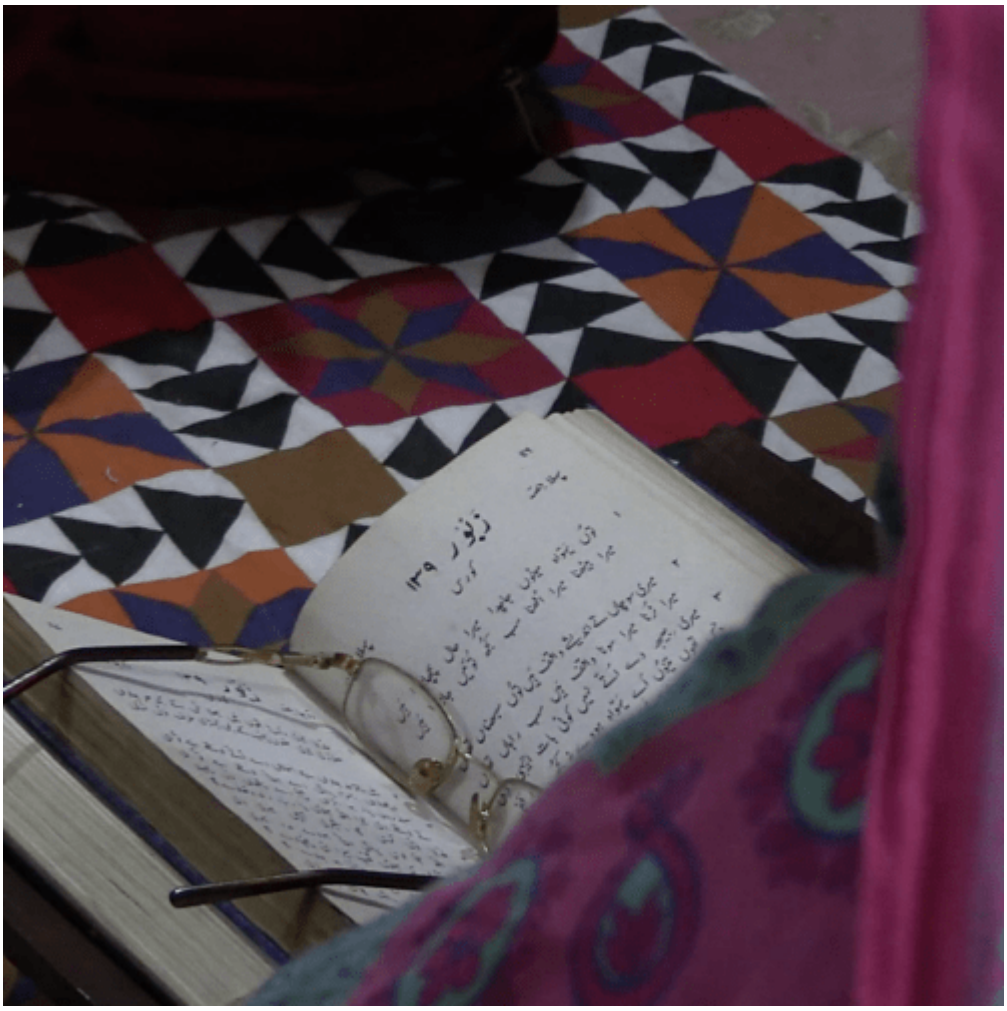
Making Sense of Violence Against Minority Women: Notes on Skepticism, Discomfort & Privilege in Fieldwork

Fatima Tassadiq
February, 2016



What is it like to do fieldwork within a marginalized social group? Especially when you – the researcher – hail from the dominant community? How do you deal with the feeling of guilt by association? And what happens when as an anthropologist

you fixate on social nuances which may not lend themselves to activism? How may your work and decisions in the field further efface certain types of violence?

These are some of the questions I had to deal with during my fieldwork in Lahore, Pakistan in the summer of 2015. I was working on the notorious 'blasphemy laws' in the country which have received a lot of attention lately as a means of persecuting Christian minorities in the country.

> *The law which stipulates the capital punishment for anyone who disrespects Prophet Muhammad is widely used to settle personal scores, property disputes, and intersects with routine religious discrimination, poor governance and a corrupt police system to ensure that lower class Christians are its primary targets.*

My interactions in the field not only taught me about the multiple ways in which the blasphemy laws and the threat of accusations are used to harass Pakistani Christians but also how other types of violence like forced conversions and abductions work to persecute Christian women. Conditions of social and economic marginality mobilize certain femininities and masculinities while silencing others. In this post I use a particular fieldwork encounter to reflect on the types of gendered subjectivities produced by violence and the constant threat of it within the Christian community. My focus here is not so much on incidents of extraordinary violence perpetrated on Christians by members of the Muslim majority but rather on the selective erasures and mobilizations effected in the aftermath of violence, and the intersection of overarching gender norms and class structures which work to further marginalize Christian women.

During my fieldwork, I spent considerable time at the office of an NGO that provides legal and financial aid to minority communities in Lahore and surrounding areas. Founded and staffed primarily by Christians, the organization handles blasphemy cases as well as those of forced conversions, abductions, forced marriages, and religious discrimination.

One afternoon two middle-aged men walked into the office, as I sat talking to Nadia [1], a field officer at the NGO. She explained that the men had an appointment, and turned to talk to them along with Kamran, another employee. I was allowed to stay in the room and observe the meeting after obtaining permission from the two visitors.

The daughter of one of the men, who were both Christians, had eloped with a Muslim man and converted to Islam. The girl, who I will call Rahat, had sent a copy of an affidavit to her family stating that she had voluntarily converted to Islam. The father explained that she had come home from work, packed her belongings before sneaking out of the house. She did not leave a note or a letter behind. The family found out about the elopement and conversion when her new husband called and explained what they had done. Nadia and Kamran agreed that the fact that Rahat took her belongings showed that this was not a case of abduction. Moreover, the fact that she had not taken cash or jewelry made it hard to make a case that the man had lured her out for her money.

The runaway girl's conversion to Islam was dismissed as inauthentic from the onset and it was assumed that she had been seduced and converted by the Muslim man because he wanted to marry her. The conversation veered towards how she was assisted in her conversion without the knowledge of her family. Thinking aloud, Kamran said that it was very strange how someone could just sign a piece of paper and convert to another religion within seconds.

Nadia replied that signing the affidavit is done 'within seconds' but she must have been in contact with 'these people' for many days prior to the actual conversion. She said that someone must have guided Rahat and given her information about how to convert, which mosque to go to, and who to talk to because an ordinary Christian girl wouldn't have access to this kind of information on her own.

Kamran, picked up the copy of the affidavit and read aloud the part stating that Rahat had changed her name to Ayesha after her conversion. He looked up at Nadia and chuckled: 'These are the names they always use. It's always either

Ayesha or Fatima.' I blushed and busied myself with my files and papers.

The men from Rahat's family also explained that they were afraid that her new husband and his family might file a false case against them of threatening and harassing the girl. They assured Nadia and Kamran that they weren't trying to get the girl back. I silently wondered if that was true. Honor killings and attacks on runaway couples are not uncommon in Pakistan. But given the lower working class background of the men I concluded that they probably couldn't afford to pick a fight with their new Muslim son-in-law.

Nadia commented that Rahat would come back on her own in a few weeks or that she would call her parents and beg them to take her back – once her Muslim in-laws mistreated her and called her *choori* [2]. I squirmed inwardly as I recalled how often the derogatory word is used by Pakistani Muslims, even by so called liberal and educated ones. It was easy to imagine how the slur could be used to torment Rahat. In fact the word is so commonly used that I suspected some members of Rahat's new family would probably not even understand her distress at being called *choori*.

The meeting was adjourned after Nadia and Kamran told the two men that they would talk to a lawyer working with the NGO and get back to them regarding the steps they may need to take in order to pre-empt any accusations of harassment by Rahat and/or her husband.

To me, the most striking aspect of the entire exchange was the ease with which Rahat's conversion was invalidated and her agency in the entire episode of conversion and elopement dismissed. The conversion to Islam was swiftly recast as one stage in an elaborate plan of seducing an unwitting Christian girl. The elopement and marriage was then understood as a means to legally access the sexual and reproductive capacity of a young woman by an obviously lustful Muslim man. The girl's father explained: 'If a grown independent man converts, then we can say that this is a real conversion. But if a young, single woman of marriageable age converts, then it is obvious that someone got her to convert so

that he could marry her.'

> *This representation of 'real' religious conversion only recognizes male agency and indirectly that of older un-reproductive women. Young women reduced to sexual and reproductive beings were unproblematically stripped of all agency and any transgressive action on their part was attributed to a kind of false consciousness. To my surprise, no one, not even Nadia – the only woman at the meeting – disagreed with this representation of religious conversion.*

The anti-women undertones of the exchange are obviously not particular to the Christian community but resonate with and express the anxieties of the broader patriarchal society. In this particular case Rahat's elopement not only violated communal boundaries but also transgressed gender norms shared across religious communities. In a separate encounter with a young male Muslim lawyer in Lahore, I was told that the law regarding abduction and kidnapping is by far the most widely abused law in Punjab.

He explained how parents of young women who marry against the wishes of their family often file a case of kidnapping against the men in question. Sometimes cases are also filed against members of the man's family. Accusations of abduction against the girl in such cases are unheard of. In addition to denying the agency of women, such narratives posit women as passive victims and deny their subjectivity as desiring individuals. In a society where the large majority of marriages are arranged by family members, such marriages posit a serious threat to the social order.

> *Reducing such unions, popularly dubbed as 'love marriages', to the deceit of lustful men casts the latter as subjects of desire, women as passive asexual objects of desire and restores the patriarchal worldview temporarily troubled by the eruption of female desire.*

The re-configuration of a Christian woman's conversion and elopement with a

Muslim man as essentially a question of masculine agencies and desires, through the construction of women as passive victims and vulnerable sexual objects is critical to upholding what Veena Das (2006) calls the 'sexual contract', the counterpart of the social contract in a masculine society. The sexual contract locates women as sexual and reproductive beings within the domestic sphere under the rightful control of certain men (Das 2006). The young Christian woman not only violated the 'right' of her father to be the arbiter of sexuality by marrying without his consent, her conversion too was invalid by virtue of being independent of any mediation by the male members of her family.

A society structured through the sexual contract is formed not of individuals but of patriarchal units headed by men who have the authority to control the bodies, sexuality and reproductive capacities of women. That 'love marriage' within and across communal boundaries is considered problematic due to its challenge to the 'orderly exchange of women' between men (Das 2006:21) rather than any threat it might posit to the welfare or rights of women as individuals is demonstrated in this case by the father's ambiguity towards his daughter's well being.

When Nadia predicted that the girl would beg her family to rescue her from her in-laws in a few weeks, the father shook his head and said that he doesn't care about getting her back and that she was responsible for the consequences of her actions. The everyday violence inflicted on women within the domestic sphere, which necessitates elopements and clandestine relationships across all religious communities, social classes and ethnic groups in Pakistan, was too commonplace to merit any comment from any of the participants of the meeting.

> *In fact, the idea that young people may need to flee their homes in order to marry someone of their choice is so unexceptional that most Pakistanis including myself may not even think of it as a type of or manifestation of violence.*

I certainly didn't think about it while I was listening to the conversation – it seemed unremarkable to me that Rahat would have to elope in order to marry her

Muslim lover. It was only later when I was reflecting on my field notes that I realized that I had failed to flag this.

I mulled over bringing up this meeting and discussing some of my concerns with Nadia. Was it really inconceivable to her that a Christian woman might actually fall in love – however that may be defined – with a Muslim man? And that the latter may marry her because he too loved her – and not because he wanted to convert her and score some kind of spiritual rewards? If Rahat had married her Muslim lover without converting, would that have validated their relationship? What would make a woman's conversion 'authentic'? In the end I decided to let it go. I was conscious of Nadia's discomfort with her boss's decision to allow me access to their office and archives.[3] I didn't want to risk antagonizing her – I had yet to talk to her about her work with blasphemy cases. In that sense my decision was rooted in self-interest. However, I was also deeply anxious about being blinded by my own privilege. As an upper class Muslim woman, I have never experienced any kind of religious discrimination in Pakistan. Perhaps that is why it was easy for me to think about the possibilities of romantic inter-communal relations.

Nadia with her years of personally and professionally dealing with the consequences of vast inequalities of power probably had a more 'realistic' grasp of the situation. In an earlier conversation, she had related how Christian women are often more vulnerable in the workplace than their Muslim colleagues. Relating her experiences at some of her previous places of employment, she stressed that Christian women need to be more vigilant because Muslim men tend to think that they are more sexually available and hence less chaste than Muslim women.

She also said that Christian women need to be extra cautious in their interactions with Muslim men because the latter are aware of and exploit the fact that the state rarely provides any relief to victims of sexual assault from minority communities. I agreed with her. It is not uncommon to see newspaper headlines on the abduction of non-Muslim girls that are later repackaged by abductors and

their lawyers as consensual relations – even in the case of underage girls – in attempts to escape rape charges. In such cases, the girls' families are accused of fabricating abduction charges in order to prevent their 'voluntary conversion' to Islam.

It is clear that violence against women cannot be studied in isolation and unfolds along lines of class, religion and ethnicity. Moreover, conflict makes certain demands of women and mobilizes particular types of femininities and masculinities while suppressing others. Policing the bodies and sexuality of women continues to be a means of regulating communal boundaries in postcolonial South Asia (Gupta 2009).

> *In Pakistan the institutionalized nature of discrimination against religious minorities, legal bars to officially converting out of Islam, individual and mob violence against minorities, incidents of rape, forced conversions and forced marriages of minority women have further marginalized non Muslim women.*

The violence and discrimination against Christians is so pervasive that fear and skepticism often suffuse and supersede all other sentiments in inter-communal relations. Skepticism is sometimes the only vocabulary available to minorities for the articulation of relations with members of the Muslim majority. Moreover, the extent of social inequality means that individuals come to stand in for entire communities – rape and forced marriages become indices of persecution of the entire social group.

Converted women and their marriages become sites of outrage of masculine honor and religious sentiment. Consequently, emphasis on exceptional violence and histories of communalism within mainstream politics and social activism tend to efface the fragmented and fractured experiences of women actually living amidst communal and patriarchal violence. My own discomfort with the treatment of Rahat's conversion and elopement but eventual decision to not discuss it demonstrates how vast power differentials between the two religious communities and pragmatic concerns when collaborating with activists help

restrict the real and imagined pain of women to narratives of collective suffering.

[1] All names have been changed.

[2] *Choora/Choori* is a derogatory term used for Christians, especially those who work in sanitation. In a class system that relegates Christians to the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy, domestic and sanitary work remains the most visible marker and reminder of their exclusion. The terms *Choora/Choori* are often used to insult Christians regardless of their profession.

[3] The anxiety was understandable and rooted in the frequent threats faced by activists working with and assisting those accused of blasphemy.

References:

Das, Veena. *Life and Words Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*. University of California Press, 2006.

Gupta, Charu. "Hindu Women, Muslim Men: Love Jihad and Conversions ." *Economic and Political Weekly* 44.51 (2009): 13-15.

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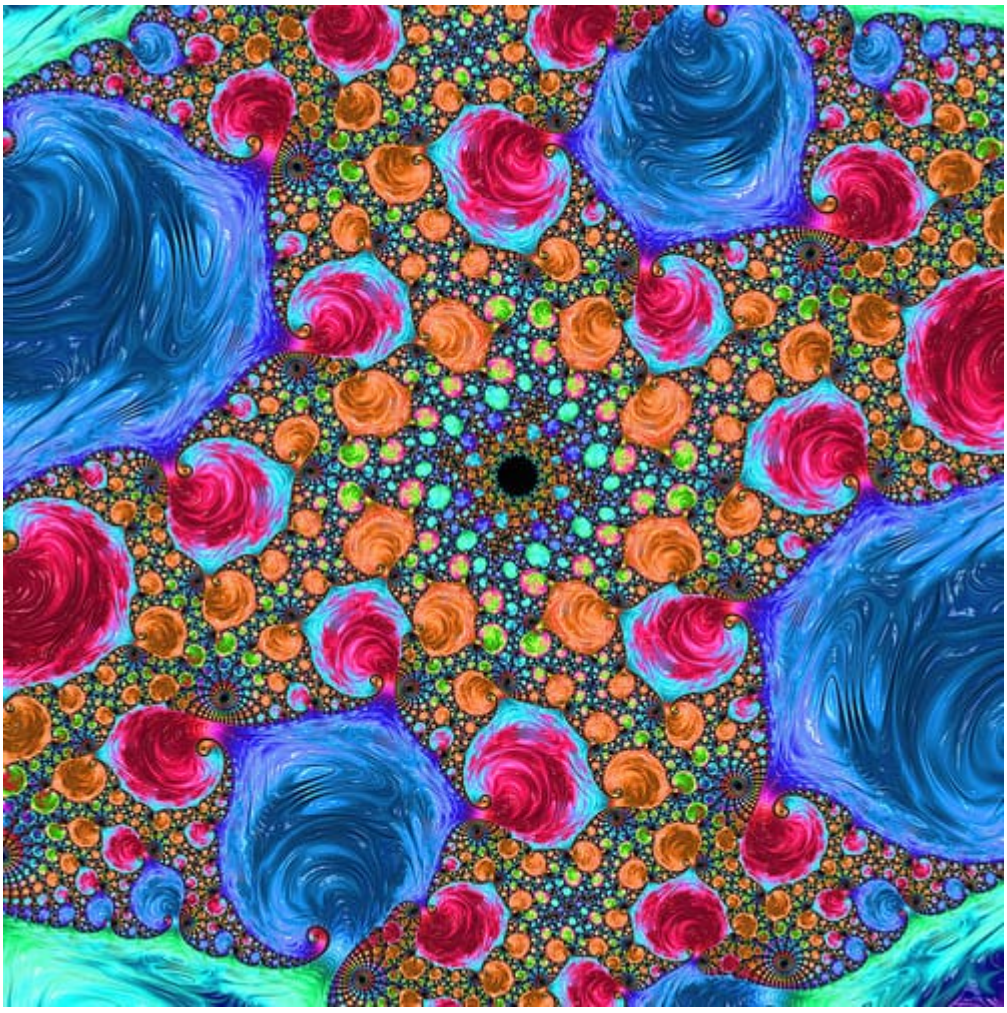
A response to McKee and Pritchard's reviews of 'One Hour in Paris'

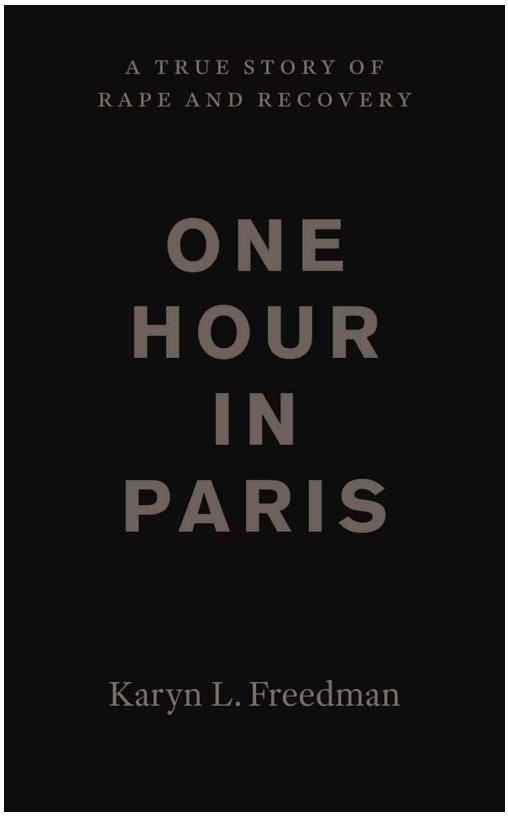
Karyn Freedman
February, 2016



I am grateful to Tamar McKee and Maureen Pritchard for their insightful and critical engagement with *One Hour in Paris: A True Story of Rape and Recovery* (University of Chicago Press, 2014), and for their generous reviews of the book. *One Hour in Paris* is a book about sexual violence, gender inequality, trauma and recovery. It is a memoir, but the book is not just about me. Over the course of five

chapters I make the point that the story of a young woman, a rape and its aftermath, is one that is, however deplorably, universal.

> *McKee sees through to my intentions in writing the book, both to my desire to speak out about these kinds of experiences which social norms dictate we keep secret, as well as to my desire to contextualize my own experience of sexual violence within the broader social and historical patterns of violence against women and girls.*



Indeed, it is in light of this set up that McKee finds the fourth chapter of the book, *Africa: 2008*, wanting. In this chapter I look at the prevalence of gender-based violence around the world, with a focus on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and also on Maun, Botswana, where I spent a few weeks in the fall of 2008 doing volunteer work at a nongovernmental organization called Women Against Rape (WAR). Although my time at WAR was brief, it was transformative in many ways. It helped to shape my understanding of rape and its aftermath. But McKee worries that I miss an opportunity here, most strikingly, she suggests, in my recounting of an afternoon I spent as a participant in a group therapy session, along with a handful of local women and girls.

> *This was a powerful and moving experience, and after describing it in this chapter I talk about how the session ended with the participants drawing pictures of imaginary gardens, each one of us creating our own makebelieve sanctuary.*

I don't relate the details of those pictures, and yet, as McKee claims, this would have been a perfect chance to give voice to the cross-cultural variation that we see in how survivors communicate the trauma of sexual violence, something that I discuss earlier on in the chapter. I find it hard to disagree with her on this point. This was an opportunity to step out of my perspective and into someone else's, and instead I move quickly here. I am not exactly sure why. I think in part I felt like I needed to protect these women, most of whom, on that afternoon, were speaking openly and publicly about their experiences for the first time. But perhaps also I did not fully appreciate the significance of the drawings, of how they were representative of the different ways that individuals express their hurt. In retrospect, I wish I had slowed down on this point and made it carefully. I could have done so in a way that did not betray any confidences gained during that session, and I agree with McKee that this would have enriched the story I tell in this chapter.

Pritchard is more critical than McKee. On the one hand, she recognizes the value of first-person narratives about rape and the importance of getting right its phenomenology, but at the same time she worries that the immediacy of this kind of storytelling shuts the door to more nuanced theoretical interpretations of trauma and sexual violence. Pritchard refers to a number of volumes that address head-on these theoretical issues, including work by Veena Das and Arthur Kleinman, as well as an edited collection by Susan Coakley and Kay Kaufman. I agree with Pritchard about the importance of these texts and the theoretical insight they bring to these issues, but I disagree with her criticism of *One Hour in Paris*.

> *To ask that I move further away from the subjective position, that is, from telling my own story of sexual violence, trauma, and recovery, in order to give a deeper theoretical analysis of these issues is, I think, to ask me to have written a different kind of book.*

Still, I agree with Pritchard that having rich theoretical analyses on these topics

helps ground first-person narratives like mine, and I hope that *One Hour in Paris* further entrenches the need for that kind of work.

Featured image: "Enchanted Garden" by Julie Geiger (flickr, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Luanda Taxi – a fieldwork playlist

Jon Schubert
February, 2016

https://soundcloud.com/jon-schubert/sets/luandataxi

Conducting ethnographic fieldwork in a hectic, chaotic, and sprawling multimillion metropolis like Luanda presents logistical and epistemological challenges. If one is not focusing on a clearly defined field site — like working in or through a neighbourhood association, for example — the notion of 'participant observation' has to be complicated, as people juggle multiple obligations, often cumulating several jobs, studies, family commitments, and their daily routines include extremely time-consuming travels from one part of the city to the other. While I probably made the most 'participant' observations in dealing with services of the public administration, my research on citizens' experiences with Angola's 'neo-authoritarian' regime was chiefly based on long conversations, often with regular interlocutors. These were complemented by observations of the stuff of everyday life: family lunches, motorised transport, petty commerce, police harassment, birthday and engagement parties, funerals, church services, and street-side chats.

More importantly perhaps, as I could not afford a car, walking the physical environment of the city, and observations in and from the ubiquitous *candongueiros*, the thousands of blue-and-white Toyota Hi-Ace minivans that make up the bulk of collective transport in Luanda, gave me a richer understanding of the tapestry of everyday life in Luanda. This was especially true because with such long-term fieldwork and under conditions where no one openly wants to speak of 'politics', it is key to attuning oneself to the fleeting manifestation of the political, that which 'blinks, momentarily shows itself, and escapes' (Navaro-Yashin 2002: 15).

> *Being stuck in traffic or bouncing through rain-filled potholes, squeezed in between fellow passengers, and listening to protest rap blaring from the loudspeakers of the candongueiros was an exhilarating and often also a definitely political experience.*

The playlist here is a small selection of popular tunes and summer hits from 2010/11. It mixes unabashedly commercial party and dance songs, Angola's very

own *kuduro* tracks (Moorman 2014), and the aforementioned protest raps, which really started in 2011 and continued ever since — for further reading see, here, here, here, and here. This will hopefully give you, the listener, a sensory immersion into the 'immediatist' rhythms of the City (Schubert 2016). Enjoy!

Playlist:

Puto Portugues — Tá sair male

Cabo Snoop – Windeck

Celma Ribas – Comando

Brigadeiro 10 Pacotes — Estado da nação

Titica – Chão Chão

Ary – Dá só

MC K – O país do pai Banana

Degala – Do Cambuá

Zona 5 – Dia do homem (the actual track only starts at about 1:52 of the video)

Nelson Freitas — Saia branca

Walter & Nicol Ananaz – Mboia

Yola Semedo — Marido infiel

References:

Moorman, M.J. (2014). Anatomy of Kuduro: Articulating the Angolan Body Politic

after the War. *African Studies Review*, 57 (03), 21–40.

Navaro-Yashin, Y. (2002). *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey*. Princeton, N.J. ; Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Schubert, J. (2016). 'A Culture of Immediatism': Co-optation and Complicity in Post-War Angola. *Ethnos*, 0 (online pre-publication).

Crime, crises and a competition

Allegra
February, 2016

You know us: we do not want to miss a single opportunity to publicise hot and exciting events on the anthropological calendar. And because times are dark (to say the least), you will notice that our february list of events is dominated by topics that illustrate the grim reality that surrounds us: crisis, violence, islamophobia, racism… Fortunately, our discipline can and SHOULD be part of the solution for a better world. So join the Sapiens-Allegra competition and become the next Margaret Mead…or simply attend one of the events listed below, and report to us!

Also: Do get in touch with Andrea at andreak@allegralaboratory.net or audef@allegralaboratory.net if you want your event to feature in our February list or if you feel like writing a short report.

Competition: Will the next Margaret Mead please stand up? The Sapiens-Allegra competition to discover new public anthropologists.

The anthropologist is a peculiar creature. We study the world, yet too often do not share our insights with the world.

Our work explores some of the most exciting and relevant issues that face humanity. We study our collective origins, the origins of violence, economic injustice, health disparities, our relations to family, constructions of "race," education systems, how cities organize themselves, how we talk, climate change, emerging digital worlds, and so much more. But all too often we conclude our research into these vitally important topics with texts that are accessible only to a narrow group of academics.

To encourage anthropologists to write about their work for a broader audience Allegra and SAPIENS have partnered to launch a competition for more engaged types of anthropological writing.

We invite submissions for timely and engaging articles that are accessible yet authoritative, exciting yet not sensationalistic. In particular, we welcome narrative-driven submissions that will appeal to a broad, adult college-educated readership, while demonstrating how anthropology contributes to a shared understanding of our world. [more]

Deadline for submissions: 1 June 2016

Conference: [Crimescapes: space, law, and the making of illegality in the Americas]

24-26 March 2016, Center for Latin American Studies, University of Florida

The 65th Annual Conference of the Center for Latin American Studies, *CRIMESCAPES: Space, Law and the Making of Illegality in the Americas*, taking place on March 24-26, 2016, invites to consider how legal and criminal acts are variously constituted across distinct geographical and social spaces throughout the Americas, above all where informal localized rules of legitimacy meet and even contest state and international regimes of law.

Our focus will be on the spatial dimensions of law, especially those thrown into relief when everyday, class-based anxieties about insecurity meet opportunities for (ill-gotten) wealth. Spaces of law are made and transgressed by altering material environments through the construction of walls, outposts and prisons, by marking and counter-marking territories, and through practices of surveillance, policing, and trespass. Yet they emerge no less through competing narratives over which acts should be deemed crimes, which people deemed criminals, and what kinds of transgressions must be stopped and punished. [more]

You can register here.

Conference: [THE SOCIAL – 4th International Association for Visual Culture Biennial Conference]

30 September – 1 October 2016, Boston University

THE SOCIAL is the title of the 4th International Association for Visual Culture Biennial Conference (IAVC2016@Boston). You can visit the conference site at OCR Visual Culture 2016. IAVC2016@Boston invites papers, presentations, interventions, collaborations, and events from researchers, artists, academics, curators, and activists on post-democracy, post-society, anger, violence, future visions, crisis, zombie democracies, social media, neo-slavery, post-capitalism, post-data, social evolution, revolution, actionism, post-state, interventionism, cannibalizing corporativism, post-colonialism, economic vampirism, neo-serfs, globalized thievery, art activism, red art, insurrectional art and social exploitation.

Analyses that explore the current failures or failing status of contemporary society and its revolts will take the form of events, panels and exhibitions in Athens, Istanbul, London, New York and internationally, leading up to the main conference on September 29th, 30th and October 1st, 2016 in Boston.

Visions of social democracy, visualization of the contemporary economic crisis, interpretations and analysis of revolts, data enslavement and rebellious usages of contemporary digital media are all parts of some of the projects and papers that we invite contributors to present.

The conference wishes to challenge and alter traditional academic interpretations and deal passionately with issues and topics that analyze, describe and envision ways and means to engage with what is left of the concept of society and social values in order to create a ‚world picture' of contemporary times. [more]

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 20 February 2016

Conference: [Perspective in the humanities and social sciences: hinting at interdisciplinarity – 3rd edition: figures of migration]

19-20 May 2016, Iasi, Romania

Migration has become lately one of the most debated themes, both in mass media, film, literature, and in international institutions and policy-making associations. Yet, the challenges determined by this phenomenon are not brand new; migration is a trans-historical process, with tremendous political, economic, social, religious, and cultural implications. Thus the intensification of these movements in the contemporary world, especially in Europe, puts migration under an even stronger emphasis.

This new analytical interest does not derive only from the amplification and diversification of human migration on objective grounds such as globalization, labor free circulation, mobility and offshoring, which have led to the massive desertion of underdeveloped regions and conflict areas. The present-day nomadism, either collective or individual, should be included within a broader, post-nationalist paradigm, developed in the aftermath of macro-states and enhanced acculturation. Humanist and social researchers have already pointed out that the modern world is “fluid”, being devised as such by an unprecedented circulation of persons, goods, capital, ideas, information and so forth. If one endorses this perspective, then definitely migration must be looked at as an epitome of our time. Beyond its downside political, economic or social effects, migration is also considered as a creative tool for cultural production. [more]

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 17 March 2016

Conference: Returning the gaze – Part II

4-5 November 2016, University of Innsbruck, Austria

ERIF is proud to announce the Call for Contributions for its second conference Returning the Gaze Part II. Picking up from our first conference – 2014's Returning the Gaze: Blackface in Europe – our second edition will continue to present a critical view on European racialised imagery, while approaching from a broader angle the departs from only blackface related themes.

Part II will be hosted at the University of Innsbruck, Austria on the 4th and 5th November 2016 and will examine the usage of racist and racialised imagery across the following topics:

– Introducing Europe: past and present resistance against racialised imagery
– Islamophobia: what this means for "multicultural" Europe in 2016
– Seeking asylum in fortress Europe
– Intersections of race, gender and trans/homophobia in entertainment and advertising

– Images Matter: decoding healthcare and welfare policies
– Decolonising the classroom from primary children to PhD candidates
[more]

Deadline for submission of proposals: 30 March 2016

Conference: Madness – The making sense of: madness project

10-12 July 2016, Mansfield College, Oxford, United Kingdom

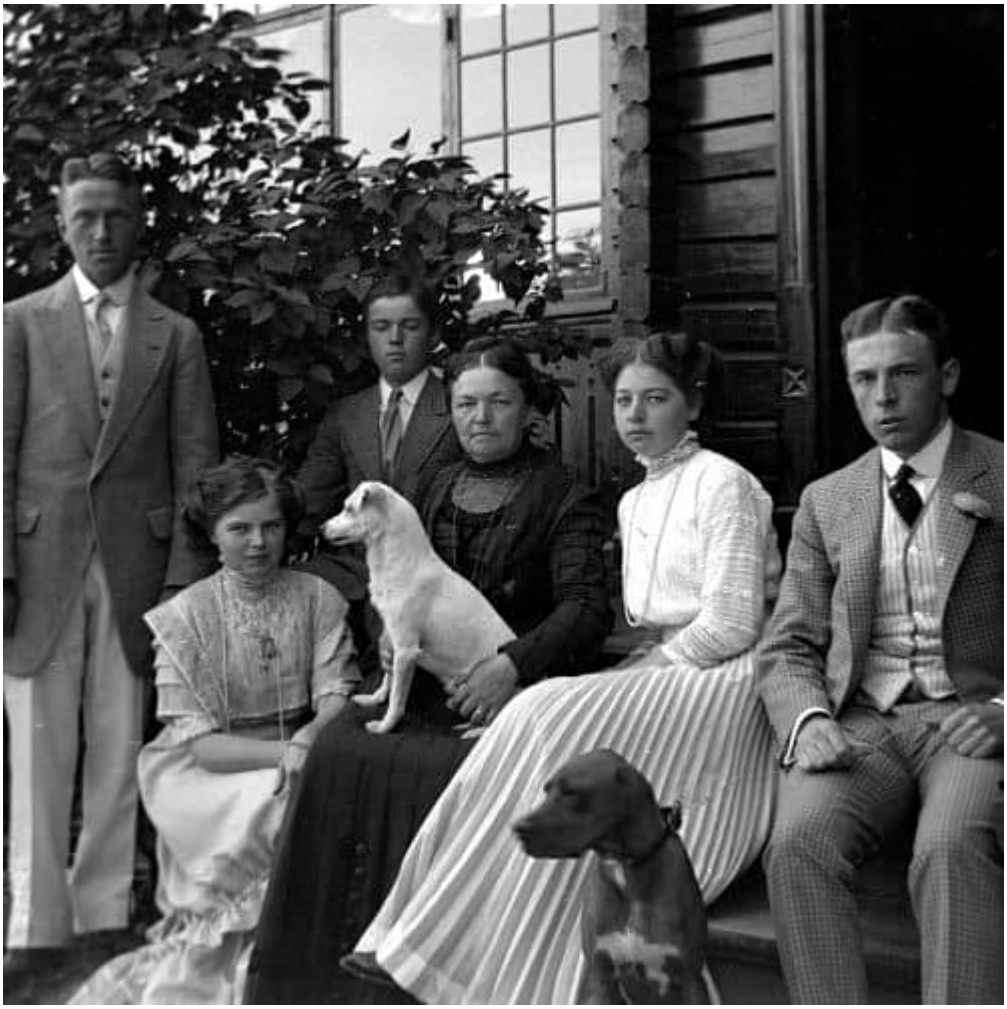
Madness: What is it? Why does it exist? Where and when does it happen? How does it happen, and to whom? Like the relation between otherness and identity, madness might have always been used to define its opposite, or defined by what it is not. Madness and its absence may even be intrinsically linked to everything we do and do not, to all we aspire and escape from; it could be part of our origins and fate. But how can it be identified, described, studied and/or treated? We propose to take an interdisciplinary approach, by which we mean one that allows us to develop dialogues about the subject from different points of view, from and between different disciplines and experiences. This will partly allow us to answer the questions above, in direct relation to the specific contexts in which madness is observed, studied and/or experienced and, it is desirable, it might also allow us all to understand that, just by being humans, none of us is actually immune to it.

This international, inter-disciplinary conference seeks to explore issues of madness across historical periods and within cultural, political and social contexts. We are interested as well in exploring the place of madness in persons and interpersonal relationships and across a range of critical perspectives. [more]

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 26 February 2016

Call for Reviews: Recent Publications on kinship

Allegra
February, 2016



Allegra's reviews editor curated for you this list of some of the most interesting recent releases on #kinship. It's sometimes good to go back to classic anthropological themes! And as usual, the list comes with a call for reviews. If you are interested in reviewing one of the books featured, contact our reviews

assistant Carolin Hirsch at reviews@allegralaboratory.net and we will send out a copy.

Here are our review guidelines:

As we receive many requests for reviews, please write 2-3 sentences why you should be reviewing this book, indicating how it relates to your own research or interests.

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

Word limit: 750-1500 words.

Font: Times New Roman.

Size: 12.

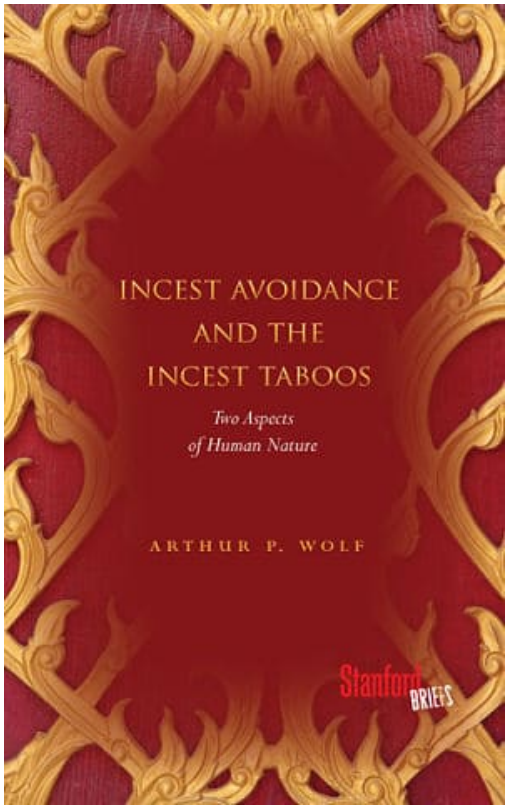
Line Spacing: 1,5

No footnotes.

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

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

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



Wolf, Arthur P. 2014. *Incest Avoidance and the Incest Taboos.* Stanford: Stanford University Press. 188 pp. Pb: $12.99. ISBN: 9780804789677.

Why do most people never have sex with close relatives? And why do they disapprove of other people doing so? *Incest Avoidance and Incest Taboos* investigates our human inclination to avoid incest and the powerful taboo against incest found in all societies. Both subjects stir strong feelings and vigorous arguments within and beyond academic circles. With great clarity, Wolf lays out the modern assumptions about both, concluding that all previous approaches lack precision and balance on insecure evidence. Researchers he calls "constitutionalists" explain human incest avoidance by biologically-based natural aversion, but fail to explain incest taboos as cultural universals. By contrast, "conventionalists" ignore the evolutionary roots of avoidance and assume that incest avoidant behavior is guided solely by cultural taboos. Both theories are incomplete.

Wolf tests his own theory with three natural experiments: *bint'amm* (cousin) marriage in Morocco, the rarity of marriage within Israeli kibbutz peer groups, and "minor marriages" (in which baby girls were raised by their future mother-in-

law to marry an adoptive “brother”) in China and Taiwan. These cross-cultural comparisons complete his original and intellectually rich theory of incest, one that marries biology and culture by accounting for both avoidance and taboo.

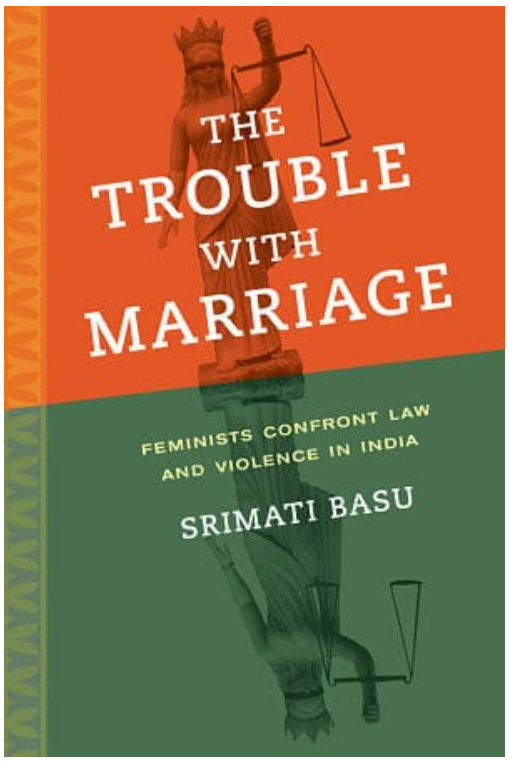
Robcis, Camille. 2013. *The Law of Kinship. Anthropology, Psychoanalysis, and the Family in France*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 320 pp. Pb: $27.95. ISBN: 9780801478772.

In France as elsewhere in recent years, legislative debates over single-parent households, same-sex unions, new reproductive technologies, transsexuality, and other challenges to long-held assumptions about the structure of family and kinship relations have been deeply divisive. What strikes many as uniquely French, however, is the extent to which many of these discussions—whether in legislative chambers, courtrooms, or the mass media—have been conducted in the frequently abstract vocabularies of anthropology and psychoanalysis.

In this highly original book, Camille Robcis seeks to explain why and how academic discourses on kinship have intersected and overlapped with political debates on the family—and on the nature of French republicanism itself. She focuses on the theories of Claude Levi-Strauss and Jacques Lacan, both of whom

highlighted the interdependence of the sexual and the social by positing a direct correlation between kinship and socialization. Robcis traces how their ideas gained recognition not only from French social scientists but also from legislators and politicians who relied on some of the most obscure and difficult concepts of structuralism to enact a series of laws concerning the family.

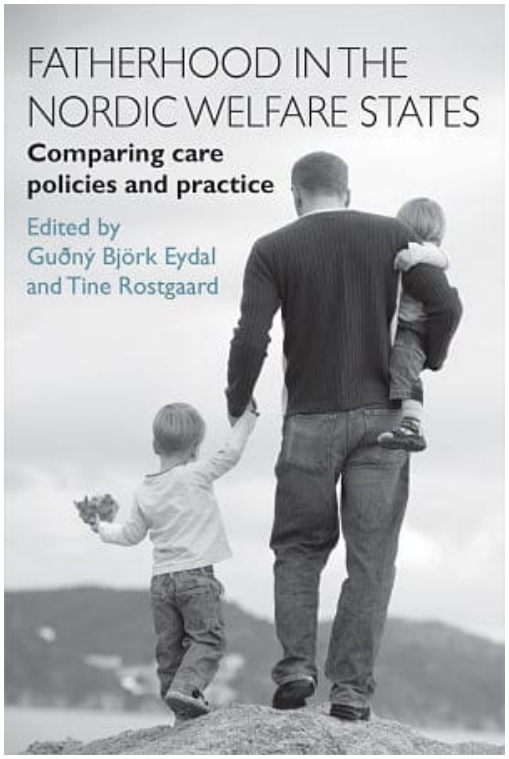
Levi-Strauss and Lacan constructed the heterosexual family as a universal trope for social and psychic integration, and this understanding of the family at the root of intersubjectivity coincided with the role that the family has played in modern French law and public policy. *The Law of Kinship* contributes to larger conversations about the particularities of French political culture, the nature of sexual difference, and the problem of reading and interpretation in intellectual history.



Basu, Srimati. 2015. *The Trouble with Marriage: Feminists Confront Law and Violence in India*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 280 pp. Pb $29.95. ISBN: 9780520282452.

The Trouble with Marriage is part of a new global feminist jurisprudence around marriage and violence that looks to law as strategy rather than solution. In this

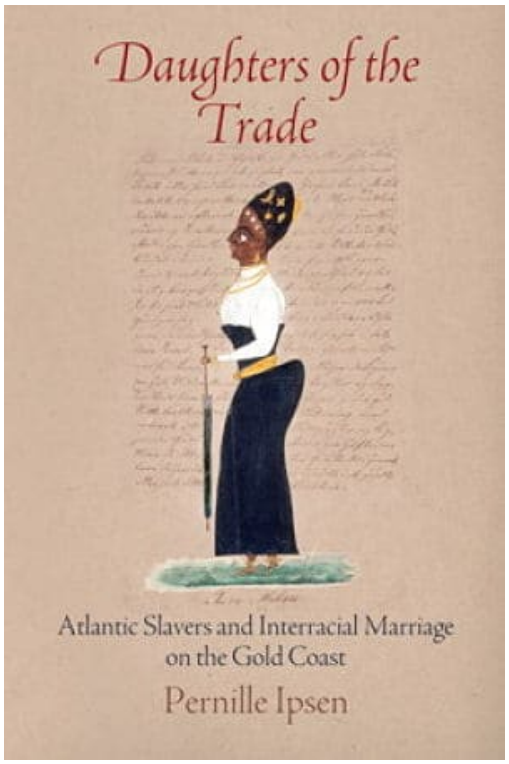
ethnography of lawyer-free family courts and mediations of rape and domestic violence charges in India, Srimati Basu depicts everyday life in legal sites of marital trouble, reevaluating feminist theories of law, marriage, violence, property, and the state. Basu argues that alternative dispute resolution, originally designed to empower women in a less adversarial legal environment, has created new subjectivities, but, paradoxically, has also reinforced oppressive socioeconomic norms that leave women no better off, individually or collectively.



Eydal, Guöný Björk and Rostgaard, Tine. 2015. *Fatherhood in the Nordic Welfare States: Comparing Care Policies and Practice*. Bristol: Policy Press. 424 pp. Pb: £27.99. ISBN: 9781447310471

The five Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, are well-known for their extensive welfare system and gender equality which provides both parents with opportunities to earn and care for their children. In this topical book, expert scholars from the Nordic countries, as well as UK and the US, demonstrate how modern fatherhood is supported in the Nordic setting through family and social policies, and how these contribute to shaping and influencing the images, roles and practices of fathers in a diversity of family settings and variations of fatherhoods. This comprehensive volume will have wide international appeal for those who look to Nordic countries and their success in creating

gender equal societies.



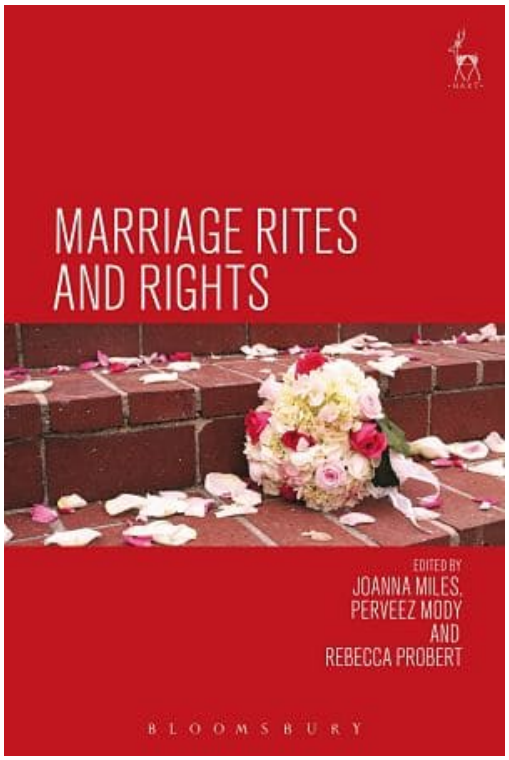
Ipsen, Pernille. 2015. *Daughters of the Trade: Atlantic Slavers and Interracial Marriage on the Gold Coast*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press. 288 pp. Cloth £32.50. ISBN 9780812246735.

Severine Brock's first language was Ga, yet it was not surprising when, in 1842, she married Edward Carstensen. He was the last governor of Christiansborg, the fort that, in the eighteenth century, had been the center of Danish slave trading in West Africa. She was the descendant of Ga-speaking women who had married Danish merchants and traders. Their marriage would have been familiar to Gold Coast traders going back nearly 150 years. In *Daughters of the Trade*, Pernille Ipsen follows five generations of marriages between African women and Danish men, revealing how interracial marriage created a Euro-African hybrid culture specifically adapted to the Atlantic slave trade.

Although interracial marriage was prohibited in European colonies throughout the Atlantic world, in Gold Coast slave-trading towns it became a recognized and respected custom. Cassare, or "keeping house," gave European men the support of African women and their kin, which was essential for their survival and success, while African families made alliances with European traders and secured

the legitimacy of their offspring by making the unions official.

For many years, Euro-African families lived in close proximity to the violence of the slave trade. Sheltered by their Danish names and connections, they grew wealthy and influential. But their powerful position on the Gold Coast did not extend to the broader Atlantic world, where the link between blackness and slavery grew stronger, and where Euro-African descent did not guarantee privilege. By the time Severine Brock married Edward Carstensen, their world had changed. *Daughters of the Trade* uncovers the vital role interracial marriage played in the coastal slave trade, the production of racial difference, and the increasing stratification of the early modern Atlantic world.

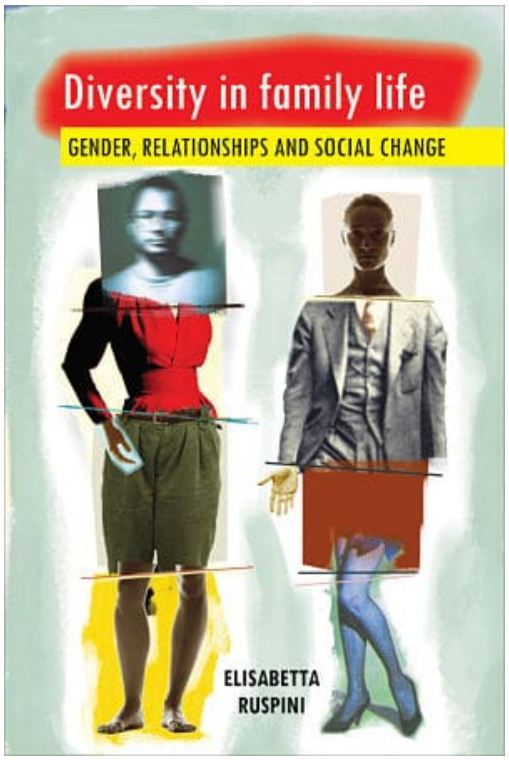


Miles, Joanna, Mody, Perveez and Probert, Rebecca (eds.) 2015. *Marriage Rites and Rights*. Oxford: Hart Publishing. 320 pp. Pb: £35.00. ISBN: 9781849469135.

Recent years have seen extensive discussion about the continuing retreat from marriage, the increasing demand for the right to marry from previously excluded groups, and the need to protect those who do not wish to marry from being forced to do so. At the same time, weddings are big business, couples are spending more

than ever before on getting married, and marriage ceremonies are increasingly elaborate. It is therefore timely to reflect on the rites of marriage, as well as the right to marry (or not to marry), and the relationship between them.

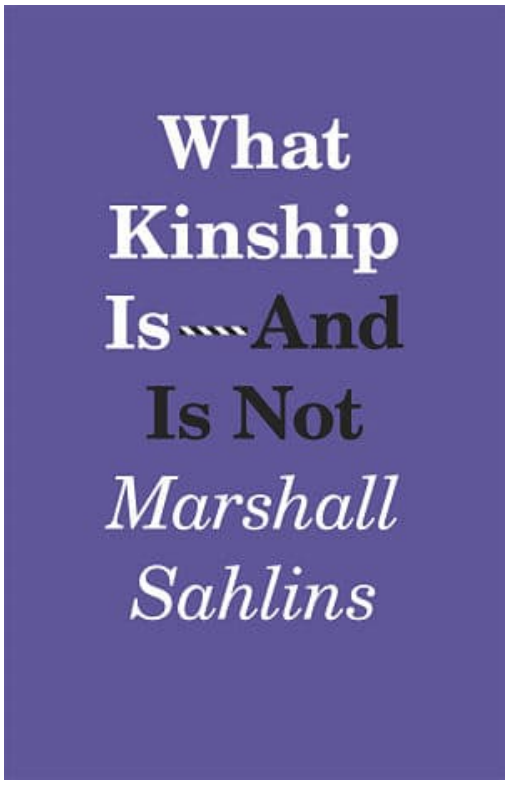
To this end, this new interdisciplinary collection brings together scholars from numerous fields, including law, sociology, anthropology, psychology, demography, theology and art and design. Focusing on England and Wales, it explores in depth the specific issues arising from this jurisdiction's Anglican heritage, demographic development, current laws and social practices.



Ruspini, Elisabetta. 2015. *Diversity in Family Life: Gender, Relationships and Social Change*. Policy Press. 176 pp. PB: $39.95. ISBN: 9781447300922.

As the variety and number of nontraditional families grow, so does the need for new models of family and parenthood. *Diversity in Family Life* discusses the relationship between shifting gender identities and the processes of family formation, examining non-traditional family structures, including asexual couples, child-free couples, living-apart-together couples, single parents, and homosexual and transsexual parents. Calling for bold reformulations, it argues that it is

possible to live, love, and form a family in an astounding variety of ways.



Sahlins, Marshall. 2013. *What Kinship Is – And Is Not*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 120 pp. Pb: $16.00. ISBN: 9780226214290.

In this pithy two-part essay, Marshall Sahlins reinvigorates the debates on what constitutes kinship, building on some of the best scholarship in the field to produce an original outlook on the deepest bond humans can have. Covering thinkers from Aristotle and Lévy- Bruhl to Émile Durkheim and David Schneider, and communities from the Maori and the English to the Korowai of New Guinea, he draws on a breadth of theory and a range of ethnographic examples to form an acute definition of kinship, what he calls the "mutuality of being." Kinfolk are persons who are parts of one another to the extent that what happens to one is felt by the other. Meaningfully and emotionally, relatives live each other's lives and die each other's deaths.

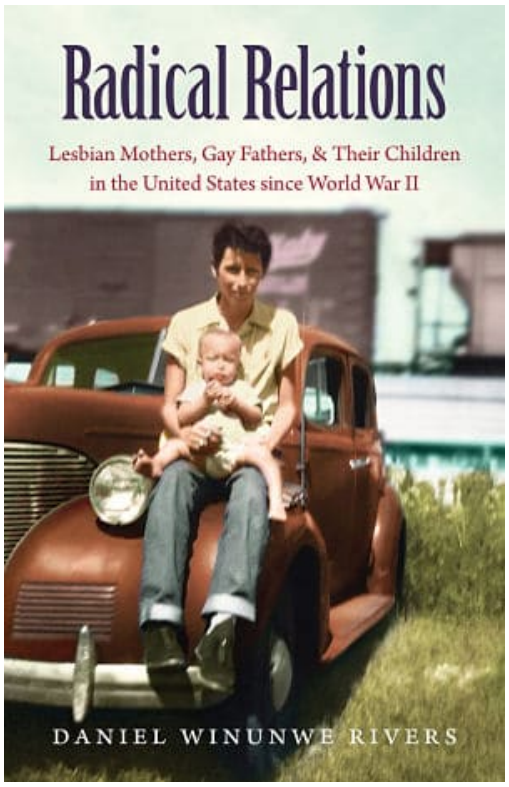
In the second part of his essay, Sahlins shows that mutuality of being is a

symbolic notion of belonging, not a biological connection by "blood." Quite apart from relations of birth, people may become kin in ways ranging from sharing the same name or the same food to helping each other survive the perils of the high seas. In a groundbreaking argument, he demonstrates that even where kinship is reckoned from births, it is because the wider kindred or the clan ancestors are already involved in procreation, so that the notion of birth is meaningfully dependent on kinship rather than kinship on birth. By formulating this reversal, Sahlins identifies what kinship truly is: not nature, but culture.

Zhang, Everett Yuehong. 2015. *The Impotence Epidemic: Men's Medicine and Sexual Desire in Contemporary China*. Durham: Duke University Press. 304 pp. PB: $25.95. ISBN: 978-0-8223-5856-5.

Since the 1990s China has seen a dramatic increase in the number of men seeking treatment for impotence. Everett Yuehong Zhang argues in *The Impotence Epidemic* that this trend represents changing public attitudes about sexuality in an increasingly globalized China. In this ethnography he shifts discussions of impotence as a purely neurovascular phenomenon to a social one. Zhang contextualizes impotence within the social changes brought by recent economic reform and through the production of various desires in post-Maoist

China. Based on interviews with 350 men and their partners from Beijing and Chengdu, and concerned with de-mystifying and de-stigmatizing impotence, Zhang suggests that the impotence epidemic represents not just trauma and suffering, but also a contagion of individualized desire and an affirmation for living a full life. For Zhang, studying male impotence in China is one way to comprehend the unique experience of Chinese modernity.



Rivers, Daniel Winunwe. 2015. *Radical Relations: Lesbian Mothers, Gay Fathers, and Their Children in the United States since World War II*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 312 pp. Pb: $24.95. ISBN: 978-1-4696-2645-1.

In *Radical Relations*, Daniel Winunwe Rivers offers a previously untold story of the American family: the first history of lesbian and gay parents and their children in the United States. Beginning in the postwar era, a period marked by both intense repression and dynamic change for lesbians and gay men, Rivers argues that by forging new kinds of family and childrearing relations, gay and lesbian parents have successfully challenged legal and cultural definitions of family as heterosexual. These efforts have paved the way for the contemporary focus on family and domestic rights in lesbian and gay political movements. Based on

extensive archival research and 130 interviews conducted nationwide, *Radical Relations* includes the stories of lesbian mothers and gay fathers in the 1950s, lesbian and gay parental activist networks and custody battles, families struggling with the AIDS epidemic, and children growing up in lesbian feminist communities. Rivers also addresses changes in gay and lesbian parenthood in the 1980s and 1990s brought about by increased awareness of insemination technologies and changes in custody and adoption law.

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Featured image by Municipal Archives of Trondheim (flickr, CC BY-NC 2.0)

Cologne: Why cultural explanations are dangerous for feminism

Julie Billaud
February, 2016

The sexual assaults that occurred in Cologne on New Year's Eve will long be remembered in Germany and in Europe more broadly. What a pity that each time women experience violence the same level of emotion is nowhere to be witnessed! Let's be honest, what triggered the alarm was not the horrid treatment of women on that night. Rather, it is the nationality of the attackers that was at stake, the victims once again being relegated to background discussions. As if sexual violence was a crime only committed by "others", "non-white" Muslim men, those who come from elsewhere. This Orientalist discourse, fueled by rampant Islamophobia in Europe since 9/11, has sadly become commonplace.

Yet, according to UN figures, it is estimated that 35% of women worldwide have suffered sexual or physical abuse at the hands of their intimate partners at some point in their lives. 70% of female murder victims are killed by their male spouse.

The aggressions in Cologne are not an isolated event but are rather part of an alarming global context of widespread discrimination and violence against women. This trend can be noticed in the paternalistic reaction of Cologne's mayor who recommended women to keep an arm-length distance with strangers. Again, women were the ones to be disciplined, not the men who assaulted them. This remark was all the more shocking that it came from a woman.

Despite these undeniable facts, the discussion remains focused on the nationality and religion of the attackers. Ironically, we never hear anything about "Bavarian culture" when women are assaulted each year during the traditional "Oktoberfest". Thus, Cologne feeds the stereotype of the "rapefugee", a combination of the words "refugee" and "rapist" which appeared during the demonstrations organised by the extreme right movement Pegida after the events. Riss, the cartoonist of Charlie Hebdo – a French satirical newspaper that has now become the symbol of freedom of expression worldwide – did not hesitate to reinforce racist amalgams by drawing Aylan Kurdi, the dead child drowned while his family tried to join Europe, as a sexual abuser in adulthood.

Cultural explanations are used to silence the dynamics of sexual nationalism at work in the current "refugee crisis". Indeed, debates on national identity that have emerged in many European countries often mobilise gender and racial stereotypes. Preserving "our values" and "our identity" requires to portray the "other" (Muslim, refugee) as occupying a diametrically opposite moral universe, particularly on issues pertaining to women and LGBT people's rights. Nationalist parties (but also more traditional right and left wing parties) use this classic version of colonial feminism to justify their securitarian and discriminatory policies towards refugees and Muslims.

While European Muslim women are increasingly victims of Islamophobic attacks which do not trigger any reaction from the public or governments, feminist issues are manipulated by the very people who in other circumstances have little interest in women's rights. The feminist movement itself is deeply divided between a universalist trend that promotes emancipation through assimilation of

differences and a more open one that takes into account race and class inequalities. The first trend, which currently dominates public debates, is dangerous because it excludes “non-white” women who experience other forms of discrimination. Furthermore, it reinforces the stereotype of the mysogynist Muslim man on which deadly nationalism flourishes throughout Europe. After Cologne, the European feminist movement will have to make decisive decisions which involve its own future. Feminists everywhere should remember that Muslim men do not have the monopoly of rape and that in the struggle for equality, nothing is ever gained by vilifying others.

A slightly modified version of this article was first published in French in the Swiss newspaper *Le Temps* on January 26th, 2016.

Lessons from a King

Gabriella Sanchez
February, 2016

For El Señor

On January 8 I followed – along with perhaps most of the world's population connected to the net – the coverage of the recapture of the man dubbed the most wanted drug-lord in the world: Joaquín Guzmán-Loera, alias El Chapo. Mr. Guzman-Loera was arrested in the aftermath of an operation conducted by the Mexican military in the proximity of the city of Los Mochis (about 1400 kilometers from Mexico City) and not too far from his hometown of Badiraguato. While official reports continue to contradict each other, Mr. Guzmán-Loera was apparently apprehended after managing to temporarily escape the troops through a sewage line. Once located he was taken to a sordid roadside motel while police back-up arrived to be then transported to Mexico's capital. A triumphant Enrique Peña-Nieto (Mexico's president) rushed to Twitter to announce the capture and

promptly held a press conference surrounded by his security cabinet – a group that seemed more relieved than happy, and whose members congratulated one another over a job well done.

I will not discuss here the political implications of Mr. Guzmán-Loera's arrest, the alleged involvement of the U.S. DEA in his search or the extradition requests from the American government that according to some reports are in the process of being granted by the Mexican government. Instead, I look beyond the spectacle and focus on what the aftermath of the arrest teaches social scientists on and off the field. Here I reflect on the implications of conducting research in an already hyper-visible field such as drug trafficking, and of how as academics we have often become complicit in reinscribing images of criminalized practices as inherently dark, heinous and – my favorite – out of empirical reach, as if they occurred in some alternate universe à la Star Wars, or as if we could only dissect them by relying on their most graphic, gruesome examples.

Moments after Mr. Guzmán-Loera's arrest, the version that his apprehension had been facilitated due to his contacts with actors and producers he had approached to make his biopic emerged in social media. I warned that the claim that the world's most wanted drug-lord could have fallen prey of his ego to the point of risking going back to prison – or even worse, being extradited – was preposterous at best. A few hours later an article by Rolling Stone Magazine seemed to confirm some of these notions. It featured an interview of Mr. Guzmán-Loera conducted by Sean Penn – an American actor best known for having been Madonna's husband – and brokered by Kate del Castillo – a Mexican actress whose pitiful portrayal of a drug empress (loosely inspired on Arturo Perez-Reverte's The Queen of the South) had recently reenergized her ebbing career as a telenovela star.

While the online publication of the article immediately raised both praise and condemnation for Penn, the piece in itself is worthy of methodological analysis. Penn (who once interviewed Hugo Chavez and is member of the crop of Hollywood's neo-humanitarian entrepreneurs trying to generate awareness from

conflict diamonds to forced child labor to sad-looking dogs) narrated an experience all too known to social scientists:

> *the nightmarish process of identifying contacts in the field who can lead us to our unicorn: the right informant. The all-knowing, the all-merciful respondent.*

As anthropologists we often experience the tension and fear that Penn did. The long waits. The wrong phone numbers. The false tips. The no-shows. And then, one day, the lucky break. The winning lottery ticket. The ultimate prize. Bingo.

And of course, the story never ends there because having obtained access to the informants, one must reach them. And so we embark on those hardly remarkable, although also sometimes unparalleled journeys on the back of commercial trucks, riding buses across borders or – as in Penn's case –traveling through "jungles" (most likely, a remote sector of the Mexican mountains known as The Golden Triangle) to reach the almighty being who holds the knowledge we once thought unreachable – or in Penn's case, Mr. Guzmán-Loera.

Penn's narrative far from constitutes a good example of anthropological inquiry – one wonders how the editor in charge of the story felt while sorting through Penn's self-centered notes and detail lacunae. Penn's questions, informed by the very media who has made him remotely recognizable these days demonstrate the naïveté and western-centeredness of our understanding of drug trafficking. "Do you think it is true you are responsible for drug addiction worldwide? Is it true that drugs destroy humanity and bring harm? Who do you love best, your mom or your dad? (Granted, he did not ask that but was horribly close).

What caught my attention was the short video Mr. Guzmán-Loera himself prepared for Penn. I was captivated by the sight of one of the most sought-after fugitives in the world sitting down for an interview recorded using his son's cell phone, the sounds of roosters and birds in the background. He listened and replied to every question carefully and concisely. His responses never sounded rehearsed – he seems to find the notion of his arrest as potentially stopping the

global flow of drugs sadly ludicrous. Mr. Guzmán-Loera transformed Penn's simplistic, shallow questions into reflections not just of an activity he knows well, but rather into a concise analysis of how precarity has impacted the lives of those involved in the drug trade.

> *What emanates from the video and the interview transcript is what so many scholars of organized crime refuse to accept: that those involved in irregular, criminalized activities like drug trafficking are ordinary human beings.*

Once the over-reliance on myth and sensationalism that has corroded much scholarly analysis of transnational organized crime, drug trafficking and border crossings in the Americas and beyond is left aside, the men and women involved in irregular, underground and criminalized markets share our same concerns. Fear over the future, the lack of jobs, the price of oil and the unavailability of opportunities for women and children. They admit the role violence plays in their chosen fields, yet acknowledge it does not constitute a valid, sustainable mechanism toward stability or success, as ambiguous as those concepts may be. The responses of Mr. Guzmán-Loera reminded me of what our respondents often teach those of us researching underground or illicit economies, and that we often forget: the drive and the desire to leave poverty behind; to have access to jobs or clean water. To see the world's metropoles having crossed the border without documents on foot or by boat. Falling in love. Partying with friends. Having a job. Having a life–living their lives.

Let's therefore not fall for the stupid story of a capo who fell prey of his own ego and was captured as he escaped through a cloaca in Mexico. Instead, let's dissect the role of the precarity of contemporary life in the life of a kid from La Tuna, Badiraguato, to find a way to survive and to become – as ordinary and simple as it may sound – a man.

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Featured image by Victor (flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Response to Daniel Münster's review of 'The Darjeeling Distinction'

Sarah Besky
February, 2016

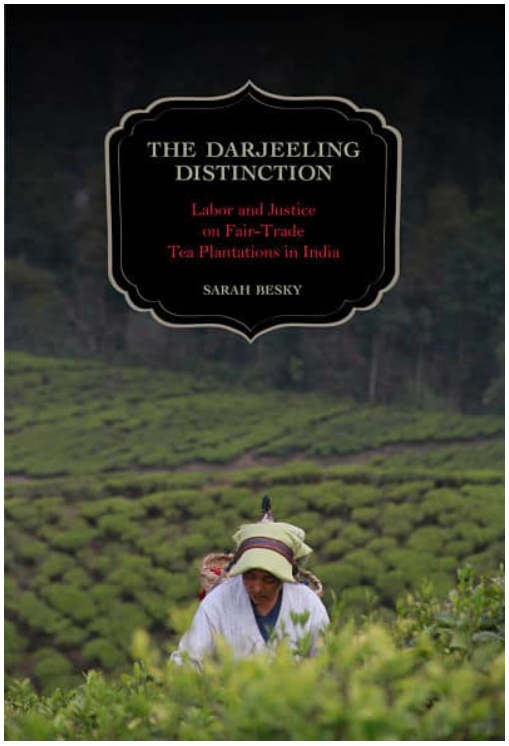
The Darjeeling Distinction, as Daniel Münster notes in his thoughtful review on Allegra Lab, is about both a place and a product. Darjeeling is nestled in the

Himalayan foothills of the Indian state of West Bengal. It shares borders with Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh, as well as the former kingdom (and now Indian state) of Sikkim. Darjeeling was founded by the British in the 1830s as a "hill station." Since the surrounding region was sparsely populated, the British recruited thousands of laborers from Nepal to clear-cut forests and construct roads and buildings. Boarding schools and sporting clubs sprang up alongside bureaucratic offices, while imported conifers and garden plants brought the landscape in line with British ideals of a restorative "nature." Thanks to the influx of Nepali labor, Darjeeling quickly became a site of social reproduction, but through the development of the hill station, agricultural production steadily intensified. The historical origins of Darjeeling (the place) as a hill station and mountain refuge are inseparable from the contemporary status of Darjeeling (the product) as a globally circulating luxury beverage.

While luxury is certainly important to Darjeeling's identity as a product and as a place, I first went to the region to study its most recent incarnation, as a site and emblem of ethical trade. On grocery store shelves in the US, I saw Darjeeling tea adorned with many labels—such as organic, fair trade, Rainforest Alliance, and Demeter. One of these labels stood out to me in my early research.

> *I began to see a remarkable disconnect between the aims, ideals, and marketing messages embedded in fair trade labels and the reality I saw on the ground on Darjeeling plantations.*

Despite this disconnect, tea plantations—grounded in histories of colonial control, land exploitation, and landscape transformation—are being enveloped into a global market for fair trade certified products with increasing frequency. Darjeeling, as I learned during my research, has served as a kind of testing ground for fair trade certification on plantations. I began my research by asking the question: how can a plantation ever be fair?



In order to understand how a plantation could be fair, I had to ask first what a plantation *was,* as a social, environmental, and economic form. This question emerged from my reading at the time of interdisciplinary discussions of agriculture in geography and food studies. Among other things, these studies tracked the resurgence of small scale, "local" food in response to the industrialization of agriculture around the world. This literature critiqued the capacity of fair trade certification to bring post-colonial small farmers into the market for socially responsible food. Despite all the talk about small farmers, the fair trade-certified tea you buy today at your local store still comes largely from *plantations*, especially if you are buying black tea (the green tea produced in East Asia is a product of different historical and ecological circumstances and is a very different product). The plantation seems to stand in opposition to our commonly held ideas of what fair trade should be, even in its ideal form.

On my grocery store shelves, tea produced on plantations in India (as well as Sri Lanka and East Africa) still seems to sit a bit too comfortably alongside locally grown organic kale and artisan pork, as well as ethically sourced coffee from Central America.

> *I see fair trade as a kind of a conceptual and institutional vehicle for this collapse of geographies, land tenure systems, and political economies of production and circulation.*

This collapse, along with conversations that I had with colleagues and fellow students in the Geography and Rural Sociology departments at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, inspired me to cross-pollinate perspectives on food and

agriculture in the Americas with concerns in South Asian studies about legacies of colonialism and postcolonial questions of rights.

In his review, Münster asks why I do not engage more with the question of organic certification. This is a fair point, considering that the fair-trade certified tea plantations on which I worked, arguably, have much more in common with the industrial organic production systems Julie Guthman has described in California than the fair-trade Nicaraguan coffee cooperatives that Bradley Wilson—another geographer—has studied in rich detail.

In answer to Münster, I would say, first, that although the plantations on which I worked were nearly all certified organic, organic certification and production methods had little meaning to the workers that I spoke with. On some Darjeeling plantations, managers lauded organics, while on others, workers told me that pesticide and fertilizer spraying continued. (Indeed, Darjeeling teas found to contain pesticide residues are often sent back to their producers from places like Germany, rejected by buyers dedicated to organic standards.) Sometimes, I was shown bug-ridden compost bins by management during plantation tours. Despite numerous inquiries, I could never quite figure out when and how this compost was used, or—more anthropologically important—what it meant to tea plantation workers when it was used.

Readers of Allegra Lab may already be aware that different national organic certification programs have different definitions of "organic" and different legal frameworks for enforcing those definitions. As anthropologists of law and regulation, we need to better understand the overlaps and divergences among these. As a globally circulating product that traverses several different national organic rubrics, Darjeeling tea might make a good case study.

But organics are just one part of an even larger story. For example, I have collected a good deal of ethnographic material on biodynamic (or Demeter-certified) tea production. On biodynamic plantations, workers must regularly collect and transport cow dung to make biodynamic "preparations," most notably

fertilizer, in addition to plucking and pruning tea bushes. Münster's question about organic certification has prompted me to think through this material, and I hope to write more about it. My interest is as much in the environmental impacts of biodynamic certification as in intersections between ethical trade and new-age philosophy. Biodynamic farming practices are undergirded by the anthropo*sophical* teachings of Rudolf Steiner (of Waldorf school fame). The cow is the central animal in biodynamic practice. There are unexplored connections here between Hindu perspectives on the "sacred cow" and consumerist New Age ones. In biodynamics, we see environmental, social, religious ethics overlapping across time and space.

Still, what troubles me is that organic and biodynamic certifications, despite their restrictions on inputs to soil, have little to say about land tenure. Herein lies a moral quandary for these movements. Both big and small producers can be organic, for example, but are these land tenure systems really commensurable? In my case, fair trade allowed me to think critically about how land tenure matters to ethical trade.

Münster also rightly points out that the book selectively employs a multispecies perspective. I drew on a multispecies framework to describe how women workers understand the plantation. When I was writing the book, I was invigorated by a wave of exciting conversations around more-than human-landscapes, and I found that a multispecies perspective opened up my own material.

> *It remains important to me that we understand the plantation as a more-than-human form, and that the specifics of environmental conditions continue to be part of plantation studies. Understanding the relationships (positive, negative, and otherwise) between plantation women and tea bushes provides a check against a temptation to see plantation labor as only an alienating experience.*

A multispecies perspective, in my opinion, lets industrial agricultural laborers voice their own understandings of their lives and work without having those understandings written off as "false consciousness." Anna Tsing (2012) has

argued that plantations "remove the love" between people and plants. I agree with Tsing that plantations depend upon coercion and exploitation, but her question provoked me. What is love? What is the place of love in labor studies?

I suppose I am concerned less with love than with more thorny affective states. Love is definitely not the way to describe plantation workers' relationships to plants, but the tea we know today is inseparable from the plantation form. Has a tea bush in India ever been loved? Love was not there in the first place to be removed. So what is there? What kinds of relationships, what forms of human-human and human-nonhuman sociality are produced on plantations? This last question was what concerned me and compelled me to adopt a multispecies perspective, though I did only develop that perspective in one chapter.

I appreciate that Münster sees this and other "loose ends" "as a promise of more to come." In two ongoing projects, I am thinking in a multispecies framework to explore other aspects of industrialized agriculture and urban space in Darjeeling and Northeast India more generally.

The first is a long-term project about the afterlives of the hill station. I am

exploring the environmental dimensions of the Gorkhaland agitation, the longstanding movement for Gorkha subnational autonomy I describe in Chapter 5 of the book. Even today, over six decades after the end of British rule, tea plantations, tended by the descendants of Nepali labor recruits but owned by British and later Indian companies, remain pillars of the region's economy. Despite living in the region since the mid-1800s, these Indian Nepali workers, or Gorkhas, continue to claim that they are not acknowledged as full Indian citizens. For decades, Gorkhas have struggled to break Darjeeling off of the state of West Bengal and to create a separate state of Gorkhaland within the Indian federation. But *what* is being separated is a much a question of *whom*. While many analyses of subnational movements in India characterize them as struggles *for land*, struggles *with land* are equally important to Gorkha senses of belonging. In my new project, I ask how contemporary Gorkha encounters with environmental problems, including landslides, a crumbling colonial infrastructure, and pest animals, provide insights into the relationship of land to identity in Indian subnationalism, as well as in political and environmental anthropology. Gorkha *land* and Gorkha *identity* can both be seen as "edge effects:" the material and ideological results of encounters between ecosystems, species, and ways of occupying space.

I ask how the Nepalis who remained in Darjeeling after independence have worked to assert belonging there. Hill stations are examples of what environmental philosopher Val Plumwood (2008) calls "shadow places:" places materially and imaginatively oriented to the sustenance and the enjoyment of others. Making claims to belonging in shadow places is difficult. In shadow places, as Plumwood (2008, 139) writes, "[t]he very concept of a singular homeplace or 'our place' is problematised by the dissociation and dematerialisation that permeate the global economy and culture."

Though British capital has long dried up, Gorkhas today still find themselves working to maintain Darjeeling's colonial infrastructure and to keep its tea and timber plantations viable. Indeed, their claims to political control over Darjeeling paradoxically depend upon such maintenance work.

> *Questions about the rights of Gorkhas to place are bound up with questions about the ecological effects of tea plantation monoculture, the sustainability of forests, and the appropriateness of a sprawling city in the steep Himalayan foothills.*

Gorkhas recognize themselves as the collective inheritors of a colonial infrastructure: one that is visibly decaying as capital recedes, while rainfall, population growth, and other kinds of wear continue to take their toll.

The second project is on reform in the Indian tea industry. As I discuss in *The Darjeeling Distinction*, Darjeeling has a special caché on the tea market. Many other tea-growing regions in India, however, are not so endowed. Such regions, most notably the Dooars, adjacent to Darjeeling, produce undifferentiated (and un-certified) black tea for both foreign and domestic markets. In the Dooars, many plantation owners, faced by a flooded market and decreasing yields, are closing their plantations. Plantation closure allows owners to keep their leases on land but excuses them from the obligation to provide workers with basic food rations, housing, and other facilities. Plantation closure is having deadly consequences. Indeed, some workers in the Dooars are reportedly starving to death. The monocultured landscape has turned from a source of work and minimal social support into a killing field. I will be thinking through these ideas in a School for Advanced Research (SAR) seminar on "How Nature Works" in September 2016, which I am co-convening with Alex Blanchette (Tufts University) and Naisargi Dave (University of Toronto). The goal of the seminar is to cross-pollinate posthumanism with labor studies.

Over the last few years, I have been excited to see more scholars coming together around the problem of the global plantation. Daniel Münster's careful review of *The Darjeeling Distinction* has raised important additional questions not only about alternative ways of producing agricultural commodities, but also about alternative ways of seeing and theorizing these commodities.

Featured image by *shankar s.* *(flickr, CC BY 2.0)*

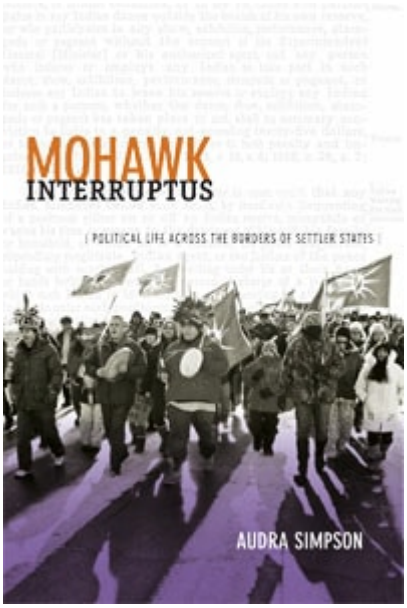
Mohawk Interruptus

Nirmala Jayaraman
February, 2016

In the online forum *Native Appropriations*, Dr. Adrienne Keene writes “When you’re invisible in society . . . every representation matters” (Keene 2015). Keene’s need to explore, triangulate and discuss resolutions regarding the need for sovereignty among Native American communities readily matches Audra

Simpson's optimism in her own ethnography, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*. Like Keene's blog, Audra Simpson's writing offers an opportunity to understand how representation manifests itself in terms of both "difference" and "relatedness" (p.11).

To begin with, she reminds readers that political "recognition" places an emphasis on requiring tribes to express a specific version of cultural difference, or "otherness", instead of an autonomous one, independent from settler and colonial provisions (p.20). In other words, "recognition" still monitors cultural differences in a way that does not lead to equality but rather serves as a reaffirmation of how history has always been reported (p.20, 33). However, Simpson does not dwell on the past, but rather uses it to show how significant the act of "refusal" is among Native American communities, like the Kahnawà:ke, living between the United States and Canada (p.33).



When indigenous groups "refuse" conditions and contracts provided by former colonial powers, they are highlighting how colonialism is still ongoing and is now a "failure" for contemporary life (p.33). Simpson writes with care and gives her readers a sense of what an "interruptive capacity of that life within settler society" could mean for future ethnographers and historians of Native North America (p.33). Simpson sees that the ideal of "this sovereignty often exists more in consciousness than in practice, as the community confronts the competing claims to sovereignty of materially dominant state(s) that sit atop their land and administer their populations" (p.39).

For example, when opposing narratives concerning the heritage of one informant do not merge well together, Simpson wonders, "Why was this exchange so puzzling? Perhaps because a very complicated story has been simplified through history, and this man's complicated claim does not 'line up' with that simple

history as easily as we are use to" (p.38). During her interviews, she detects that "the most critical question, the question of family" obscures the promise of having a uniform history for informants living as members among the Kahnawà:ke (p.38). Identity starts with the founding of relationships between individuals of the present and survivors of the past. Without kinship, where is their history?

Though this question poses a worthy challenge to the interviewer, it also represents the extent to how community members have migrated or have gone missing.

> *At her best, Simpson surprises us because she is willing to start all over again, and reconsider how she defines her terms.*

She invites readers to witness the struggle "that challenged an emerging paradigm in my research on the primacy of kinship and family, and family as a political form of relatedness" (p.40). Conflicting legal definitions of family and inheritance further undermine the question of historical representation when she sees how family lines are continually redrawn between the mother's clan and then rewritten to conform to the pattern of patrilineal descent (p.58).

Simpson clarifies that "My point is not to challenge this interlocutor's truth claim but to point out the way in which the narrative he provides highlights the very problem of settler colonialism, of fragmentation, of doubt" (p.64). She then discusses the prospect of reinventing ethnographic methodology to better portray this intricate history. To write an ethnography that interrupts assumptions made by anthropologists from previous centuries is also a necessity for advocates seeking to address histories that have disappeared (p.64). In that sense, her strongest point is actually her style of writing, the act of refusing to portray communities as being "more perfect, more culturally 'intact'" (p.65).

Simpson writes in a way to ensure "a future that is not bound so inextricably to the desires of others" so that anthropologists can evoke more honesty in how they view their own role in documenting history (p.70-71). By constructing a hierarchy

of traditions to look for, prior to even interviewing their informants, anthropologists have also contributed to the problem of "ahistoricity", of neglecting points of views that are not readily "discernable" to those existing outside the cultures in ethnographic studies that were "born, in part, from mimetic play" (p.73, 75, 77). The traditions captured in ethnographies really reflect a tradition of ethnographic methodology that once privileged the anthropologist's comfort zone by default over the disagreements witnessed during their work (p.73).

Simpson defends the idea that anthropologists should acknowledge the fact that their work consists in creating a meta-critical analysis that always remains messy and unfinished (p.71). In this book, she changes her approach toward ethnographic writing and remains true to her original argument: that one sovereignty can exist within another sovereignty and that this idea "interrupts and casts into question the story that settler states tell about themselves" (p.177). In other words, members within a given Indigenous community may not agree on what representation means to them, yet acknowledging the existence of their debates and discussions is still a way of valuing their "capacities for self-rule" (p.100). One could dispute that all of this theoretical discussion would have fallen on deaf ears if Simpson had chosen not to share it.

> *Since the work of an anthropologist is never fully complete, when can a researcher start showing their work and analysis in the form of a published ethnography?*

I do not see Simpson's book as lacking information because she "refuses" to complete the stories of her informants (p.113). Rather, it is the responsibility of the reader to learn from more people, like Keene, who encourage members of Indigenous communities to voice their ideas both inside and outside the discipline of cultural anthropology.

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Wrapped in the Flag of Israel

Anya Evans
February, 2016

How can we conceive of the contemporary relationship between race, poverty, and bureaucracy? Smadar Lavie's latest publication, an account of her experience as a Mizrahi single mother dependent on Israeli state welfare, provides a valuable contribution to all those concerned with bureaucracy, neoliberalism, and the on-going occupation of Palestine by Israel. By shedding light on the little-known but demographically dominant Mizrahi population of Israel, Lavie answers questions that the audience may have perhaps not anticipated. She also provides a vital contemporary overview of Israel's racial hierarchy and its impact on regional politics.

Lavie sets the ethnically complex scene by differentiating between Ashkenazi (those of European origin) and Mizrahi (those who emigrated from Arab and Islamic areas) Jews. She then distinguishes between those Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and within what is known as "'48", or present-day Israeli borders. Locating the majority of the Mizrahim as socioeconomically inferior to the Ashkenazim, Lavie explains the arrival of Mizrahi Jews to Israel in the 1960s as a result of the Ashkenazi elite's need to establish a Jewish labour force and demographic buffer to the fleeing Palestinians. As a civilising ideology, Zionism aimed to reform Israel's growing population to an Ashkenazic paradigm, using the notion of 'chosen people, chosen land' to establish a binary construction of ethnicity that opposes Jews to Arabs. Therefore, upon their arrival to Israel, the Mizrahim were encouraged to shed their Oriental habits and languages and 'Ashkenazify', or 'Europeanise', themselves according to the Zionist standard.

> *The Arab Mizrahim were largely settled in the border areas of the new Israeli state and were financially and socially neglected in favour of the Ashkenazim. With less hereditary wealth, larger families, and lower incomes, the Mizrahim are now a demographic majority but a cultural minority, underperforming and underrepresented in most areas.*

With a higher number of single-parent families combined with a higher rate of unemployment and a lower rate of professionalisation and education, Lavie explains how the Mizrahim are rendered dependent on a state that is reluctant to support them. Following the Oslo Accords of the early 1990s and the waves of global neoliberalism that preceded it, the Israeli state began to retract its welfare programmes, allowing NGOs to fill its previous functions while outsourcing labour to cheaper foreign markets. Neoliberalisation also impacted the legal protections

afforded to single parent families, with no legal function enabled to extract child support payments from absent fathers. These cuts impacted the large population of Mizrahi single mothers hardest, rendering them dependent on ever decreasing welfare payments. The impoverishment of the Mizrahim and their shared Arab heritage with the native Palestinian population might give cause for collaboration between the two groups, but in fact the Mizrahim remain predominantly Zionistic and anti-Arab in outlook.

A relatively new subject in anthropology, existing work on the Mizrahim tends to focus on their marginalisation (Khazzoom 2003, Chetrit 2000) and their transition as immigrants to Israel (Shohat 1999, 2003). Lavie's alternative focus on single mothers is particularly interesting, as a more religiously traditional community but with a high number of single parent households, the Mizrahi single parent is dependent on the state for financial support and kept as such by being made increasingly marginal to the workforce. Particularly interesting is Lavie's account of her own positionality in relation to her subject: due to a series of unpredictable circumstances, Lavie finds herself trapped in Israel, unable to secure employment despite her previous status as a Berkeley professor due to her Mizrahi status, and thus suddenly forced into the position of auto-ethnographer. Acknowledging that auto-ethnography is often rejected by the British and North American academies as somehow more unreliable than the narratives of informants, Lavie utilises the particular circumstances of her position to provide a unique insight into the pain of the experiences shared by her and her fellow welfare mothers. This is emphasised by her use of a more unconventional ethnographic style, which includes letters, diary entries, the use of anger in ethnographic writing, encounters with other Mizrahim both in her personal and professional life, and her own struggle against the state's reclassification of her identity in its own terms.

> *What is crucial to understanding the plight of Mizrahi Jews, and what Lavie skilfully makes clear, is how the Israeli state denies its Jewish citizens the right to an identity politics outside the boundary of 'Jewish'.*

As the Zionist state operates on an ethnic binary of 'Jew' opposed to 'Arab,' the Mizrahim are in an especially complex position as former Arabs, encouraged to shed their 'uncivilised Arab ways' but also unable to completely deny themselves their past, and perhaps unable to identify how the Ashkenazi-led state uses this as a tool against them. Lavie describes her informants as trapped in such a position without any agency, unable to speak out against a state that oppresses and denies them their ever shrinking welfare allowances while fashioning itself as their protector.

> *It is here that lies my chief criticism of both the book and the practice of auto-ethnography itself: while the depth of Lavie's own experience as a Mizrahi welfare mother is fascinating, it leaves the breadth of knowledge of others lacking.*

Where we understand intimately the emotional and financial aspects of Lavie's own demotion to the role of welfare-dependent single mother and what this entails, the use of auto-ethnography as means of representing all Mizrahi single mothers silences their voices by omission. While some testimony of her contemporaries appears, it is used primarily to show their politics in relation to the Palestinians and the Ashkenazim, not as voices of their interactions with the state. Though Lavie's privilege as a half-Mizrahi academic émigré to the United States is clearly acknowledged, in her use of auto-ethnography we are denied the experiences of those Lavie claims to speak for. Consequently her privilege in her ability and status to voice the pain she seeks to document and share also serves as a means by which to silence her fellow Mizrahi single mothers.

However, this is not to the detriment of the analysis of the pain inflicted on her by the bureaucratic encounter. Describing with a Geertzian thickness the myriad ways in which welfare dependency exhausts and humiliates its beneficiaries, Lavie expands upon the work of Handelman (2004) to expose the concept of bureaucracy as a modern instrument of torture. Adapting Scarry's (1985) plus-minus model of torture to show how the bureaucrat unwittingly abuses the

mother in a plus-plus (mutually repellent) relationship whereby the bureaucrat is unable to simply and efficiently solve the single mother's needs, and the mother is unable to avoid this encounter, and indeed is forced to undertake it with increasing regularity in order to survive. As a result the bureaucratic encounter becomes self-perpetuating and ritual-like in form, requiring the Mizrahi welfare mother to repeatedly submit to its punishment in order to eke out the meagre provisions of the state.

Lavie then theorises the essence of this bureaucracy: GendeRace, a neologism for the dual means by which the Ashkenazi-Mizrahi distinction is formed and thus Mizrahi single mothers are prevented from achieving the social mobility attained by their Ashkenazi contemporaries. Consequently, Lavie shows that the unilateral front against the Arab enemy that the regional ethnic privilege of Jewish identity demands overpowers the call for an internal identity politics for those damaged by the gendered and racialised aspects of the Israeli bureaucratic engine.

Lavie's ethnography fills a chasm in the anthropology of Israel that documents the inter-ethnic hierarchies and how these are impacted and enforced by the state. In doing so she situates the Mizrahim not only in relation to their own subordination within Israel, but also in relation to the on-going inability of the Israeli government to forge peace with Palestine. What is fascinating is the detail given to the ways in which the Mizrahim are played off against the Palestinians in Israel's media as a means of deflecting attention towards and away from the conflict depending on the needs of the government in the eyes of the national and international media.

As a relatively new topic in anthropology, an auto-ethnographic account of the Mizrahim provides a unique insight, and Lavie is particularly well qualified in detailing a peculiarly unusual removal of status and privilege and how this might impact upon one's identity in relation to neoliberalism and the ethnic binary of Jew versus Arab formulated by the Israeli state. Beginning and ending the book with scenes from Mizrahi protest against their treatment by the Israeli state, Lavie shows how the single mothers are manipulated and bought off to be

silenced, ominously indicating at one point that a Palestinian suicide bomber is capitalised upon, even given a security exception, by the government as a distraction technique. Ultimately, as an institutional ethnography of bureaucracy, Lavie paints an intimate and personal picture of the pains of poverty and state-dependency, using her privilege to speak for those with less. However, as an ethnography of an under-privileged population, especially a majoritarian one, I wonder if Smadar Lavie might be able to share with us in the future more testimony from the broad umbrella of experience that is to be a Mizrahi Israeli.

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Author's Response

Writing book reviews is integral to the circulation of ideas and dialogue between scholars. This daunting job often goes unappreciated. I am grateful to Anja Ryding for the time and care she put into this important public service and for her cogent summary and analysis of *Wrapped in the Flag of Israel*.

There seems to be **two errata**, however, that I would like to address for potential readers of my book.

First, although I am currently a scholar-in-residence at U. C. Berkeley and completed my Ph.D. at this fine institution in 1989, I was not a professor at Berkeley before my forced stay in Israel from 1999 to late 2007 — The book states clearly that I was an associate professor at U. C. Davis. Since, as the reviewer aptly points out, my background and personal experience are the basis for the autoethnographical component of Wrapped, it seems important to be clear on this matter.

Second, *Wrapped in the Flag of Israel* dedicates a whole chapter to discussing the socio-economic effects of Mizrahi labor migration to Palestine from 1882 onwards. 1882 marks the beginning of Ashkenazi Zionist settlement of Palestine as well. The book does not discuss Mizrahi immigration to the state of Israel in the 1960s, as the reviewer claims in her opening paragraph. Indeed, Chapter One emphasizes the importance of understanding the role of pre-Nakba Mizrahi migration to Palestine, rather than the large waves of 1950s migrants.

Prof. Smadar Lavie

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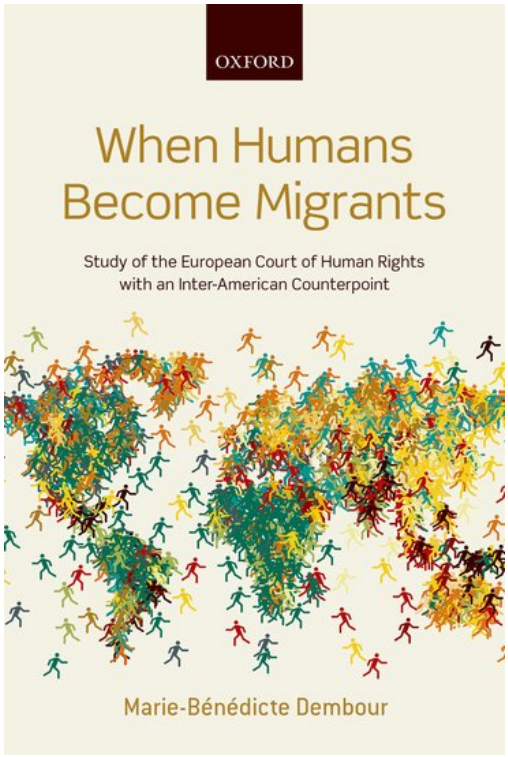
Featured image (cropped) by couturiere7 (flickr, CC BY 2.0)

When Humans Become Migrants

Tea Skrinjaric
February, 2016

The current humanitarian crisis is not only a flux of events that have been occurring recently, despite the impression created by the latest media coverage. Indeed, statistics do report that the numbers of refugees and migrants coming to Europe has increased compared to earlier years. Nevertheless, armed conflicts in certain countries are ongoing, and as European countries are facing some of the consequences within their own territories, all of a sudden leading political figures

are asserting that the ‘problem’ must be solved at its root.



It seems that Europe is divided in finding the appropriate expressions for describing the current situation, titling it as either a migration crisis or a refugee issue, despite statements made by the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that it is more than a mere migration phenomenon. Regardless of the terminology, the recent decisions to reinstate some of the internal Schengen borders and set up physical barriers on the external ones (i.e. the Hungarian border with Serbia and Croatia) raise the question of the violation of migrants’ rights on different levels, warn against legal challenges people are facing, and reveal the lack of a joint European policy towards migration.

People from war-affected countries desperately run for their lives and, paradoxically, largely risk those same lives on their exhausting voyage to a safer location. At the same time the managed migration process dehumanises the image of the struggle for human lives and dignity, and twists it into an image of events that have engendered political crisis and induced fear from destabilising European democracy and *our* way of life.

> *Individuals and numerous civil rights organisations are crying out that no human is illegal, bearing in mind that anyone who is in need of help is a human being in the first place, and therefore deserves to enjoy certain rights.*

This is the approach on which Marie-Bénédicte Dembour emphasises in her new book in *When Humans Become Migrants*. The creation of the ‘migrant category’ is a key distinction in processing cases, both at the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in Strasbourg, and at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights

(IACHR) whose headquarters are in San José, Costa Rica. The author conducted extensive research on the two regional human rights courts and through the three main parts of the book, *Foundations*, *Consolidation* and *Prospects*, she examines and analyses numerous immigration-focused court cases within each institutional context. Being well aware of the wide scope of meaning of the word "migrant", she stresses that her main interests were those most unprivileged (p. 27).

The first part, *Foundations*, explores the historical settings and early trends that resulted in the two contrasting approaches of the Courts and the different ways of applying the law. It presents the founding texts of the European and American Conventions of Human Rights which contributed to the different treatments of migrants. Part 2, *Consolidation*, examines the way in which the migrant case law of the European and Inter-American Courts was integrated in two different directions, especially reflecting on the failure of the European system of human rights to protect everyone in need, regardless of nationality. Dembour refers to this as a new form of institutionalised racism or discrimination at the least (p. 505). Part 3, *Prospects*, consists of reviewing recent case law in order to track changes in identified trends of the migrant case law of the two Courts, and to predict the potential development in European and Inter-American jurisprudence.

As its subtitle suggests, the book is a *Study of the European Court of Human Rights with an Inter-American Counterpoint*. Given that these two Courts were established and operate in different social and political circumstances, the author does not suggest a direct comparison of the two, but rather examines the different approaches to migration that these two courts apply. Even though both Courts apply similar human rights standards, Dembour highlights the contrasting biases of the Courts. She criticises the ECtHR's migrant case law, its approach to migrants as "aliens" who are subject to the control of the state (p. 8), and the Court's suggestion that migrants are masters of their own lives (p. 504), omitting the limitations of certain marginalised groups of people, and inclining in favour of the state. On the other hand, the Inter-American case law represents the counterpoint in its implementation of the *pro-homine* approach (p.7). Migrants are primarily conceived as human beings who should be protected, rather than

subjects who threaten the state. This judicial method of the IACHR is portrayed as a possible instance of how the European human rights body's jurisprudence could or should be applied. The critique of the ECtHR is not solely in its approach, but also in its passivity in developing the human rights of migrants: "the great majority of migrant applicants today lose at Strasbourg, just as they did 20, 30, and even 50 years ago" (p. 21). By presenting concrete cases processed at both Courts, examining political and social contexts of the applicants and taking into account the legal norms and processes of the Courts, the author contributes to scholarship critical of the Strasbourg case law, which she recognises as relatively rare.

> *What I found noteworthy in Dembour's stylistic approach was the way she takes into account the gender sensitivity in regard to the topic.*

She critically notes that female migrants are often overlooked in policy circles and in the academic literature, even more by either using the masculine pronoun or the possessive when referring to a generic applicant. Therefore, she devotes special attention to this issue by deliberately using the feminine in odd-numbered chapters and the masculine in even-numbered chapters, not only when referring to applicants, but also in respect to other nouns as well.

In sum, Dembour offers not only a perspicacious analysis and prudent suggestions, but also raises significant questions such as how the interests of migrants on one hand and of states on the other could be balanced without a bias for either or another (p. 8), or how to regard "the other" as one of our own, create an open and inclusive attitude and set it as an institutional imperative (p. 504). As the title of the Chapter 8 suggests, the fact is that we are all "…equal, but some more so than others" (p. 250). Dembour suggests that we should, therefore, strive to make a change, both in everyday life and within the legal framework, to see migrants as humans too.

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Support Academics for Peace! Sign the Petition!

Allegra
February, 2016

Recently, a petition written by Turkish academics has circulated online, demanding an end to the Turkish government's attacks on the Kurdish provinces of the country. Since the website where the petition is posted is constantly attacked by hackers, we at Allegra, decided to make it available via our own site. Support our Turkish colleagues and sign the petition!

————————————

As academics and researchers of this country, we will not be a party to this crime!

The Turkish state has effectively condemned its citizens in Sur, Silvan, Nusaybin, Cizre, Silopi, and many other towns and neighborhoods in the Kurdish provinces to hunger through its use of curfews that have been ongoing for weeks. It has attacked these settlements with heavy weapons and equipment that would only be

mobilized in wartime. As a result, the right to life, liberty, and security, and in particular the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment protected by the constitution and international conventions have been violated.

This deliberate and planned massacre is in serious violation of Turkey's own laws and international treaties to which Turkey is a party. These actions are in serious violation of international law.

We demand the state to abandon its deliberate massacre and deportation of Kurdish and other peoples in the region. We also demand the state to lift the curfew, punish those who are responsible for human rights violations, and compensate those citizens who have experienced material and psychological damage. For this purpose we demand that independent national and international observers to be given access to the region and that they be allowed to monitor and report on the incidents.

We demand the government to prepare the conditions for negotiations and create a road map that would lead to a lasting peace which includes the demands of the Kurdish political movement. We demand inclusion of independent observers from broad sections of society in these negotiations. We also declare our willingness to volunteer as observers. We oppose suppression of any kind of the opposition.

> *We, as academics and researchers working on and/or in Turkey, declare that we will not be a party to this massacre by remaining silent and demand an immediate end to the violence perpetrated by the state. We will continue advocacy with political parties, the parliament, and international public opinion until our demands are met.*

For international support, please send your signature, name of your university and your title to info@barisicinakademisyenler.net

Background Note (as of 15 January)

This is now much more than yet another online petition. Since it was made public

with an initial list of 1128 signatories from Turkey and 355 international supporters on 10 January, a multifaceted campaign targeting the signatories has been underway. The stakes have become high, especially for colleagues based in Turkey:

The targeting campaign started with a number of newspapers declaring the signatories “terrorist-supporters”, “PKK collaborators” and “traitors”. President Erdoğan gave a speech on 12 January in which he denounced the petition as “treason”, “colonialism” and “mandateism”, and scorned, insulted and threatened the signatories. On the same day, following the president’s speech, the Higher Education Council (the body that oversees universities in Turkey) announced that they would take measures against academics who signed the letter.

Since then 27 university administrations have either initiated formal action ranging from investigation to suspension of staff members who signed the petition, or declared their intention to do so.

On 13 January, Sedat Peker, ultranationalist mafia boss with known “deep state” ties and a following among fascist vigilantes, made explicit death threats to the signatories in a post on his official website saying he and his comrades would “shower in their blood”.

Since 14 January, a criminal investigation against the initial 1128 signatories has been underway, with charges carrying 1 to 5 year prison sentences.

As of 15 January, at least 28 academics in 4 cities (Kocaeli, Bursa, Erzurum, Bolu) have been detained in connection with this petition campaign and some have had their homes searched by the police. According to the lawyers following the case, most are released after they are interrogated by the prosecutors.

For reliable (if at times non-fluent) coverage in English, see http://bianet.org/english.