



Slam that ethnography! - Troubling Fieldwork

Silke Hoppe
October, 2016



Let's start our ethnography slam with contributions by [David Bukusi](#), [Silke Hoppe](#), [Justine Laurent](#), and [Natashe Lemos Dekker](#). If you want to know what an ethnography slam is, [here's the introduction](#).

Doctor's Slam
by [David Bukusi - Daktari](#)



No one's gonna talk to me
Coz I'm The Daktari,
Get an appointment
Yeah, get in line!

Yet here I am in Amsterdam
Where the Sun don't shine,
Men are in Trouble
Men are on the line!

There is a Prozac bubble
Some call it mental Health
But when you want to kill yourself
It may be lack of wealth

20 years of HIV
And nothing new coming through
I'm kinda tired of WHO
Telling me what to do

I'll be replacing objectivity with reflexivity
I'm sorting out my psychiatry with anthropology

I don't want to continue talking about myself
No no no, let's focus on mental health
I want to get into the field
To make sure I get the yield

I want this info
To help figure out why
Men do as they do
And why sometimes they die

How do I do this?



Through Ethnography
With all its ways, means and methods
It's great for stories, tales and records

How will I report it,
I ask myself softly?
I do have some clues,
I'll work them out nightly

But others here are telling me
To take some liquor
Coz this will help the lines
Flow faster and quicker

Now I really need this info
Do you get my drift,
Coz I'm the Daktari
And I'm on my shift!!!

Personally, I hate talking

by [Silke Hoppe](#)

As one of the organisers of the ethnographic writing workshop, various people approached me in an attempt to replace the ethnography slam with some discussion on writing. "It's a writing course so why can't we do something more on writing? And also, listening for three hours to other people's presentations will just be really boring". Since I myself felt a bit ambiguous about the idea, I voiced my colleagues' concerns, but in the end we did not change the programme.



After a lot of stress and frustration resulting partially from the fact that the ethnography slam should be done in groups, everybody managed to prepare something.

While on Friday morning most people were still a bit sceptical, many tired from the intensive week, this completely changed after the first person did the ethnography slam.

All of a sudden we were no longer intellectuals competing for excellence, we were human beings touched by the vulnerability of our colleagues.

In retrospect, I think this vulnerability provoked so much resistance in the first place. Although not everybody feels confident as a writer, writing about scientific concepts and theory in a somewhat distant manner feels safe. It is what we do as academics. We also sometimes translate those writings into presentations, adding a picture or two to our Power Point slides to make them more interesting. But trying to engage with our audience and adding something personal sounds scary. It involves stepping out of our comfort zone and trying something new which might backfire and make us look (and feel) ridiculous.

To me, the fact that each of the workshop participants dared to be vulnerable made the ethnography slam so special. Doing it, we did not only learn new things about our colleagues' research projects or personalities, the ethnography slam transformed the whole group. Each time I meet one or another workshop participant in the department hall, I smile as I remember something funny, personal or provocative from that person's slam.

Below is my slam, in which I encourage people to embrace their vulnerability. Upon rereading it, however, I wonder if I give a good example and am myself embracing vulnerability, or if am I just being angry?

Personally, I hate talking. Well, not all kinds of talking, but talking about difficult things, and by difficult things I mean painful things. And by that I don't mean



talking about whether I should sell my beloved car in order to go on a holiday, but I mean things that unsettle me at the core of my heart.

But don't get me wrong. It's not so much the content I find painful. It's people's reaction. If, for example, I tell people about my muscle disease I get replies like "There are many people who do not have so much strength in their arms and legs," or "Actually I am also feeling very tired." Okay, but you are still able to get on that fucking stage and I am not.

I often feel there is no space for pain. "Think positive and don't despair."

And yet we live in a world in which we are encouraged to talk about our problems and pains. "Speaking is healing," they say, "Silence is suspicious." Well, it certainly didn't heal me to get stupid comments when I talk about my pain. Actually it just made matters worse.

As anthropologists we encourage people to talk about painful things. In our education we are taught that it is important to ask the right questions. "Only use open questions. No 'yes or no' questions. And by all means avoid those leading questions. You don't want to be humiliated later by your supervisor for using them."

But we don't get any teaching on how to be a good listener. Or how to respond to intense pain, sadness, desperation.

Based on my own experience, I hate it when people try to relate my experience to theirs and believe that it is similar. "I know exactly how that feels." No, you don't.

This all might sound a bit harsh. But I don't expect perfection. I don't wait for that perfect sentence giving me the feeling of being completely understood. Although if I had to say what a perfect reaction was, I would say that my colleague's remark "That sucks!" came quite close.

Instead of receiving a perfect response, I would prefer some vulnerability. Why do we find it so hard to just pause and admit that we don't know what to say?



Photo by [emmajc](#) (flickr, [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#))

Out Loud

by [Justine Laurent](#)

I have been doing fieldwork with a lot of scientists and people from the probiotics industry in the Netherlands. Here is a compendium of some recurring sentences I heard - which, I want to believe, stemmed more from me presenting as a young female researcher rather than from my failure as a researcher.



Are you a journalist?

Are you a student?

Aaah it's our philosopher!

Are you a social worker? Or some kind of nurse?

Do you want to do science communication?

You think you can tell people that we are doing something really good?

Do you understand what I am telling you? Is it too simple? Too hard?

Can you tell me again what is your research about?

Do you really want to know about the detail of how I run this algorithm to work on this bacteria?

Well, this is the freezer you wanted to see. Not much to see, right?

You know, this is not really interesting.

But are you not talking about what people think of good bacteria?

What do customers want?

Well, now you kind of know our whole strategy!

You won't tell that to our competitors, will you? Oh, and by the way, can you tell us how they do this or that?

[after talking for an hour, and having agreed to being recorded] Of course, all this is off-record!

Well, I would reframe it a bit, I mean, for you it's all the same, but this is for the



image of the company ...

What you wrote is very nice, but this is not very useful for us, can you tell us the perspective of 'the people' [i.e. customers] instead? Well, I know you said you did not work on that, but this would be more useful for us. You should make an effort. After all the hours we gave to you...

Writing this short piece with the specific aim of reading it out loud wasn't seamless.

First came the reluctance - "We are already doing presentations at conferences, why would we have to do this?! Oh, and really, on a stage?" This was a shared feeling, it seemed, among us PhDs in anthropology having signed for this writing workshop. *Writing*, not performing.

Second, curiosity - Tanja managed to dispel some of this mix of annoyance and apprehension when she screened a few examples of impressive poetry slams. "Oh, so this is what is expected of us, completely unrealistic, but seems so much more fun than suffering while reading your paper at a big conference through a half asleep academic audience, this can be fun" I thought, while self-doubting about not being a native speaker of English started eating me alive.

Third, the process of writing the text came to be completely transformed by the fact that it was going to be read out loud - and that it should at least partially, be 'creative.' It suddenly became clear: "What better words to say out loud than the ones I had been spoken to me?" It was a great occasion for me to make use of these (at times) painful sentences I had heard during my fieldwork by transforming them in a creative exercise mixed with a little bit of self-derision!

Fourth, reading. It was not like these difficult (for me) academic exercises of reading your paper. It became, as soon as I managed to articulate the first sentence with feelings ranging from fear to amusement, a pleasant exercise. I was



talking to my colleagues in front of me. And I was gaining their attention and engagement by making them laugh with me.

This entire morning of performances filled me with astonishment. These academics, some of whom I had seen shaking, blushing, stumbling, hesitating while presenting their papers were occupying the space with their honest and poetic performances. We read, a lot of us still shaking and blushing, but with a different voice, another presence. Filling the immense room with our accents, our stammering, our sweat, our shouts, our poses, our spit, our hesitations, our tones, our smiles, our tears, our mistakes. The situation spoke volumes.

We needed to bring our bodies (back) into our texts.

How to import the process of performing that we have learned during this ethnography slam to academic presentations? Not that we should all perform our texts at all times, although more of that would be welcome in a feminist academic environment trying to open up the homogeneity of the norms (that's what I realised when witnessing some innovative performances and presentations at a conference a couple of months later). However, maybe embodying our texts in order to relate to a situated audience - instead of showcasing our research (for PhD students especially) and deliver a specific smart message - could make for a better reading and writing process.



Photo by [Nicolas Nova](#) (flickr, [CC BY-NC 2.0](#))

Standing at the bedside

by [Natashe Lemos Dekker](#)

Her nightgown is lifted up to her left thigh while she is lying in the wooden bed surrounded by the same colour nightstand and wardrobe. There's nothing remarkable about them, but plain light brown wooden furniture, the same like in any of the other rooms.

Her daughter, son and granddaughter are sitting around the bed. She moves her hand across the mattress, first slowly, then faster as if she were looking for something, trying to grab it, failing at it and grasping the air between her fingers. Then her hand opens again. This time she manages to grab her nightgown, pulls at it, as if she were trying to cover herself. Her eyes are not just shut but closed with a deep frown that spans her entire forehead. Outside the sun is brightly



shining, and in the distance I even hear some birds; such a great contradiction to the scene that is unfolding before my eyes inside this small room. The air inside is heavy. At first, her mouth opens, and she gasps for breath. Each time we fix our view on what's happening, in search for a sign. Will this be her last one? No, her mouth closes and opens again. Her daughter takes a deep breath and looks at her brother, eyes filled with tears. At that moment, the woman lying in bed starts screaming, bruised sounds, unfinished. The rooms gets filled with it, time and again. Each time I squeeze my hands. We all look at each other and stand there. Stillness comes to the body, and fragmented movements are transgressed by traveling into lightness.

Participating in the ethnographic writing workshop was an amazing experience and opportunity. It made me think critically about the use of different voices in text and which suits best for the theory, epistemologies and eventually stories I want to bring forward. The workshop also created time to reflect, write and learn in an informal and affirmative setting, with the support of fellow PhD students and senior researchers.

Having to write ethnographically asks for slowing down, reflecting, thinking back about the experiences and moments we have witnessed as researchers, and translate these into words on paper. Words that make sense and sketch out a portrait. Writing and then reading this vignette out loud during the ethnographic slam, brought me back to the bedside, to the broken smiles of family members around it, to their confusion and despair.

As I trembled and felt vulnerable reading this to the public, I came to the core of my research.



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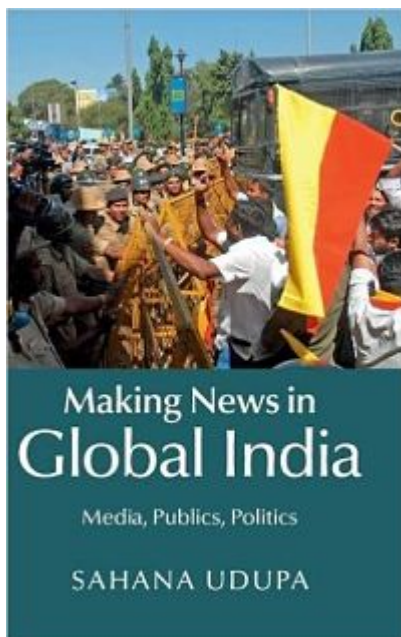
#Podcast Interview Round Up May-August: New Books in Anthropology

Allegra
October, 2016





It's once again time for us to help your eardrums get some anthropological loving in collaboration with our dear friends, [New Books in Anthropology](#). Below you'll find a carefully curated list of the best interviews with anthropologists (and a few closet anthropologists), all speaking about their brand new books.



[Making News in Global India: Media, Publics, Politics](#)

by Sahana Udupa

(Cambridge University Press 2015)

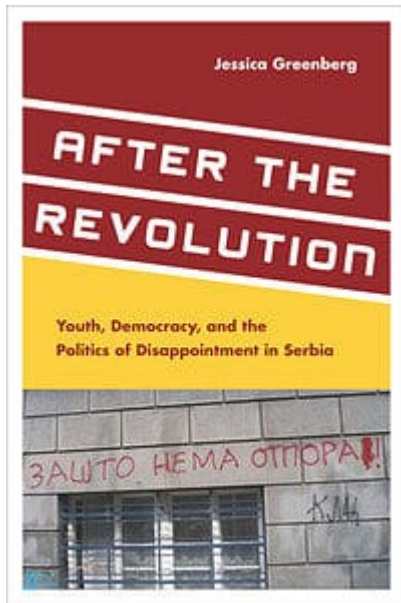
What role does Bangalore's private news culture play in shaping the southern Indian metropolis' ongoing urban transformation? Sahana Udupa's new book answers this question through an ethnography of the city's bi-lingual news media. Exploring differences amongst the English language and local language press, class-based civic activism, novelties in news room practices and layers of journalistic identities, the book shows the ways in which a certain type of

aspiration that has come to characterize some news outlets, conflicts and contends with the visibility of local urban cultures and the struggle for dominance amongst different actors in the news field.

Interview by Ian M. Cook

Listen [here](#) or here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/southasia/062southasiaudupa.mp3>



[After the Revolution: Youth, Democracy, and the Politics of Disappointment in Serbia](#)

by Jessica Greenberg

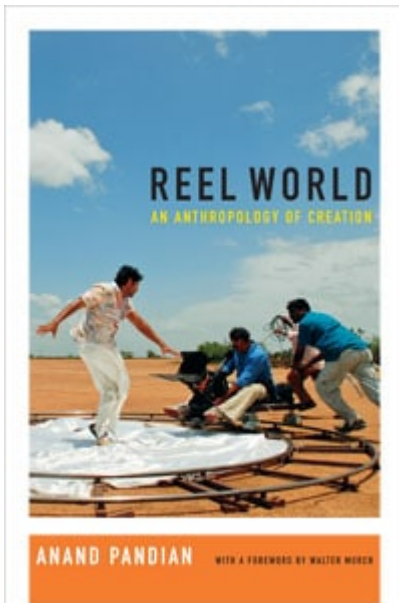
(Stanford University Press 2014)

Jessica Greenberg’s new book explores a dual tension at work in Serbia in the early 2000s. She reveals young people’s disappointment in what they saw as a betrayal by their parents’ generation that led to the collapse of Yugoslavia and the failure of democracy in Serbia, as well as adults’ disappointment that young people did not live up to expectations of what student activists should be. This “politics of

disappointment” opened up new understandings of democratic engagement on the part of Serbian students, resulting in activism that utilized “quality” protests, expertise in administrative reform, and procedural participation in politics.

Interview by Amanda Jeanne Swaine

Listen [here!](#)



Reel World: An Anthropology of Creation

by Anand Pandian

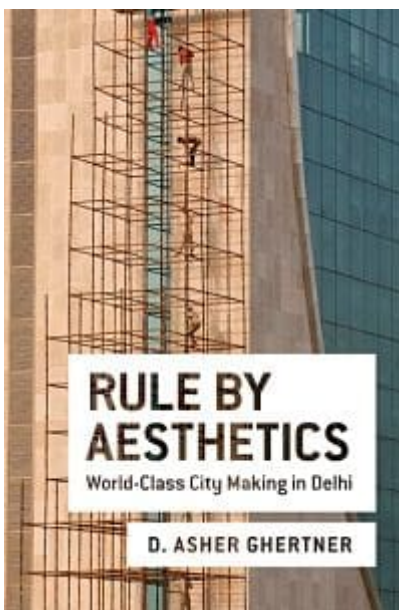
(Duke University Press 2015)

Do we live in a real world or a 'reel world,' in which life begins to feel like a film? In this ethnography of the Tamil film industry, Anand Pandian explores topics as grand, rich and timeless as those explored in film itself - love, desire, rhythm, wonder - as a way of unpacking what it means to be creative. In doing so the book takes its readers from the deserts of the middle east and the mountains of Europe to India's archaeological sites and less trodden city streets.

Interview by Ian M. Cook

Listen [here](#) and here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/southasia/064southasiapandian.mp3>



Rule by Aesthetics: World-Class City Making in Delhi

by D. Asher Ghertner

(Oxford University Press 2015)

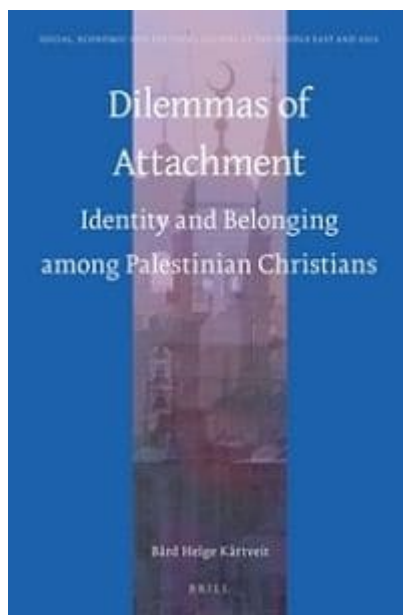
D. Asher Ghertner explores why the ways things look are fundamental for Delhi's transformation into a "world class" city. Based on ethnographic engagement in one of the city's slums that is destined to be demolished, the book weaves the experiences of these slum dwellers together with an analysis of middle class Resident Welfare Associations, legal rulings, influential reports, and idle chatter to argue that mapping and



surveying are no longer the primary means for administering urban space. Rather it is a set of vague and powerful aesthetic norms derived from notions of what it is to be world class that set the contours of Delhi's change. *Interview by Ian M. Cook*

Listen [here](#) or here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/southasia/066southasiaghertner.mp3>



[Dilemmas of Attachment: Identity and Belonging among Palestinian Christians](#)

by Bard Kartveit

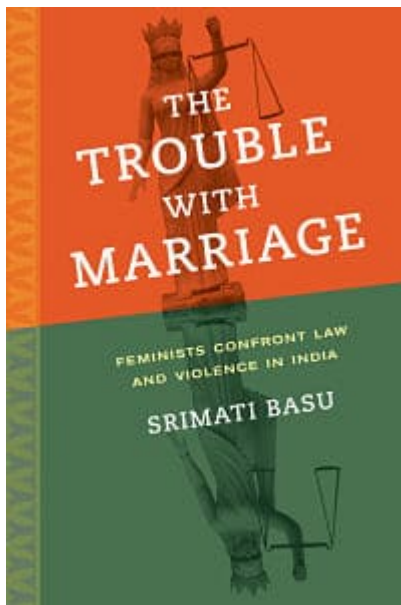
(Brill 2014)

Bard Kartveit's new book carefully describes the constraints faced by Palestinian Christians, particularly in the unique context of the Bethlehem area, exploring the ways in which such realities are experienced and narrated in relation to questions of identity. Tradition, modernity, kinship, patriarchy, sectarianism, nationalism, state power, migration and the decisive role of the Israeli Occupation are all given

their due. *Interview by Mark Calder*

Listen [here](#) and here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/middleeast/017middleeastkartveit.mp3>



[The Trouble with Marriage: Feminists Confront Law and Violence in India](#)

by Srimati Basu

(University of California Press 2015)

Are solutions to marital problems always best solved through legal means? Should alternative dispute resolutions be celebrated? In her latest book Srimati Basu answers such questions and many more through explorations of 'lawyer free' courts and questions surrounding understandings of domestic violence, analyses of the way rape intersects with marriage and how kinship systems change with legal disputes and by

delineating the most important acts that frame marriage law in India. *Interview by Ian M. Cook*

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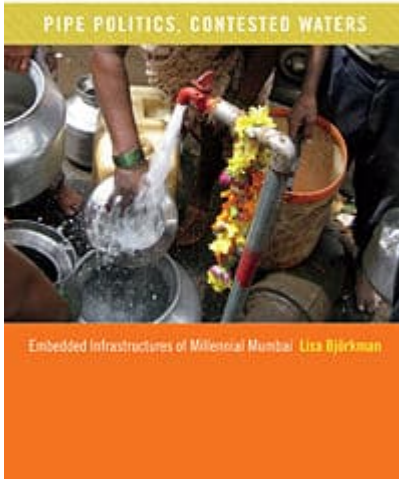
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Pipe Politics, Contested Waters: Embedded Infrastructures of Millennial Mumbai

by Lisa Bjorkman

(Duke University Press 2015)



Mumbai is in many ways the paradigmatic city of India's celebrated economic upturn, but the city's transformation went hand-in-hand with increasing water woes. In her new book Lisa Bjorkman moves from slums to elite enclaves in analyzing the processes of mapping and politics in the city's watery infrastructures. Exploring the workings of secondary markets, water brokers, and planning offices she

reveals how power, knowledge and authority over how when and why water flows are being reconfigured as Mumbai makes itself a "world class" city. *Interview by Ian M. Cook*

Listen [here](#) and here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/southasia/065southasiabjorkman.mp3>



[Rifle Reports: A Story of Indonesian Independence](#)

by Mary M. Steedly

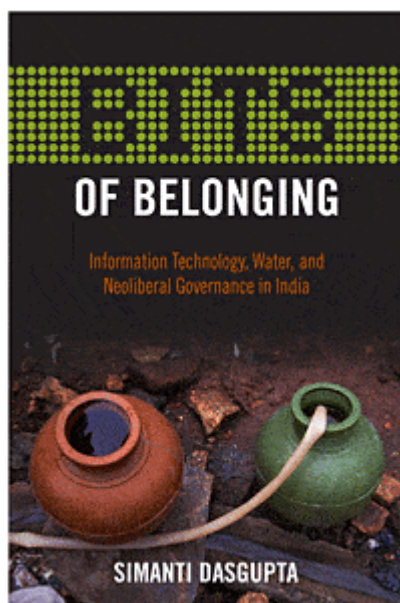
(University of California Press 2013)

Mary M. Steedly's book, *Rifle Reports: A Story of Indonesian Independence* weaves the stories of Indonesian independence told to her on "the outskirts of the nation" together with discussions of memory practice and the writing of history via ethnography. Concentrating on the accounts of Karo women and their struggle against Dutch colonizers and Japanese invaders, Steedly situates the fight for independence

in the day-to-day activities of North Sumatra's populace. *Interview by Nick Cheesman*

Listen [here](#) or here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/southeastasia/020southeastasiasteedly.mp3>



[BITS of Belonging: Information Technology, Water, and Neoliberal Governance in India](#)

by Simanti Dasgupta

(Temple University Press 2015)

What links a water privatization scheme and a prominent software company in India's silicon city, Bangalore? Simanti Dasgupta's new book explores the was in which the corporate governance of IT is seen as a model for urban development in contemporary India. Through ethnographic research into both a water privatization scheme and the practices of an IT



company, Dasgupta reveals the similarities that cross-cut both domains as new and old inequalities are produced. *Interview by Ian M. Cook*

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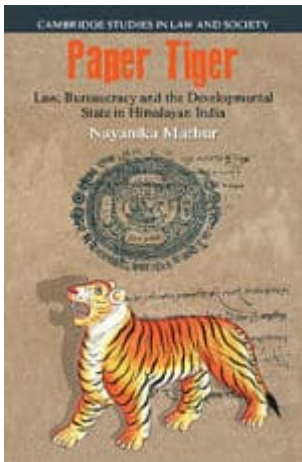
#Podcast Interview Round Up January-April: New Books in Anthropology

Allegra

October, 2016



Hi there pod-pickers, here's another earful of podcasts for you to squeeze into your drums, freshly prepared by our audiophile associates [New Books in Anthropology](#). As ever each interview is around an hour's conversation with an anthropologist about their latest offering. Download, stream and subscribe (if you're so inclined).



[Paper Tiger: Law, Bureaucracy and the Developmental State in Himalayan India by Nayanika Mathur](#)

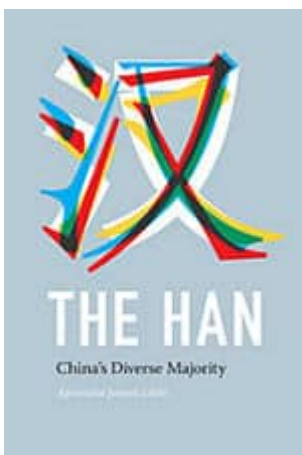
(Cambridge University Press 2015)

A village terrorized by a man eating tiger and a state struggling to implement possibly the largest social security program in the world coalesce in this wonderful ethnography of bureaucracy by Nayanika Mathur. Paper Tiger: Law, Bureaucracy and the Developmental State in Himalayan India is a detailed account of paper that reveals the unintended consequences of reforms, the problems with implementing new programs and the inability of state officials to act when faced with crises.

Interview by Ian Cook

Listen [here](#) or here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/southasia/061southasiamathur.mp3>



[The Han: China's Diverse Majority by Agnieszka Joniak-Lüthi](#)

(University of Washington Press 2015)

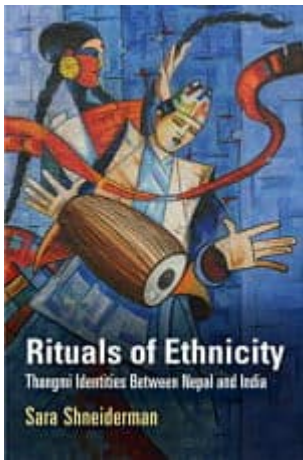
What does being Han mean? Agnieszka Joniak-Lüthi's new book argues that being Han is a "historically contingent narration" and does so by taking the readers through a history of such a narration from a pre-modern culturalist mode of Han-ness to modern modes of racialised nationalism. The book further explores the roles of language, education, home-place identities and collective labels in making contemporary narratives of Han-ness, opening up new ways of thinking about identity in China.

Interview by Carla Nappi

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[Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities Between Nepal and India by Sara Shneiderman](#)

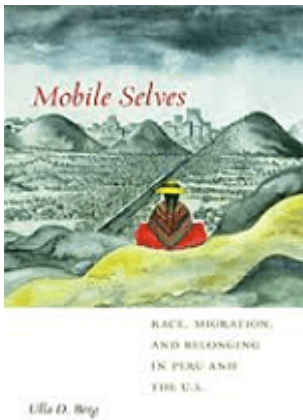
(University of Pennsylvania Press 2015)

Sara Shneiderman's book is the first comprehensive ethnography of the Thangmi, a Himalayan community who move between Nepal, India and the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China. Through an analysis of orality, funerary rituals, the practices of gurus and circular migration (to name just a few of the topics covered) the book makes a forceful case for ethnicity as something people do rather than are and explores how such performances of ethnicity speak to questions of citizenship and belonging across national borders.

Interview by Ian Cook

Listen [here](#) or here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/southasia/058southasiashneiderman.mp3>



[Mobile Selves: Race, Migration, and Belonging in Peru and the U.S. by Ulla Berg](#)

(NYU Press 2015)

Ulla Berg's new book explores the lives of migrants from the central highlands of Peru, including how migration is used as a strategy for social mobility as well the ways in which it forms identities of those who leave. Examining the moral, material and aspirational factors surrounding such migratory practices the book analyses the "transgressiveness of

Andean mobility."

Interview by David-James Gonzales

Listen [here](#) or here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/latinostudies/018latinoberg.mp3>



[Atheist Secularism and its Discontents: A Study of Religion and Communism in Eurasia by Ngo, T., Quijada, J. \(eds.\)](#)

(Palgrave 2015)

What was the communist project of atheism in Eurasia, and what are its legacies today? Editors Tam Ngo and Justine Quijada bring together a collection of papers that complicate the western notions of state secularism premised on the separation of secular and religious spheres to analyse states which sought to explicitly dominate the religious areas of life. From Poland to China and many more places in between

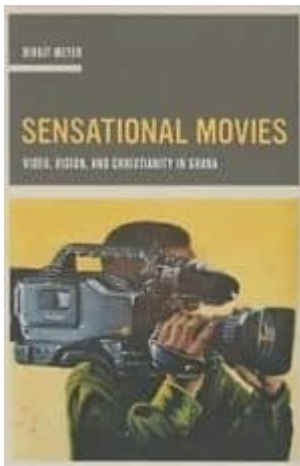
the chapters show how the legacies of state interference in religious matters continue today.

Interview by Todd Weir

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[Sensational Movies : Video, Vision, and Christianity in Ghana](#)
by [Birgit Meyer](#)

(University of California Press 2015)

Sensational Movies: Video, Vision, and Christianity in Ghana analyses the changing processes surrounding filmmaking in Ghana as the medium interweaves economic, technological, cultural, social, and religious aspects in its production. Moving into the space left by the moribund state film industry, video movies negotiate the imaginaries deployed by both state cinema and Pentecostal Christianity.

Interview by Hillary Kaell

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**Podcast Interview Round Up
November-December: New Books**

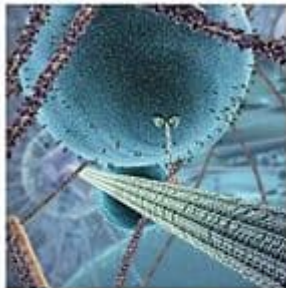


in Anthropology

Allegra
October, 2016



Hi there, it's time for the latest round up of interviews from by [New Books in Anthropology](#). Long and luxurious discussions with authors about their new books can be found below!



[Rendering Life Molecular: Models, Modelers, and Excitable Matter by Natasha Myers](#)

(Duke University Press, 2015)

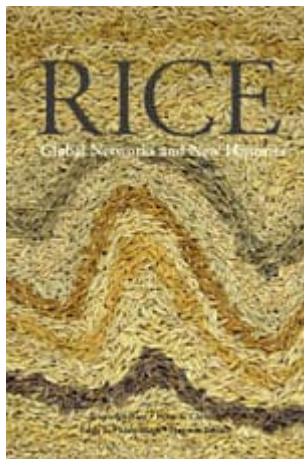
An ethnography of protein crystallographers, Natasha Myers's new book explores the scientific culture at a US research university. *Rendering Life Molecular* analyses the ways in which scientific knowledge can be both embodied and gestural - something performed - and emerges through the 'rendering' work undertaken by scientists in the course

of their research.

Interview by Carla Nappi

Listen here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/scitechsoc/126scitechsocmyers.mp3>



[Rice: Global Networks and New Histories by Francesca Bray, Peter Coclanis, Edda Fields-Black, and Dagmar Schafer](#)

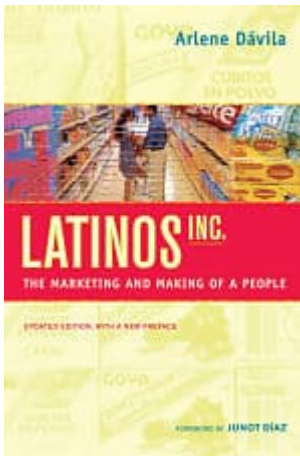
(Cambridge University Press, 2015)

Interdisciplinary and multi-sited, *Rice*, edited by Francesca Bray, Peter Coclanis, Edda Fields-Black and Dagmar Schafer is 15 chapters worth of the history of rice. Interrogating both the 'black rice' and the 'agricultural involution' debates, the discussion, with Francesca Bray and Dagmar Schafer, also

touches on the challenges and rewards of scholarly collaboration. *Interview by Carla Nappi*

Listen here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/eastasia/165eastasiabrayschafer.mp3>



[Latinos, Inc.: The Marketing and Making of a People by Arlene Dávila](#)

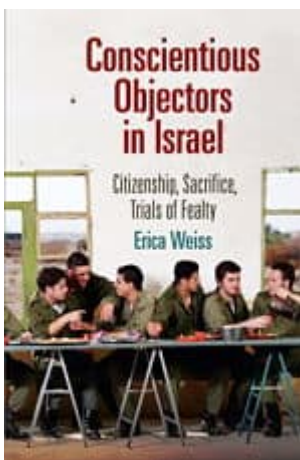
(University of California Press, 2012)

Latinos Inc. by Arlene Davila analyses the role of the Hispanic-Latina/o marketing industry in the production of Latina/o identity and culture. Critiquing the role of race, class, culture and nation in Latina/o identity formation, the book teases out the key tenants of a safe and consumable Latina/o culture.

Interview by David-James Gonzales

Listen here:

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[Conscientious Objectors in Israel: Citizenship, Sacrifice, Trials of Fealty by Erica Weiss](#)

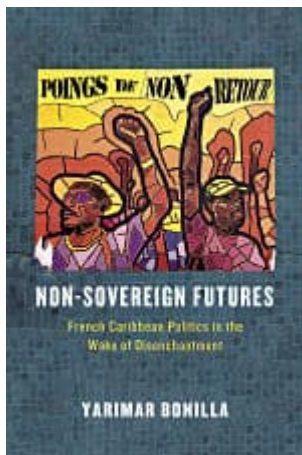
(University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014)

The choices and lives of Israeli conscientious objectors are explored in Erica Weiss' new book. *Conscientious Objectors in Israel* analyses two generations of those who have refused military service within a state fermented 'economy of sacrifice' and, in doing so, opens up fresh questions about contemporary citizenship.

Interview by Jason Schulman

Listen here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/jewishstudies/030jewishstudiesweiss.mp3>



Non-Sovereign Futures: French Caribbean Politics in the Wake of Disenchantment by Yarimar Bonilla

(University of Chicago Press, 2015)

It is non-sovereignty rather than sovereignty that characterises the majority of Caribbean states according to Yarimar Bonilla in her new book *Non-Sovereign Futures*. Through an ethnography of labour activists in Guadeloupe, the book analyses the ways in which political claims can reach beyond the confines of demands for sovereignty in one

of France's 'overseas departments'. *Interview by Alejandra Bronfman*

Listen here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/caribbeanstudies/008caribbeanstudiesbonilla.mp3>



Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report by Saba Mahmood

(Princeton University Press, 2015)

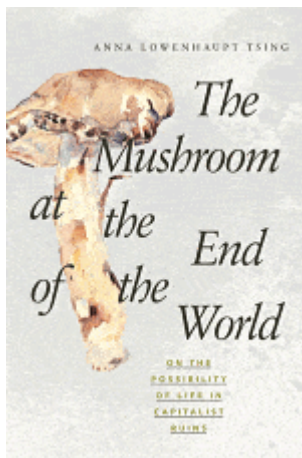
In this new book by Saba Mahmood, it is argued that political secularism and modern secular governance are drivers of the Middle East's religious tensions. *Religious Difference in a Secular Age* critically examines the commonly held belief that majority-minority violence is produced by religious fundamentalism and, through a focus

on the experience of Egyptian Copts and Bahais, argues that majority/minority conflict emanates from secular politics and discourses.

Interview by SherAli Tareen

Listen here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/islamicstudies/068islamicstudiesmahmood.mp3>



[The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins by Anna L. Tsing](#)

(Princeton University Press, 2015)

A mushroom-centred analysis of what lives on in spite of capitalism, *The Mushroom at the End of the World* is Anna Tsing's latest book. Based on research over seven years, across the US, Japan, Canada, China, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, and Turkey and with foresters, traders and scientists, the book has grown out of the Matsutake Worlds

Research Group and makes a powerful case for the 'arts of noticing'.

Interview by Carla Nappi

Listen here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/scitechsoc/125scitechsoctsing.mp3>



[The New Arab Man: Emergent Masculinities, Technologies, and Islam in the Middle East by Marcia C. Inhorn](#)

(Princeton University Press, 2012)

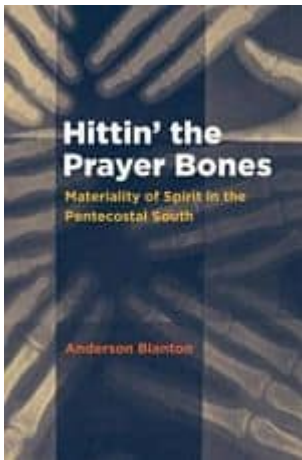
The New Arab Man by Marcia C. Inhorn is an exploration into the lives of Middle Eastern men as they attempt to overcome infertility through assisted reproduction. Through ethnography of these men's lives as they self-consciously rethink previously prevailing patriarchal masculinity, the

book challenges Western stereotypical images of the Arab man.

Interview by Banafsheh Madaninejad

Listen here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/middleeast/016middleeastinhorn.mp3>



[Hittin' the Prayer Bones: Materiality of Spirit in the Pentecostal South by Anderson Blanton](#)

(University of North Carolina Press, 2015)

Hittin' the Prayer Bones is an attempt to feel and hear the Holy Ghost. Anderson Blanton's new book explores - through an ethnography of Christian worship in southern Appalachia - how faith, healing and prayer are entangled with technologies of sound reproduction and material culture.

Interview by Hillary Kaell

Listen here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/religion/059religionblanton.mp3>

Featured image by [Ky](#) (flickr, [CC BY 2.0](#))

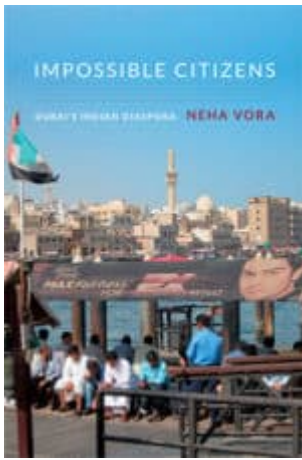
Podcast Interview Round Up July-October: New Books in Anthropology

Allegra

October, 2016



Hi there, and welcome to our second round up of interviews from our good friends at [***New Books in Anthropology***](#). Each of the interviews below is an in-depth discussion with an author about her or his latest monograph. We hope you enjoy the collection.



[Impossible Citizens: Dubai's Indian Diaspora](#) by Neha Vora

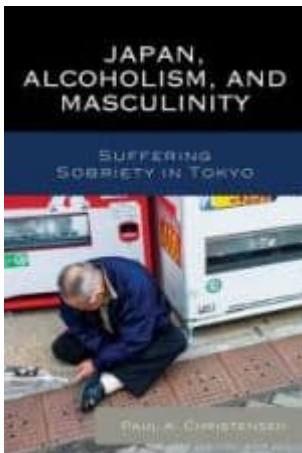
(Duke University Press, 2013)

Neha Vora's *Impossible Citizens* is an account of middle class Indians who live and work, supposedly temporarily, in Dubai. Through an analysis of these perpetual outsiders, that are crucial to the Emirati economy, Vora sheds new light on our understanding of citizenship, belonging and Dubai itself.

Interview by Ian Cook

Listen [here](#) and here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/southasia/054southasiavora.mp3>



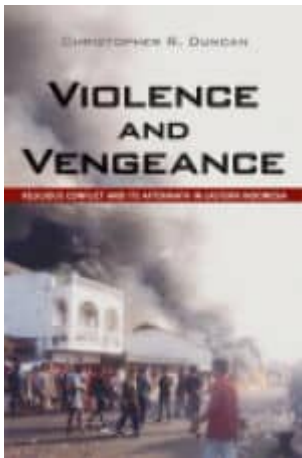
[Japan, Alcoholism, and Masculinity: Suffering Sobriety in Tokyo](#) by Paul A. Christensen

(Lexington Books, 2014)

In this book Paul A. Christensen explores drinking, drunkenness, and male sociability in modern urban Japan through an ethnography of sobriety support groups. Complemented with historical analysis, the book looks at how men try to rebuild their selfhoods in the face of dismantled senses of masculinity. *Interview by Carla Nappi*

Listen [here](#) and here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/eastasia/153eastasiachristensen.mp3>



[Violence and Vengeance: Religious Conflict and Its Aftermath in Eastern Indonesia](#) by Christopher R. Duncan

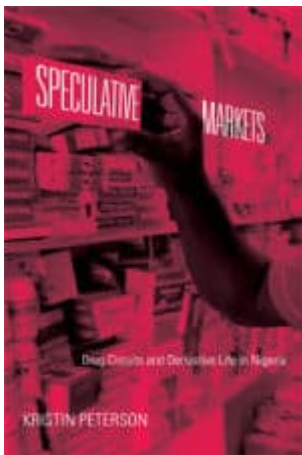
(Cornell University Press, 2013)

In this ethnography Christopher R. Duncan examines the role that religion played in violence in Indonesia during 1999 and 2000 . Drawing on more than ten years of research in North Maluku, the book explores how participants (re)produce master narratives of religious warfare. *Interview*

by Nick Cheesman

Listen [here](#) and here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/southeastasia/013southeastasiaduncan.mp3>



[Speculative Markets: Drug Circuits and Derivative Life in Nigeria](#) by Kristin Peterson

(Duke University Press, 2014)

Delving into the Nigerian pharmaceutical market, Kristin Peterson's new ethnography entwines approaches from medical anthropology with an analysis of the global economy, to explore how the pharmaceutical industry has remade itself through the speculative marketplace. This has important implications for individual Nigerians who find a

mismatch between drugs and diseases, as well as for the formation of new professional relationships and markets. *Interview by Carla Nappi*

Listen [here](#) and here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/scitechsoc/117scitechsocpeterson.mp3>



[Entangled Urbanism: Slum, Gated Community and Shopping Mall in Delhi and Gurgaon](#) by Sanjay Srivastava

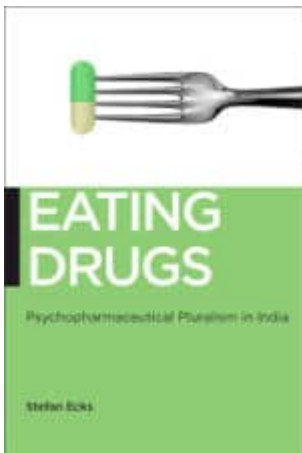
(Oxford University Press, 2015)

The latest book by Sanjay Srivastava explores the ways spaces and processes are interconnected in the city. From temples that resemble shopping malls, through the gates of luxury apartments and into the electricity supply networks of slums, the book pulls together the threads that entangle city

dwellers with one another. *Interview by Ian Cook*

Listen [here](#) and here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/southasia/056southasiasrivastava.mp3>



[Eating Drugs: Psychopharmaceutical Pluralism in India](#) by Stefan Ecks

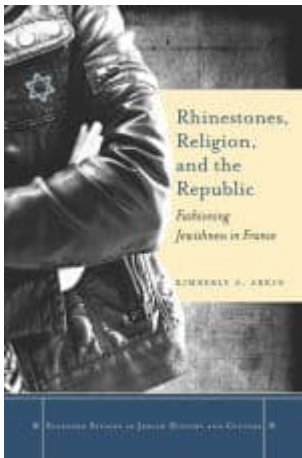
(NYU Press, 2013)

Stefan Ecks' latest work of medical anthropology explores health-related practices in Kolkata (erstwhile Calcutta). It analyses various and overlapping healing and medical contexts that together make the medical marketplace in this north Indian metropolis, exploring patients' suspicions of 'magic-bullet' psychopharmaceuticals. *Interview by Carla*

Nappi

Listen [here](#) and here:

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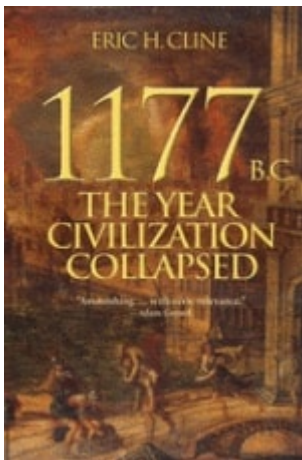


**[Rhinestones, Religion, and the Republic: Fashioning Jewishness in France](#) by Kimberly Arkin
(Stanford University Press, 2013)**

Kimberly Arkin analyses the “racialisation” of Jewishness in North African Jewish adolescents. Through her interviews with second- and third-generation students who attend three different Jewish day schools the book explores multiculturalism in postcolonial France. *Interview by Jason Schulman*

Listen [here](#) and here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/jewishstudies/015jewishstudiesarkin.mp3>



**[1177 B.C.: The Year Civilization Collapsed](#) by Eric H. Cline
(Princeton University Press, 2014)**

Eric H. Cline’s book recreates the late Bronze Age life, before describing its complete destruction. Exploring the explanations why so many cities, empires and civilisations collapsed in 1177 - plagues, earthquakes, the Sea People - the book analyses the whys and the hows of the First Dark Age. *Interview by Robert Broadway*

Listen [here](#) and here:

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[Featured image](#) by [Justin Lynham](#) (flickr, [CC BY-NC 2.0](#))

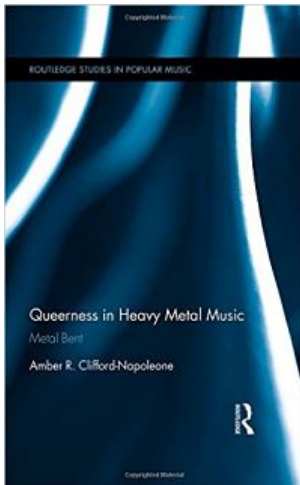


Podcast Interview Round Up: New Books in Anthropology

Allegra
October, 2016



After getting all worked up about new publications via [last week's #Reviews](#), we thought to indulge a bit more - by revisiting podcasts on new anthropology books all week long! We have been running these podcasts for a while now, courtesy of our friends [New Books in Anthropology](#). Each interview is an in-depth, hour-long discussion of selected authors' latest books. Quite the treat, we must say, so enjoy - we know that we do!



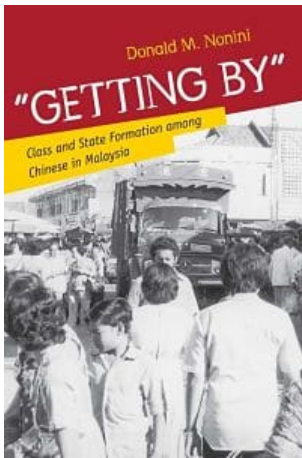
[Queerness in Heavy Metal Music: Metal Bent](#) by Amber R. Clifford-Napoleone (Routledge, 2015)

Amber Clifford-Napoleone's ethnographic study of performers and fans of heavy metal music who self-identity as queer, challenges the assumed 'straight white male' stereotype of metal aficionados. The book explores the links between the queer and heavy metal communities, the sub-culture's acceptance of non-normative lifestyles, the connection to the leather scene and the history of heavy metal.

Interview by Rich Schur

Listen [here](#) or here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/popmusic/053popmusicclifford-napoleone.mp3>



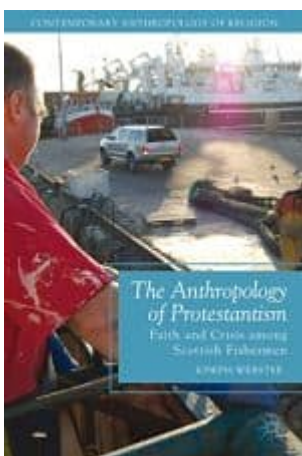
[“Getting By”: Class and State Formation Among Chinese in Malaysia](#) by Donald Nonini (Cornell University Press, 2015)

In this book Donald Nonini explores the role of class in state formation amongst overseas Chinese, arguing against the dominating focus on ‘Chinese culture’. Pulling upon data gathered since the late 1970s, *Getting By* is a detailed political historical ethnography, that entwines analysis of class struggle and identity.

Interview by Nick Cheesman

Listen [here](#) or here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/southeastasia/011southeastasianonini.mp3>



[The Anthropology of Protestantism: Faith and Crisis among Scottish Fishermen](#) by Joseph Webster (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

A village in north-eastern Scotland is the site for Joseph Webster’s exploration of the millennialist faith found in the village’s many Presbyterian and Brethren

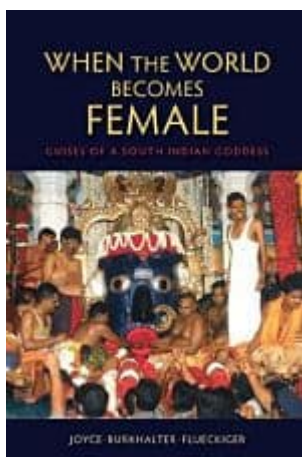


churches. Discussing the differences in belief between newcomers and the village's older inhabitants, the book explodes simplistic assumptions about the decline of religion, and analyses how fishermen experience life as simultaneously enchanted and modern.

Interview by Hillary Kaell

Listen [here](#) or here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/religion/048religionwebster.mp3>



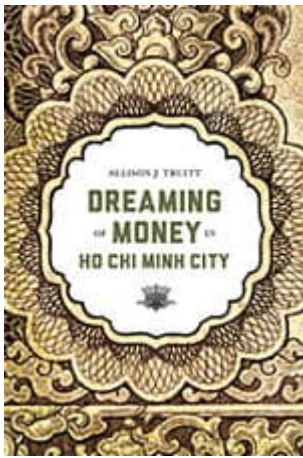
[When the World Becomes Female: Guises of a South Indian Goddess](#) by Joyce B. Flueckiger (Indiana University Press, 2013)

Joyce B. Flueckiger's new book analyses the Indian goddess Gangamma, her festival and her devotees. During the celebrations men take on female guises, whilst women intensify the rituals that they perform throughout the year. The book explores the 'excess' of the goddess and the lives of those who bear her.

Interview by Ian M. Cook

Listen [here](#) or here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/southasia/049southasiaflueckiger.mp3>



[Dreaming of Money in Ho Chi Minh City](#) by Allison Truitt (University of Washington Press, 2013)

Money is the focus of Allison Truitt's book - not just money as exchange however, but money and the ways it intersects with relations between people, the global market place, the state and the spirit world in Ho Chi Minh City. In Truitt's account the city is a place of 'monetary pluralism' enlivened with the sensuous pleasures of cash, where power is upheld and undermined by foreign currencies and counterfeits.

Interview by Nick Cheesman

Listen [here](#) or here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/southeastasia/010southeastasiatruitt.mp3>



[Kabul Carnival: Gender Politics in Postwar Afghanistan](#) by Julie Billaud (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015)



Julie Billaud analyses the state, women, and 'reconstruction' projects in postwar Afghanistan. These themes intersect in discussions over veiling in public, the role of the law, gender empowerment training programmes and the lives of young women who struggle to be both 'modern' and 'modest'.

Interview by Ian M. Cook

Listen [here](#) or here:

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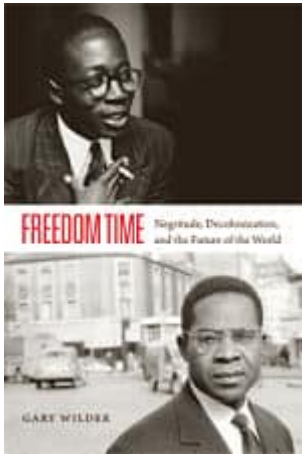
[The Clinic and Elsewhere: Addiction, Adolescents, and the Afterlife of Therapy](#) by Todd Meyers (University of Washington Press, 2013)

This ethnography of drug dependence and treatment in Baltimore by Todd Mayer, takes the reader into the lives of young people treated with the relatively new drug buprenorphine. Tracing the experience of these 'subjects' during the trials and afterwards, as well as the use of the drug, the book examines the ways clinical medicine and social life cross paths.

Interview by by Monique Dufour

Listen [here](#) or here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/medicine/013medicinemeyers.mp3>



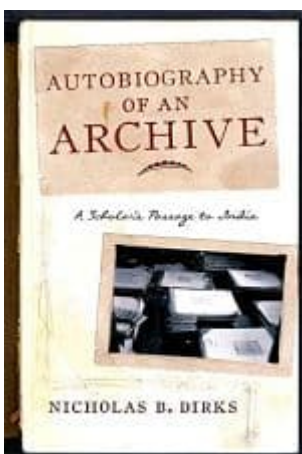
[Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World](#) by Gary Wilder (Duke University Press, 2015)

Freedom Time, the new book from Gary Wilder, looks into the politics and poetics of Léopold Senghor and Aimé Césaire between the years 1945-1960. Exploring notions of temporality and liberation, it analyses how these figures awaited and planned for a post-imperial order.

Interview by Roxanne Panchasi

Listen [here](#) or here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/frenchstudies/027frenchstudieswilder.mp3>



[Autobiography of an Archive: A Scholar's Passage to India](#) by Nicholas B. Dirks (Columbia University Press, 2015)

Nicholas B. Dirks collection of essays, loosely arranged along the line's of the author's scholarly life, touch upon themes such as empire and the politics of

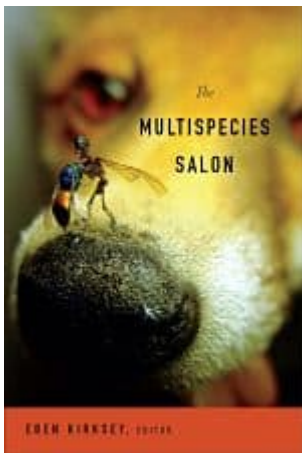


knowledge, as well as the experience of archival research.

Interview by Ian M. Cook

Listen [here](#) or here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/southasia/047southasiadirks.mp3>



[The Multispecies Salon](#) by Eben Kirksey (Duke University Press, 2014)

This volume is an introduction to multispecies ethnography based on a travelling art exhibition of the same name in which anthropologists collaborated with artists and others. In it readers can discover recipes for acorn mush and human-milk cheese along with essays on matsutake worlds and bioart.

Interview by Carla Nappi

Listen [here](#) or here:

<http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/scitechsoc/101scitechsockirksey.mp3>



Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human

Gabriela Radulescu
October, 2016



Underlying the domain of human rights is the conception of the human on which we predicate, and advocate for, human rights' recognition. But what are we actually lobbying for and to whose advantage? Powerful black feminist theories, among others, have drawn attention to the problem that comes with the narrative of inclusion and integration, namely that it reinforces the very system that performs the exclusion in the first place. So would it not be time to revise the extant definition of the human?



What does it mean to be human, and what impact does the current definition of being human have on those defined, as well as those not defined, as such?

Are there degrees of humanity implied in the definition? If so, how are the degrees present? These are the questions that shape the agenda of Weheliye's new publication.



Habeas Viscus is a theoretical reflection that sheds light on the conceptualization of the human by black feminist theorists like Hortense Spillers and Sylvia Wynter. Weheliye's contention is that black studies have more to offer at this historical moment than Agamben's theory of bare life and state of exception, Foucault's biopolitics or Deleuze and Guattari's assemblages. As these western European concepts fail to inquire into the role race has to play in shaping the modern idea of the human, they leave us with the assumption of an "indivisible biological anterior to racialization" (p. 4). Black studies, on the other hand, start by banning the perils of this naturalisation - whereby biological features mask the political disciplining of humans - precisely because they conceive of the human as a process, not as a defined or pre-defined subject. In other words, according to black studies' prerequisites, we are what we choose to be along the way during the course of our lives.

And we become ourselves the more we take control of who we can be, freed from the constraining pre-defined identity options we are granted as we develop into social beings.

In order to restore this freedom, *Habeas Viscus* revives the notion of "flesh", as conceptualized by Spillers. As such, "viscus"/ "flesh" stands for the human body validated in all its forms and variations. Subscribing to this definition means going beyond culturally racialised layers until we reach the elementary unit from



which we are to build on a new definition of the human that would render justice to the whole ontological being involved (p. 137). Other attempts to locate the ultimate epistemic unit that would account for all humans, with no inherent exclusion performed at the level of definition, have failed because they did not include race as an essential feature in the process. In the spirit of Spillers, Weheliye makes a strong case when showing how Agamben's Muselman, the last functional stage to which Nazi concentration camp detainees could be pushed, cannot fulfil this role as it fails to explain the different extant degrees of exclusion and violence and the different degrees to which they gain legitimacy. In other words, whereas black feminism, for instance, has been structurally relegated to the ethnographic and local, the Holocaust has been deemed relevant to everyone (p. 7).

*What better proof is there of the primary role of race in performing exclusion **before** the intrusion of other forms of discrimination such as violence in a suspended state of exception than the violence which is banned during a state of normalcy and that suddenly becomes legitimate in an 'exceptional' situation, like the concentration camp?*

In other words, the fact that a state of exception is declared cannot account for all the violence performed in such a situation: the violence is already at work through the dormant but already extant rules that are merely promptly activated. The potentiality of violence per se signals the existence of violence. Analogically, the concentration camp and other forms of state of exception and of suspending violence are just externalizing the violence that a society does not (fully) admit to itself. The notion of flesh is meant to account for the violence performed at the epistemic level towards each others' bodies; it points at the filters through which we get to know the suffering bodies.

To render such filters visible, Weheliye invites us to see the accounts of flesh at which we are educated to turn our backs in disapproval. Cinematic aesthetic, for instance, has limited suffering black bodies screaming and moving in a



deculturized way, thereby evacuating them to a zone where they are being denied the right to a meaningful existence. This is where the question of language intertwines with *pornotroping* mechanisms, bringing us to the argument pushing for an approach from the vantage point of black studies. The book spotlights examples of images taken from the cinematic world which depict black bodies. It offers us, as announced in the title, flesh in its crudest form, the kind of flesh to which we refuse to assign the full status of humanity. This is what *pornotroping* actually stands for, namely, “the enactment of black suffering for a shocked and titillated audience”. It is based on a historical coding mechanism in whose design black subjects have not been invited to participate and whereby their bodies have been “marked with significations [...] they cannot choose” (Ulysse 2015). It is from the vantage point of this marked flesh, black bodies perceived as below white ones, that *Habeas Viscus* recreates the conditions of possibility for the voices that inhabit the flesh to be heard. The sounds created by the bodies, until now not worthy of significance, claim their significance. We are attuned suddenly to all kinds of flesh, beyond both race and gender. The sonic reference is also a legitimate hint about [Weheliye’s work on black music culture](#).

There is also valuable advice in *Habeas Viscus* for anthropology as a discipline in itself: epistemologically at stake is how it portrays and what it chooses to portray in its ethnographies. The way black bodies have been depicted as external to the hegemonic version of Man (Wynter 1989), is mirrored in the way anthropology has overrepresented the exotic. As Wynter put it, “relativization has not occurred at the level of our human sciences”, despite having taken place in the ‘natural sciences’ (Wynter 1989: p. 645). A practical move in the sense that black studies envision decolonizing the imagery of further non-white bodies is, for instance, [Faye Harrison’s and Jennifer Esperanza’s critique through images meant to rebrand anthropology books](#). The visual permutation is crucial in revealing and dismantling the western racialising gaze.

Habeas Viscus lays down the theoretical framework necessary for the visual enactment of this critical gaze.



One of the strengths of this book lies in the fact that it shows the deep correlation between the 'revolutionary' western philosophies meant to draw attention to suffering, violence and exclusion on the one hand, and the ongoing discrimination against black (female) bodies, on the other. It reveals and disrupts the underlying exclusionary logic, and its subtle workings, that disempowers certain bodies or denies them access to humanity, and offers them an after the fact chance to reclaim their personhood, where personhood is understood as property. What is at stake in disenchanting theories like Foucault's or Agamben's is rendering visible the workings of the definition of human beyond the precincts of law.

While it unpacks the critique of Spillers and Wynter of the "human", and by moving from one concept to another, leads the reader through a visual journey into the modalities of the flesh, the book retains a smooth flow in presenting its arguments.

It successfully delivers what it suggests right up to the end: moving a step closer to a just and encompassing definition of the human.

The last chapter announces forms of freedom that become possible as a result of the new conceptualization of the human. Ultimately, it draws on Benjamin's understanding of historical materialism (Benjamin 2003) which opens up the space for emergent and future forms of humanity, avoiding closure and reification of any definition along the way. Further issues could be raised after all the hierarchies among human bodies have been challenged and overcome. One question could inquiry into what other forms of blocking belonging of all humans will be rendered visible after the abolition of race (and gender)? And what tools will we need to develop to unveil such forms by theorizing them or involving them in a revolutionizing visual permutation? Finally, what will be the future challenges for human rights once we have abolished racialisation?



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[*Featured image*](#) (cropped) by [Brianna O'Connor](#) (flickr, [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#))

Reviews Week - and a Student-Led Research Project!

Judith Beyer
October, 2016



This week we have two new reviews for you, tackling the question of #race (see our #callforreviews [here](#)): Tomorrow, our frequent and much cherished reviewer [Gabriela Radulescu](#) explores Alexander Weheliye’s new publication on what it means to be human: “[Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human](#)”.

On Wednesday, [David Fazzino](#) (who has also reviewed twice for Allegra already) sheds light on “[The Borderlands of Race: Mexican Segregation in a South Texas Town](#)” by Jennifer Najera. Needless to say, both books are more than timely.

On Thursday and Friday, we feature two related posts that resulted from the student-led research project “Finance and the Common Good” at New York University. The first post “A Not-So-Wolffy Wall Street: A Study of Financial Players Risky Behavior and Their Proclaimed Elitism” is written by fellow



students Matilde Ascheri and Kelsey Barnett. They have carried out fieldwork on Wall Street with “financial players,” i.e. investment bankers, brokers, and administrators. Comparing their findings with recent ethnographies of the financial and investment industry, their study yields some interesting counterintuitive insights.

On Friday, Fabio Mattioli, who taught the class and guided the students through their research projects, reflects on the possibility of cooperation as part of anthropology education programmes and on the obstacles such approaches need to overcome in a discipline where “the old Malinowskian paradigm” is still in place.

Allegra is interested in featuring more insights from classrooms (and outside of them!) in the future. If you are teaching courses with a research component, or if you are a student taking such a course right now, why not share your experiences with Allegra? We’d love to hear from you!

Utopias of Crime: Review of the Maurice Halbwachs Summer Institute 2016

Catherine Whittaker
October, 2016



“They say everyone’s born a hero. But if you let it, life will push you over the line until you’re the villain. Problem is, you don’t always know that you’ve crossed that line. Maybe it’s enough that the world thinks I’m a hero.” Jessica Jones is perhaps the zeitgeistiest character in recent TV memory. Marvel’s snarky superheroine-cum-private eye personifies our age of ambivalence, a time of neo-noir serials, Panama Papers, and protests against police violence, in which the boundaries between hero and villain, police and criminals, legality and illegality are breaking down. Similarly, the advent of the “home-grown terrorist” troubles the neat moral geographies spatially separating citizen from terrorist. This is a time in which polarizing figures like Donald Trump call for radical expansions of what is permitted in politics and policing, in the name of fear.

It is precisely this uncertainty that gives rise to an unprecedented, global



preoccupation with the subject of criminality, according to Jean and John L. Comaroff, both anthropologists at Harvard.

They shared their preoccupation with the international attendees of the [3rd Maurice Halbwachs Summer Institute](#) at the Lichtenberg-Kolleg in Göttingen, Germany (August 30 to September 3, 2016). This year's theme, "Crime, Dis/Order, Narrative", inspired a cornucopia of interdisciplinary contributions, spanning culture and literature studies, history, and social sciences.

Crime's wide scholarly appeal harks back to the French father of sociology, Émile Durkheim's, famous assertion that a society without crime would fall apart: The social order and the ideal of citizenship is defined against the disorder enshrined in criminal activity. Hence, justice and crime are mutually constitutive. Yet the Comaroffs observe that there has recently been a "tectonic shift" in the relationship between crime and its punishment, in which law enforcement appears no longer trustworthy, but rather to act in collusion with crime. So crime and punishment no longer make up separate entities, legible against one another, but rather one confusing, indivisible whole: crime-and-punishment.

In this age of hyphenation, the illegibility of illegality requires "divine detection", as [Jean Comaroff](#) laid out in her public keynote. Drawing from her fieldwork in South Africa, she spoke about the relationship between evidentiary practice and the occult in detective work. Imagining fetishized, near-supernaturally intelligent detectives a la *Sherlock* both in crime literature and reality represents at once the impossibility of resolving crime, while hoping for it nonetheless: a desire to reassert the boundaries that were lost.

[John Comaroff](#)'s keynote on *doppelgängers* and the policing of personhood focused on a court case surrounding a Zulu singer - or rather, the person claiming his identity. He explained that impostorship is only a crime when damage can be established - and you cannot criminalize the cultural frames that legitimize practices of impersonation and multiple personhood, such as Zulu kinship role negotiations, post-colonial redefinitions of personhood, and the



constant thirst for reinvention in the music industry as a form of entrepreneurial self-fashioning. At the same time, the case shines a light on the everyday lawlessness faced by South Africans, in the shape of fake policemen and plagiarism.

In other words, the making, breaking, and enforcement of the law become ways of constructing and negotiating the very nature of society.

This helps us to make sense of the Trump phenomenon, by locating his appeal precisely in his con-man persona: He is a charismatic, Gatsbyesque personification of the American Dream, who takes on the nature of the law, while showing up its limits.

As we can only access reality through narrative, the third keynote, delivered by Daniel Stein from the University of Siegen, was devoted to antebellum American city crime literature, in which the subjects of race and crime were exploited for sensational effect, attracting mass readerships. But even without a political agenda, this literature contributed to creating a sense of a racially structured social order, while simultaneously hinting at the possibility of its disordering.

Yet beyond its undeniably timely and thought-provoking theme, what truly stood out about the Maurice Halbwachs Summer Institute was its unique atmosphere: generous intellectual cross-pollination and stress-free, decelerated human encounters of the kind that allow young scholars not only to “network” self-servingly but to actually build an academic community.

Sure - the relentless sunshine, unlimited cookie supply, and quaint setting in an old planetarium of a small university town did their part. And the impeccable organizing team, as well as the initiators and speakers all went well beyond their duties. Nonetheless, several attendees expressed their surprise at just how well everybody was getting along - which sadly highlights the toxic competitiveness cultivated in many departments and conferences.



More concretely, the keynotes' ideas were brought into an invigorating interdisciplinary dialogue throughout the five-day-duration of the Summer Institute, both in terms of formal poster presentations and group discussions, as well as informal chats over coffee and an all-day excursion to a police academy in nearby Hann. Münden and the Borderland Museum in Eichsfeld. The select group of 15 early career scholars spoke about their interests, which spanned a refreshingly wide range of topics: new surveillance technologies in Brazil, the gendered biopolitics of neoliberal governmentality in Turkey, historical discourses about rehabilitation in Germany and emotions in early Soviet criminal law, just to name a few. My own ongoing PhD research on local definitions of violence in Central Mexico greatly benefitted from swapping notes with people grappling with similar issues and subjecting myself to an initially scary, but ultimately amicable, grilling by the senior scholars.

Rather than think of interdisciplinarity as a necessary evil to fulfill funding requirements, more universities should draw inspiration from the success of this Summer Institute. The friendships, professional links, and inspiration forged here were built to last. It is not yet certain whether the next Maurice Halbwachs Summer Institute will take place in 2017 or 2018 (for reasons connected to its funding), but I wholeheartedly encourage everyone who is tempted by the theme to apply. In previous years, the themes covered "Emotion - Interaction - Violence" and "Economy between Cultural Theory and Cultural History". Hopefully, this is just the beginning.

Featured image by [Ryan McGilchrist](#) (flickr, [CC BY-SA 2.0](#))



Workshop: Collaborative dilemmas

Chiara Bortolotto

October, 2016



Policymaking and implementation across state institutions, international organisations and transnational networks of civil-society organisations are expanding fields of anthropological research. The complex positionalities that anthropologists adopt in these ethnographic contexts and their implications in epistemological, methodological and ethical terms are emerging as central issues in these fields.



This workshop explored different and often controversial forms of anthropological engagement with global policy worlds and the dilemmas that collaboration entails against the background of a dominant neoliberal research agenda.

Whether emerging from intention, serendipity or necessity, researchers' commitment to the explored policy fields and their complicity with research subjects are recurrent patterns in these ethnographic situations. As interns, consultants, advocates, representatives of governmental or non-governmental organisations, experts or temporary employees, researchers become actors in the processes that they are observing. This insider status affords key opportunities for exploring the creative friction that different policy regimes bring to global governance. Inside-track and first-hand experience also prevents simplistic essentialisation of "institutional cultures". Yet taking on a position outside the comfort zone of the "hands-off" approach exhumes anthropology's skeletons in the closet and generates pressing methodological anxieties, evidence of the difficult relation between action and knowledge production that characterises social sciences' worldly interventions.

Belonging to the "epistemic community" that contributes to shaping the explored policy programmes provides scholars with the opportunity to impact social and political debate, yet it also radically challenges the founding anthropological assumption of a distinction between self and other and is therefore regarded as an obstacle to genuine critique. Furthermore, while collaborative anthropology in the exploration of the worlds of the marginal, dispossessed or dominated is appreciated as a form of social responsibility, working with powerful organisations is suspected for its multiple responsibilities to institutional or political interlocutors and to the groups that are affected by their intervention. Within this context ethnographic research raises numerous methodological, political and ethical dilemmas, especially when it is directly or indirectly supported by standard-setting organisations and policy-making institutions.



As social sciences come to grips with neoliberal research models, academics increasingly live with this uneasiness. Trained to formulate questions aimed at unpacking policy apparatuses, they are expected to provide answers to policy issues and contribute to governance objectives following managerial, rather than speculative, logics. In these contexts,

scholars face the challenge of disseminating their research while being aware of their interlocutors' negative perception of the analytical language they use to describe policy interventions.

There are clearly no easy solutions to these conundrums. This workshop set out to interrogate collaborative dilemmas by exploring the epistemological, ethical and methodological consequences of engagement, as well as of disengagement, with governmental agendas, international organisations, and other superseding institutions.

This workshop was a first collective attempt to share big and small dilemmas. In coming weeks the UNESCO frictions will engage in a virtual roundtable in collaboration with Allegra.

Programme of the workshop:

[pdf-embedder
url="http://allegralaboratory.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Programme_Collaborative-dilemmas-_05_04-copie.pdf" title="programme_collaborative-dilemmas-_05_04-copie"]



UNESCO frictions: Heritage-making across global governance

Chiara Bortolotto
October, 2016



Destroyed under global media coverage, exalted as identity symbol, traded and purchased, heritage is taking on a growing and controversial role in the making of social and political subjects in the global era. This is there for all to see but we rarely know how the heritage machine actually works.

UNESCO frictions explores cultural heritage policies in the era of global governance, focusing on their most recent and debated domain, that of



[Intangible Cultural Heritage \(ICH\)](#), and on its controversial key development, namely, the “participation” of “communities” in heritage identification and selection.

In tracing the social life of the [UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage](#) from diplomatic discussions in UNESCO boardrooms to the implementation of local heritage projects, we investigate the entire policy chain that links the international arena where standards are negotiated, national heritage institutions where they are domesticated, and local heritage programs where they are implemented in three case-study countries (Greece, Brazil, and China), chosen on the grounds of the diversity of their national heritage regimes.

UNESCO FRICTIONS

HERITAGE-MAKING ACROSS GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

An ethnographic exploration of complex world governance sheds light on the interactions of particular actor networks in observable situations across multiple scales, thus allowing our analysis to go beyond the simplistic opposition between “global norm” and “local reactions”. In order to follow the successive translations of an international standard, the project focuses on the scenes of the encounter between different heritage regimes and explores the controversies arising from these regimes’ interpretations of the participatory shift introduced by the UNESCO convention.

As anthropological expertise overlaps with the field of ICH, we access these contact zones by engaging with ICH policy implementation as actors in the process we are observing. This combination of multi-scale and comparative enquiry with collaborative ethnography aims at introducing new developments in fieldwork design and ethnographic practice. A reflexive analysis of the radical complicity between researchers and research subjects interrogates the theory/practice gap in heritage and beyond it, as it ultimately addresses the role



of the anthropologist in society.

UNESCO frictions is generously funded by the [Agence Nationale de la Recherche](#) by way of a @RAction grant, hosted by the [École des hautes études en sciences sociales \(EHESS\)](#) and based at the [Institut interdisciplinaire d'anthropologie du contemporain \(IIAC\)](#) in Paris.

We are organising exciting events for the next few years. The first one was a workshop on '**collaborative dilemmas**' (12-13 April 2016). Read more about the objectives of the workshop tomorrow at Allegra.

To anticipate some of the dilemmas that are likely to mushroom in the UNESCO frictions project, a group of scholars agreed to share their concerns around the positionality of the researcher in the field of policy-making and implementation during a workshop organised at [École des hautes études en sciences sociales](#) in collaboration with the [EASA network on Anthropology of International Governance](#).

The excitement, embarrassment or anxiety of being out of the comfort zone of the "hands-off" approach resonates well beyond the circle of anthropologists engaging with UNESCO's heritage programmes. These feelings are well known by most ethnographers exploring governance issues.

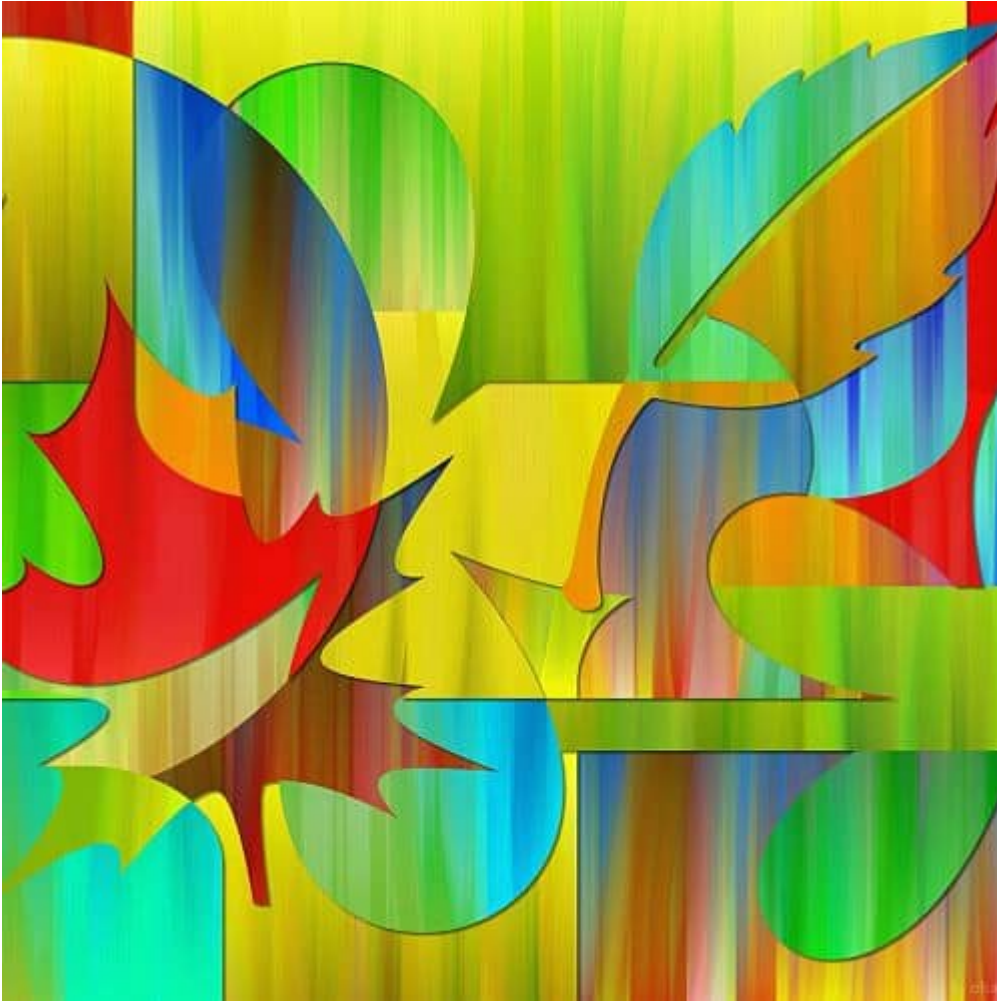
In one way or another, we are all facing collaborative dilemmas when, as academics, we intervene in public action. If you are burdened by big or small dilemmas, please continue reading.

[Featured image \(public domain\) courtesy of Wikimedia Commons](#)



Goodbye summer, hello autumn

Allegra
October, 2016



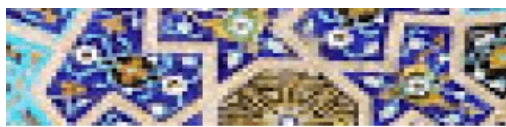
What do you know: the summer is finally over - even in parts of the world where we would insistently like to think otherwise - and the fall is upon us. By now many of us have enjoyed refreshing breaks, likely spent by the pool or the sea, in the mountains or the woods. Or perhaps merely at home, with nothing but blissful idleness as company.

No matter what is the case, we hope that you are entering this new academic year in well-rested and invigorated spirits!



And with this, time to move right into action: once again, it's events time! This time we invite you on a real world tour, as our events take us from The Netherlands to Portugal, Spain and different parts of the US. In terms of themes they focus on gender, race, identities, as well as migration and violence. The call for papers is still open for each event - so let there be submissions a plenty!

And remember: do get in touch with Andrea at andreak@allegralaboratory.net or Aude at audef@allegralaboratory.net if you want your event to feature in our next event list or if you feel like writing a short report!



Muslim Marriages Project

Workshop: [Global Dynamics of Debating and Concluding Shia Marriages](#)

25-26 August 2017, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Particular kinds of 'Muslim marriages' have recently been the focus of public debates in Europe and beyond, both in Muslim-majority countries and in settings where Muslims are a minority. Controversies abound about a wide range of marriages, varying from unregistered or polygamous marriages, marriages with parties deemed too young or too old, mixed marriages, to transnational and tourist marriages. While these topics have also been addressed in academic research, most authors have focused on marriages of Sunni Muslims.

Our workshop brings together researchers who are engaged in empirical research about debating and concluding *Shia marriages*, starting from the search for a suitable partner to the celebration of the wedding. Our aim is to gain insight in how and to what extent various strands of Shia Islam- be it in terms of doctrine and religious authority, legal and ethical practices, rituals and everyday life - affect debates about marriages and the ways in which they are concluded. We are, in particular, interested in research about less conventional forms of



marriage, including (but not limited to) marriages with Sunni Muslims and non-Muslims and temporary marriages. [[more](#)]

Deadline for submissions of abstracts: 1 October 2016



Conference: [Intersectional inquiries and collaborative action: gender and race](#)

2-4 March 2017, Notre Dame University, Indiana, USA

Questions of race and gender continue to undergird broad sections of inquiry in the academy and beyond. The ongoing legacies and current manifestations of racism and sexism continue to demand intellectual analysis, institutional recognition, and collective intervention. Reaching a critical crescendo during the political upheavals of the 1960s' civil rights/anti-colonial era and the responding cultural turn in the humanities, Black feminists have discussed the ways in which both race and gender are co-constitutive and rely on intersecting paradigms of power and constructions of difference. Indeed, the concept of "intersectionality," coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, has become a key mode of framing how identities and sites of contestation around identity are multiple and complex. Furthermore, critics and activists from a myriad of socio-political milieus have underscored the importance of intersectional approaches in struggles for social justice and in the making of inclusive public spaces. From feminist scholarship to human rights policy to commentary via Twitter memes, intersectionality as a theoretical concept, method of analysis, and mode of collaborative action circulates in both grassroots and intellectual discourse.



The Intersectional Inquiries conference will offer a platform for scholars from various fields to interrogate the intersections of race and gender—as manifested materially and discursively—from a broad range of historical, global, and contemporary contexts. We call on scholars, activists, and students to attend rigorously to the ways that race structures gender, sexualities, class, and dis/ability and the dominating matrices of biopolitical violence and imperialism, as well as to trace how racialized subjectivities and non-normative embodiments challenge and radically fracture hierarchy. With this conference, our hope is to inspire impactful intellectual dialogue and assist in building ties that might lead to scholarly- and social justice-focused collaborations. [[more](#)]

Deadline for submission of proposals: 1 October 2016



Global conference: [Migration](#)

1-3 April 2017, Lisbon, Portugal

Migration has defined our age perhaps more than any other single issue, as the 20th and 21st centuries have been characterized by prolonged global mobility on a massive scale. Total estimates of the number of migrants, both international and internal, vary widely but the United Nations puts the number at approximately



300 million. The scale of this global migration and its effects are reshaping the world to the extent that in many areas, this level of mobility has created a new 'normal' or status quo that challenges the idea of the nation state and old notions of collective core identities and mainstream cultures.

This inter- and multi-disciplinary project seeks to explore the contemporary experience of migration, to pose questions about how and why people move, and study the effects of that mobility. The project seeks to examine how migration and the experiences of migration are conceived, discussed, represented, and understood, and how that understanding is subsequently applied or put into practice in governance and policy. [[more](#)]

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 28 October 2016



Annual symposium: [Intersectional Black identities](#)

6 April 2017, The University of Texas at San Antonio, USA

Each year the University of Texas at San Antonio hosts a daylong African American Studies Spring symposium. On this 10th anniversary, the symposium invites presentations from across the disciplines that examine the complexity of Intersectional Black Identities. The event offers a space to explore all that “intersectionality” has signified and all that it has become.



This stimulating symposium will set the stage for collective exploration and celebration of Intersectional Black Identities across social and cultural realities. Topics will include a broad range of lived experiences, intellectual inquiries, and creative representations. The work of keynote speaker Jericho Brown, Associate Professor of English and Creative Writing at Emory University, provides a pathway for (re)considering the axes and edges of history, community, love, expression and more. [[more](#)]

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 31 October 2016



International conference: [The meaning of violence](#)

8-9 March 2017, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Spain

While it has long been noted that violence has, in one form or another, been inherent to the history of human being, little work was done historically to identify what 'violence' means and entails. This changed in the 20th century as a number of thinkers, especially within critical theory, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, existentialism, post-structuralism, and feminist thought, turned to the topic. Contemporary thinkers have continued to be influenced by these attempts, with Walter Benjamin's famous essay 'Critique of Violence' being particularly important to their re-engagement with the nature and meaning of



violence and its relationship to ethics and politics, a re-thinking that has also necessitated a critique and re-evaluation of the meaning of and relationship between the ethical and political.

The purpose of this two-day international conference is to gather a range of scholars to discuss the nature and meaning of violence within and from these 'traditions.' Suitable contributions may engage with the meaning of violence in Benjamin, Schmitt, Freud, Heidegger, Arendt, Sartre, Levinas, Deleuze, Derrida, Lacan, Girard, Butler, Critchley, and/or Žižek. Alternative perspectives and figures are also welcome so long as they aim to provide insights into the meaning of violence. [[more](#)]

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 30 November 2016