of the role of religion in the Enlightenment, pushing back on residual resistance to bringing them together under the same analytic lens.[more]

Deadline for application: 30 January 2019

Workshop: A European Perspective on War Disability in the Twentieth Century

28 June 2019 – 29 June 2019, University of Siegen, Germany

The topic of war injuries increasingly becomes a subject of historical research. In the light of only a few recent examples – the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s, the Golf Wars, or the current 'war against terror' – the need for an historical interpretation of the effects of military conflicts on the countries involved seems to grow. The questions regarding the strategies of dealing with and compensating disabled veterans is of growing public interest, as the current debates about PTSD (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder) show.

With this in mind, the workshop sets out to discuss the meaning of disabled veterans subject to physical and/or mental injuries for the history of modern European societies. The workshop aims to combine different research perspectives. Possible topics are discourses on war disability, individual or collective experiences of suffering, or questions regarding the politics of welfare and compensation. Contributions which offer a methodological/conceptual approach to the topic are just as welcome as comparative or transnational perspectives or analyses of specific cases. [More]

Deadline for application: 31 January 2019

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Secular Powers and Heretic Undercurrents in a God-Fearing Part of the World

Samuli Schielke
January, 2019

We live in a world where the secularisation thesis has been proven wrong, where modernities more often than not are enchanted, and paths of striving in this world involve commitment to God or gods and the expectation of an afterlife in another world. At this particular moment, anthropology has become increasingly aware of the peculiar, exceptional nature of secularism.

> *Far from being a natural absence of religion, secularism strikes as a rather special way to live in the world and understand it. It requires explanation, and should not be taken for granted.*

A critical study of secularism has thus become a way to address both subtle and brutal relations of power in the contemporary world, also in places that might at first not seem so secular, such as Egypt and the Middle East. But like all academic concepts (and especially those that come with the appealing aura of critically questioning hegemonic power), also critical theories of the secular need to be scrutinised against an empirical question: To what degree and how is it useful to talk about experience, politics, moral struggles in a God-fearing place like Egypt in terms of secularism, secularity or the secular? And where do these words fall short of their capacity to understand whatever is going on?

In this lecture, I bring together my fieldwork in Egypt and critical anthropologies of the secular, and argue that thinking about secularism as a form of discursive power that promotes specific subjectivities can provide a useful but only partial understanding of various developments regarding state power, faith, and imagination that are going on in a God-fearing part of the world.

Rather than trying to think them through the somewhat mystifying entity of "the secular", I suggest that they may be understood in a clearer way as different shapes of the relationship between humans and God. Some of these shapes correspond to a binary model that oppose Islamic and secular-liberal traditions as distinct, mutually exclusive regimes; and some of them do not.

> *I propose to add to the theme of secularism a more complex landscape of heresies and imaginative explorations that either unsettle a tradition from within, or that have different concerns altogether.*

Michael Jackson (2011: xii) has argued that the sense that "there is more to life than what exists for us in the here and now" is probably a universal constituent of

a meaningful life: an excess of human imagination and energy that keeps us striving for more than we need for survival, for other and better things than are available. But that excess is never unlimited. Yes, contrary to what Michel Foucault famously argued, there *is* an outside of discourse. But it is not a free, unrestricted, unlimited outside. They are relative outsides in the sense of a finite margin and surplus, a shadow or perhaps better, a halo of imaginative excess that accompanies all discourses or traditions that try to produce authoritative correct readings and practices.

This is the transcript of a keynote lecture I gave at the Secularity and Nonreligion Research Network conference at King's College in London on 5 July 2018. The lecture was based on scattered hand-written notes; there was no original paper to read from. I have therefore decided to share it in its original shape as a lecture. I have removed from the transcript filler words, ellipses and repetitions that are not relevant for the substance of the argument. Where necessary, I have added clarifications or corrections in [*square brackets*]*. My thanks go to Stacey Gutkowsky for organising and chairing the lecture, Diana Gluck and Nico Putz for transcribing the sound recording, Bassem Abu Gweily for allowing me to use his poem and correcting my translation of it, and Muhammad Saad Shehata for expertise regarding the work of Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd.*

[pdf-embedder url="http://allegralaboratory.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/KEYNOTE_Schielke-2018.pdf" title="KEYNOTE_Schielke 2018"]

Download the full lecture.

You can listen to the original recording here: https://soundcloud.com/user-501636273/samuli-keynote-mixdown

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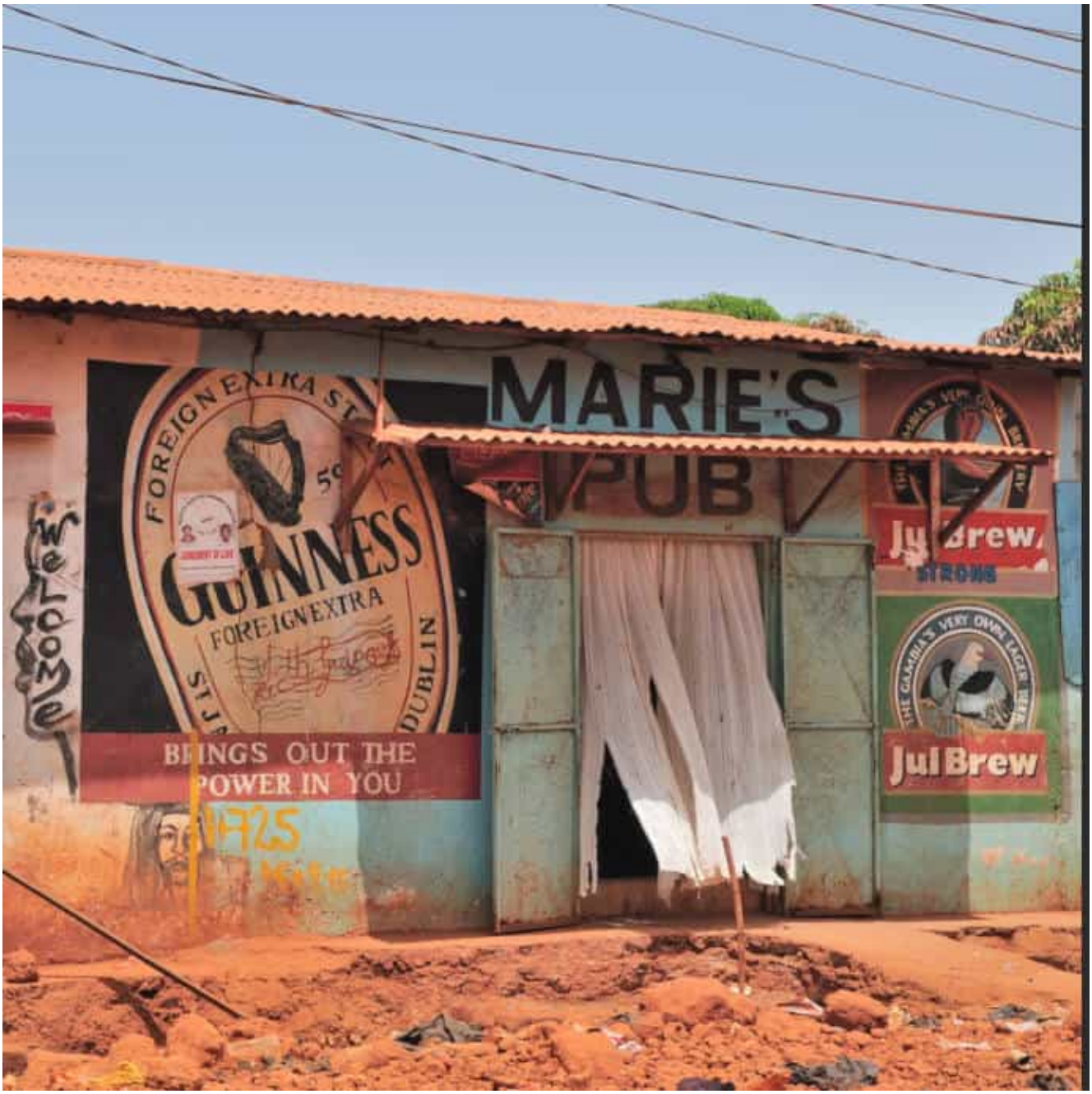
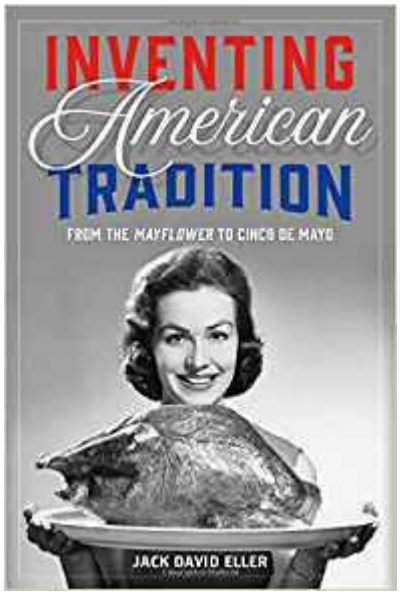
Podcast Interview Round Up: The Best of November

Allegra
January, 2019



It’s getting cold (in some parts of the world) and, as we all know, the best thing for keeping ears warm is anthropology. Don’t have an anthropologist on hand to talk to you? Bored of the anthropologists you already have and looking for someone new? Well, today is your lucky day. Along with New Books in Anthropology, we bring you some new and old anthropologists talking about their new books.



Inventing American Tradition: From the Mayflower to Cinco de Mayo

by Jack David Eller

(Reaktion books 2018)

Americans gathering for Thanksgiving this week may assume they are continuing an unbroken chain of tradition that traces directly back to Massachusetts settlers in 1620. In fact, many of our most cherished Thanksgiving traditions are far more recent, and some are at odds with the historical record. When you examine various American traditions through the eyes of a historian and a cultural anthropologist, the gap between myth and fact can be vast. But that gap is instructive in revealing what Americans believe about ourselves. This is what Jack David Eller contends in *Inventing American Tradition: From the Mayflower to Cinco de Mayo* (Reaktion Books, 2018).

Interview by Nathan Biema

Listen **here**!

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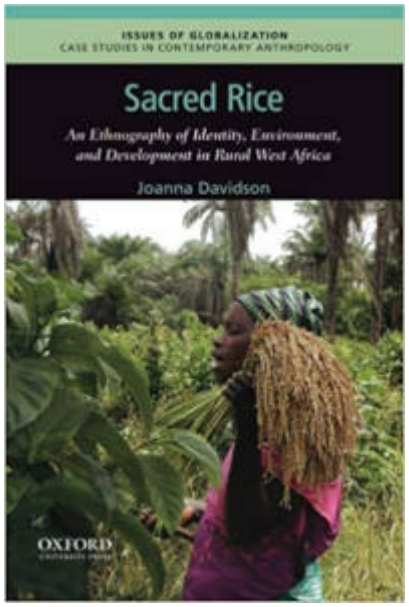

[Sacred Rice: An Ethnography of Identity, Environment, and Development in Rural West Africa]
by Joanna Davidson
(Oxford University Press 2015)

Sacred Rice: An Ethnography of Identity, Environment, and Development in Rural West Africa (Oxford University Press, 2015) is a book about change. The Jola, a people living in Guinea-Bissau, have long cultivated rice and formed their social identity around its growth, but recent changes in climate, economic, political and social circumstances have rendered this a precarious existence. As a result, individuals from the village where Prof. Joanna Davidson has spent years conducting in-depth ethnographic fieldwork have been forced to integrate not just the outside world, but changes in their own society. How these changes have affected them and how they have dealt with them, along with what this means in terms of our thinking about development theory and social change in general, form the major theme of this excellently researched book that tells us about the history of rice in Africa, West Africa generally and about a village in particular.

We'll talk to her about how she found the village where she did her work, how she became interested in the topic, what the Jola as a people are like, the changes they are experiencing as well as what we might learn about the Jola and even ourselves.

Interview by Jeffrey Bristol
Listen **here**!

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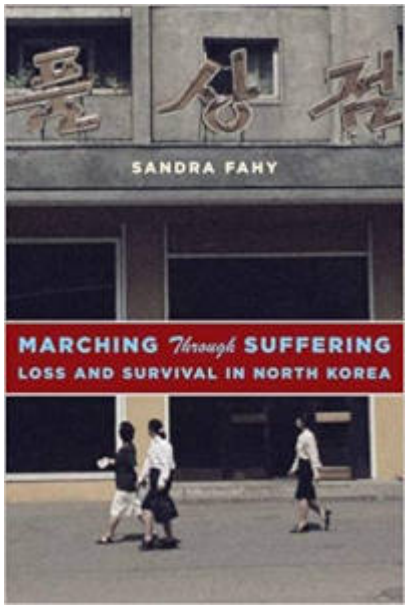

Marching Through Suffering: Loss and Survival in North Korea
by Sandra Fahy
(Columbia University Press 2015)

Amidst an atmosphere of hope on the Korean Peninsula over the past year, questions over the wellbeing of North Korea's population have again come to global attention. But this is far from the first time that such a subject has been in the news, for ever since the catastrophic famine which affected the country from the mid-to-late 1990s, discussions of human rights abuses and malnutrition have been frequent.

Sandra Fahy's *Marching through Suffering: Loss and Survival in North Korea* (Columbia University Press, 2015) is based on interviews with survivors of that seminal and devastating moment in the DPRK's recent history. Adding careful framing and contextualisation, and paying close attention to her interlocutors' linguistic and expressive nuances, Fahy leads us into the lifeworlds of a wide range of North Koreans: parents and children, bureaucrats and farmers, soldiers, miners and students. The book's account of the consequences of the disaster for community, political and economic life in North Korea is as important as it is

chilling, and offers deep insight into a situation which should remain in the mind of anyone seeking to understand a changing Korea today.

Interview by Ed Pulford
Listen **here**!

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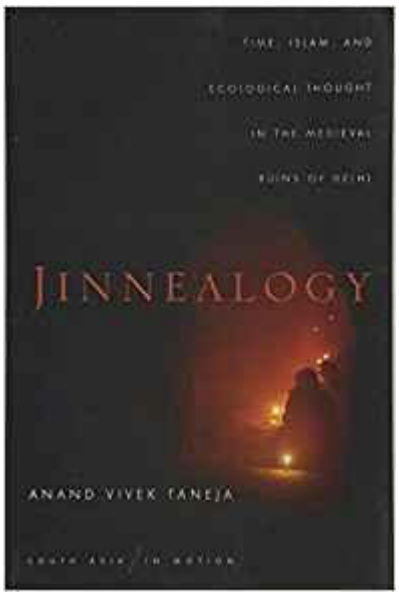

Jinnealogy: Time, Islam, and Ecological Thought in the Medieval Ruins of Delhi
by Anand Taneja
(Stanford University Press 2017)
Anand Taneja's *Jinnealogy: Time, Islam, and Ecological Thought in the Medieval Ruins of Delhi* (Stanford University Press, 2017) is a landmark publication that interrogates modes of religious practice and imaginaries of time that disrupt dominant claims and narratives of the post-colonial state about religion and religious identity. Centered on the ruins of Firoz Shah Kotla in Delhi, this book brings into view visions of sovereignty, ethics, hospitality, and inter-communal encounters that rescue Islam in modern South Asia from the suffocating pressures, anxieties, and amnesias of nationalist politics and historiographies. Conceptually bold, ethnographically vivacious, and historically grounded, this book masterfully carries a tragic sensibility while also offering provocative avenues of hope and optimism. Written with poetic eloquence and lyrical command, this book will not only be widely read and debated by scholars of South Asia, Islam, and religion, it also cries out for adoption as what will surely become a Bollywood blockbuster.

Interview by SherAli Tareen
Listen **here**!

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An Anthropologist in the Archives

Allegra
January, 2019

Is it Christmas already?! This week, Allegra is collaborating with the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies* to celebrate and create the biggest possible buzz for the much anticipated Erkko Inaugural Lecture by dear Allie and mentor, Prof Jane Cowan.

The Inaugural Lecture will take place at 4pm on Tuesday 27 November 2018 in the Main Building's Small Festive Hall at the University of Helsinki. The lecture is free and open to the public. It will be followed by a (festive!) reception in Jane's

honour.

To precede and accompany the Lecture, we'll be posting a list of essential readings and an interview by Pekka Rautio with Prof Jane Cowan on Monday 26 November.

On D-Tuesday 27 November, the lecture will be live streamed on Allegra and available to watch as soon as possible via our website thereafter.

We'll use this opportunity to highlight some of the fantastic projects Jane has collaborated on in the past this Wednesday 28 and Thursday 29 November, and finish the week *en beauté* with a dive into Allegra's bottomless archive around topics very close to our collaboratory heart and central to Jane's work: bureaucracy, international governance and international institutions, and human rights.

An Anthropologist in the Archives: Reading letters to the League of Nations on minorities and Macedonia

The 1919 Paris peace conference following the Great War finalised the dismantling of the Ottoman, Hapsburg, Hohenzollern and Romanov empires and established the 'New Europe' in which the nation-state became the normative political form. According to interwar scholar Jakob Robinson and his colleagues, the new political order detached almost 100 million people of the three great pre-war empires of Central and Eastern Europe and transformed 25-30 million of them into national minorities.

In this lecture, professor Jane Cowan considers the process of 'making minorities' from the vantage point of letters sent to the League of Nations on minorities and Macedonia and the encounters that they generated. She explores how these letters (treated by the League as 'petitions') were read by League of Nations civil servants, state diplomats, civil society advocates and allies and the European

press. The authors penned their letters to make political claims and to seek individual and collective justice, yet many of those reading and responding to the letters held very different visions of justice.

> *Jane Cowan's lecture will convey a sense of the drama that unfolded in the League Secretariat offices of the Hôtel Nationale as claimants asserted who they were and what they wanted.*

Cowan probes how they used or resisted categories like 'minority' within this subject-making process and how their readers responded and why. She also explores some methodological aspects of entering a historical archive as an anthropologist, one who has spent significant periods of time in the Balkans, especially in Greece, since 1975. Jane Cowan's experience 'on the ground' and her anthropological training causes her to read archival records in a distinctive way. Although the League archives are full of claims about 'the Macedo-Bulgarians', 'the Greeks', 'the Albanians' and so forth, portraying them as separate peoples with unambiguous loyalties and clear boundaries, Professor Cowan's forty years of work in the Balkans alerts her to the complex, always situated politics of identity, and the shifting ways that an individual may describe herself from one context to another, one audience to another, and across time. Inspired by Michel Foucault's project of 'a history of the present', Professor Cowan asks how our taken-for-granted notion of 'minority' arose out of the still fluid and contested identifications of the interwar period.

UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI
HELSINKI COLLEGIUM FOR ADVANCED STUDIES

*The Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies is an independent institute of advanced study within the University of Helsinki. It provides a top-class, international research environment for scholars in the humanities and social sciences. The Collegium promotes innovative interdisciplinary cooperation, both within the Collegium and at the University of Helsinki. Collegium fellows are recruited annually in a highly competitive fellowship call to work on their

research projects.

Featured image (cropped) by Antti T. Nissinen (flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Erkko Lecture Wrap-Up

Allegra
January, 2019

Jane Cowan’s inaugural lecture at the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies is insightful in more than one way not least because it resonates with the current resurgence of nationalism across the globe and how it is played out at the UN.

> *She asks what happens when ‘self determination’ and ‘justice’ are defined at the League of Nations (the precursor of the UN) and how such definitions jar with the complex realities of everyday life.*

She illustrates how and why those who govern use the term ‘minority’, why certain groups resist it, and looks at the politics of language use and admissibility to show how petitions made to the League of Nation were used to construct and resist national identities.

To round off this thematic week, we have dug into our archives and propose three posts that may be read in dialogue with the #ErkkoLecture. In this author conversation, Heath Cabot reflects on her 2014 book on the Greek asylum crisis and asks how we can think about justice outside the formal framework of judgment.

Miia Halme-Tuomisaari takes us to a surprisingly tiny room within the confines of Palais Wilson in Geneva, where the UN Human Rights Committee hear states present their periodic reports.

In *Human Rights as War by Other Means: Peace Politics in Northern Ireland*, Jennifer Curtis depicts the ways in which human rights theory and practice have overwritten other narratives of the conflict and even undermined the gains of the peace process, thus continuing the war ‘by other means’, as Aditi Surie von Czechowski writes in her review.

As two cherries on top of the pre-Christmas cake, we offer you a comprehensive bibliography of recent titles on human rights, as well as an earlier tribute to Jane Cowan on the occasion of her 60th birthday.