



Brazilian Food. Race, Class and Identity in Regional Cuisines

Simrat Kang
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“The symbolic power of foods...is different from (even if related in some manner



to) the tactical and structural power that sets the outermost terms for the creation of meaning. The power resting within outside meaning sets terms for the creation of inside, or symbolic, meaning...what is needed is a concerted effort to study the various ways in which stable food habits can be called into question.” – Sidney W. Mintz, *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and the Past* (22-3)

Highlighting the power of food, Mintz asks scholars to think *with* food rather than relegating it to a secondary or tertiary site of knowledge production, as often happened in early anthropology. Anthropologists of food have taken up this call differently; in [*Brazilian Food: Race, Class and Identity in Regional Cuisines*](#), Jane Fajans asks what food does to categories of difference and how it might be a way to rethink the nation and region in Brazil. *Brazilian Food* explores the connections between regional culinary and cultural traditions and Brazilian nationalism, asking how both shape Brazilian identities. Like Mintz, Fajans aims to understand the circuits of power and difference in Brazil by deploying homey, everyday foods as exceptional tools to consider the taken-for-grantedness of nation, citizen, region, and the transnational. Importantly, Fajans uses this book as an inter-national experiment; *Brazilian Food* tries to help readers consider what it is about Brazilian food that *makes* it good for thinking with.



Fajans also addresses the everydayness of food, exploring what is naturally kept hidden—borders, ethnic identities, class positions, racialisation, ideals of modernity—and what food can do to make them visible, particularly the promise and the myth of a unified nation.

In the book's introduction, Fajans explains that she is particularly interested in identity and regionalism because of a growing feeling of a singular national



belonging in Brazil, where the nation's elites control "sites of unity", including soap operas, Carnival, sporting events, and ecotourism. For Fajans, thinking with food helps us reconsider the ways that region has been understood as both a fixed site for understanding the particularities of people and "their" food, and porous, movable boundaries that can be crossed by food. By interrogating the cultural and culinary values of various regions, Fajans counters a holistic narrative of nation and nationalism, writing the nation as both a multiplicity of Brazils and a celebration of Brazil as a discursive whole.

Fajans uses the majority of her text to detail the complex differences between singularity of, or kinship among, regional Brazilian cuisines. Each chapter is rich in ingredients, techniques, and stories, and asks how food co-substantiates identity, labor, regionalism, and terror. By crossing regions, thinking through specific ingredients (*acai*, *dendê oil*), and examining what is produced in cosmopolitan food centres (São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro), Fajans asks how food is a site of differentiation—racial, regional, classed, laboured—that also contributes to a singularising kind of identity creation. In Brazil, the historical legacy of multiple colonialisms and transnational exchanges, from the influences of Portugal to the more recent East Asian influence via chefs, both come together to create what is called Brazilian food. This multiplicity of influences and exchanges reinforce the value of and difference among regional food cultures.

For Fajans, food also makes meaning as it moves—the same dish might be made using the same basic ingredients in two regions, but the way it is consumed, classed, and the place it holds at mealtime is different. Fajans shows how the meanings of individual dishes are solidified and rendered visible when the dishes themselves are threatened. Other dishes retain and produce meaning in their everydayness and their place at every table. One of the most striking examples she uses to illustrate this is the dish *feijoada*, touted as the national dish of Brazil.

By centralising feijoada's "nationalness", Fajans show how its multiplicity of provenances and places at the table might help us consider Brazilianness as a whole.



Feijoada (a stew of beans, meats, and flavorings that is often accompanied by many side dishes, including rice, uncooked salsa, and *couve*, or “collard greens”) has roots in the kinds of ‘make due’ dishes that are the base of so many culinary foodways. Fajans explains that the origin story people often invoke about the dish is that it emerged from the ingenuity of slaves who made tasty dishes out of what was left in the master’s pantry. Part of *feijoada*’s mythic status at the tables of Brazilians is its “melting pot” quality, where it is thought to represent the nation; Fajans extends this, comparing the dish to French cassoulet, Tuscan beans cooked with meat, or feijoadas from Portugal (p. 89). More than this, however, *feijoada* illuminates the way that stories about the nation travel, particularly among the upper and middle classes, who narrative the equality of Brazilians of indigenous, European, and African ancestries.

Feijoada itself disrupts this discursive egalitarianism—it is not consumed by everyone at the same time every day, but rather “a whole sector of the country does not partake in the ritual except as laborers...They are not included as ‘family’ or granted commensal relations through eating together” (p. 96). *Feijoada*, a melting pot of a national dish, becomes for Fajans a way to highlight the still extreme classed, ethnic, and gendered distinctions between Brazilians.

In this way, it is feijoada that makes meaning from within the myths of national unity that disenfranchise many Brazilians: those who labor in the very kitchens that produce “national” food.

The book’s last chapter, *The Chemistry of Identity: Cooking Up a New View of a Nation*, brings all of these themes together in a discussion of restaurant cooking, cookbooks, tourism, and a discourse of rescue that many have applied to regional foods and cuisine. Many of the people Fajans encounters in this chapter think deeply about ingredients, their preparation, and the histories they carry—from the environmental chef who sits with the author and a group of anthropologists at dinner, lovingly telling them about the ingredients he used in each dish, to the



cosmopolitan cook who embraces fusion cooking while adopting the ingredients and techniques of the “regional hinterlands” (p. 103). In so doing, they increase the visibility of regional cuisines. This happens both when regional cuisines are more deeply attached to their regional provenance, and when they blend and fuse with national and international cuisines, exceeding the boundaries of the region and nation through cooking, eating, and sharing food.

Brazilian Food allows us to rethink the function of nationalism in a country where diversity is visibly celebrated. By using food as her primary tool to think with, Fajans interrogates how food is connected to individuals’ racial, regional, and national identities.

Food also allows her to ask how cooking, selling, and writing about food might tell stories about identity, regionality, and nationality that disrupts each of these categories; each is a moving target, intersecting and diverging across a meal, a dish, and within eating communities. Most importantly, by thinking through the function and provenance of eponymous dishes, *Brazilian Food* interrogates how food might carry traces of its temporal, spatial, ethnic, and regional history. For Fajans, it is the very kinds of power that food animates that makes it so incredibly good to think with.

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'The Other Side' - Attempted suicide, impossible love and (un)crossed boundaries

Samuli Schielke

May, 2015



<https://vimeo.com/127082964>

This time we are proud to present [The Other Side, an enchanting ethnographic](#)



[film by Mukhtar Shehata and Samuli Schielke.](#)

The Other Side tells in nine minutes the absurd story of a man with extremist looks played by Mukhtar Shehata himself. He plans a suicide attack at the Abu Qir railroad but turns out to pursue quite different objectives, ones that appear related to an unhappy love story across class boundaries.

Shot on location in the district of Al-Mandara in Alexandria, *The Other Side* is a realistic fantasy set at two boundaries that mark the lives and expectations of the inhabitants of the area. One is the Abu Qir railway line that runs parallel to the coastline, separating a wealthy neighbourhood at the seafront from a poor, informal area on the inland side. The other boundary is the Mediterranean sea, which separates North Africa and the Middle East from wealthy Europe.

The main hero, a man from the poor side of the railroad, finds the railroad as impenetrable as the walls of Berlin and Palestine. But if his course of action seems violent at first, it soon takes a different turn. Standing at the railroad, he faces the impossibility of a love across social classes. Having finally crossed one wall under suspicious circumstances, he finds himself facing new walls. Gazing across the sea, he wonders whether there may be someone like him at the opposite shore, also longing for the other side.

REDUX: #Fieldwork with children

Reetta Toivanen
May, 2015



Today we combine two recent Allegra themes - both very dear to us - by revisiting a jewel from our archives: Reetta Toivanen on doing fieldwork with children, a post that was first published last June when we featured our first ever round of fieldnotes. We hope that this post serves as inspiration to the increasing number of us who are both parents and fieldworkers. As Carole McGranahan recently declared in [her article](#) that quickly became our most read post to date: you *can* be both a mother and an anthropologist. This is how!

#Fieldwork with Children

The stereotypical anthropologist is a young bearded man going by himself to an isolated island in order to return one year later with a thick book of notes which he will analyse in his isolated office over the following years. The fact is that more and more of us are women and mothers, and more men admit the fact that they have also responsibilities towards their children. This is why we would like to launch a discussion on fieldwork with children: share yours!

In October 2013 I had no other option, once again, than to take my three-year old son with me on a research trip to South Africa and Namibia. My interest lay in



making some initial contacts and conducting interviews with people (both academics and activists) who could help me to advance my research on San peoples and their efforts to get their rights recognized as indigenous peoples. This was by no means the first time that my son accompanied me. We were together, for example, in Northern Norway conducting research and interviews with Sea Sámi and Kven peoples (the Sámi are recognized as indigenous peoples and the Kven have been recognized since 2005 as a national minority of Norway).



The positive thing with having your child with you is that you get to know “normal” people very easily. Sometimes I am myself slightly shy in making contacts with people on the streets, camping areas, festivals or where ever; my son, on the other hand, has a very straight-forward attitude to finding new friends. He goes around asking everybody with his almost non-existent English: “Hey, what’s your name?” “What are you doing?” I can rely on his charm and openness and he forces me to start talking to strangers when translating his



questions and then adding a few new questions of my own. Only working with the recorder and concentrating on the interviews can be at times challenging: he asks his own questions, wants things that he cannot have, touches things he shouldn't and if nothing else succeeds in interrupting me, the last tool to get my full attention is the sentence: "Mami, wee-wee!" He has learned that this is incredibly effective! I wouldn't say, however, that kids can and should be brought to all research settings. There are many interviews that cannot be carried out with smaller or older kids and not all people appreciate the presence of a little adventurer...

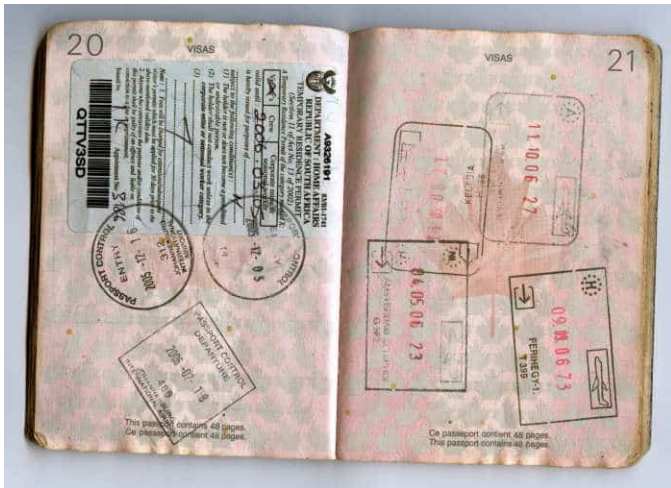
Nonetheless, the most difficult situations are less those where you make contact with people and actually interview them, and much more the whole travelling and nurturing of the child in situations in leave you worried and uncertain about whether it was a good idea to bring a minor with you to the "field" in the first place. This is a short entry in my field diary written after a long bus drive from Cape Town to Windhoek last autumn.

It is a few minutes past midnight in a waterless rotten toilet at the South African and Namibian border. I am squatting next to the toilet bowl trying to prevent my tree-year old from falling into the bowl. This has been going on for some twenty minutes but he keeps saying, "Mami, I am not finished yet..."

I am worried. Worried because he is so sick and so tiny. Worried that we will not make it to the passport control and the bus to Windhoek will leave without us. His clothes are covered in what one can call shit and, as there is no place to wash, I just throw away his underwear and t-shirt. When he finally gives me the sign that we can move on, I grab him under my arm and run through the darkness towards the green light indicating the place for border control. I assume we do not look nice, nor do we smell nice. I guess my face looks too tired and worried, because the border police officer asks me to smile. Because that is the way Namibians do things, they smile, he commands. I try to explain that I do not actually feel very much like smiling; I feel rather more like crying. The police officer repeats: you



smile because we have to smile too. I press an artificial smile on my face.



This is about to die in a few seconds as the police officer announces that my little boy was not stamped out from South Africa and that we must return there to get the proper stamp. At this point I cannot hide the fact that tears start running as I ask how on earth I could get back to South Africa in the middle of the dark night. The border police officer is not interested in my problem; he just says: "Next!" We go back to the bus, which at that moment is being searched for drugs (as it was just 20 minutes before at the South African border), ask for my suitcase and find some clothes for the kid. The bus driver is yelling at me, blaming me for the failure of the South African officer who forgot to put a stamp in my child's passport. Tears are running again: is nobody worried about my son's health? A Namibian lady steps out, takes our passports and goes to a border control officer standing next to his car. They say something in Damara and, suddenly, I find my son and myself in his car on our way back to South Africa. We get the stamp, return to the Namibian control and just when we are ready, the bus is declared clean and the trip to Windhoek can continue."

Due to the two lengthy stints at the border controls with their thorough searches of the bus (for drugs and stolen items?) and a few new street constructions, the bus did not stop again but drove as fast as possible to catch up the delay. The remaining 11 hours without getting to any other toilet than the overflowing one in the bus did not make the trip as beautiful as I had imagined it would be, but we



got see the amazing sun rising in Africa and made new wonderful friends with people travelling with us.



Nothing seems to bring people more closely together than shared experiences. My son also seems to remember the bright side of the trip, the funny girls who had been with their parents to see a doctor in Cape Town, not the night-time horror at the border control.

Combining children and fieldwork is maybe not the ideal combination if you hold the ideal, as I once did, that children and work are separate zones of life. Then, after receiving funding for a research project that was written without realizing that I might become a mother once again, I had to rethink my worldview. Kids are not always welcome additional guests; nor do most funding agencies pay any of the costs caused by the presence of children. But ever more parents work under circumstances in which they have no other option than to integrate a child-friendly approach to their work. We anthropologists are not an exception to this. Is it good or bad? Share your views!



The Darjeeling Distinction. Labor and Justice on Fair-Trade Tea Plantations in India.

Daniel Münster

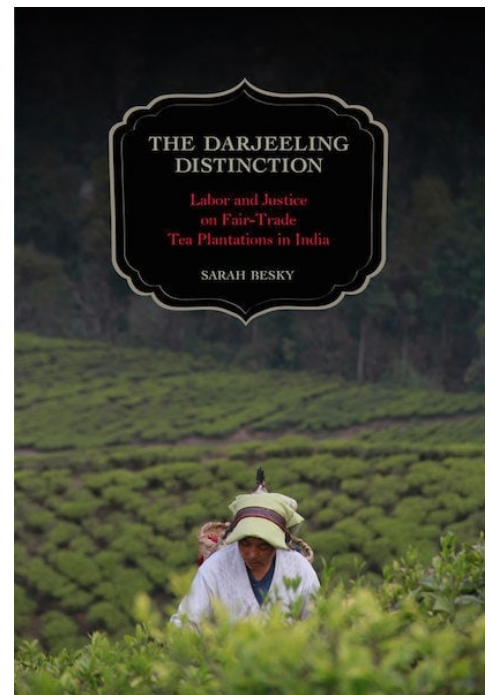
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In [*The Darjeeling Distinction*](#), Sarah Besky provides a highly readable and theoretically ambitious ethnography of tea plantations in West Bengal's Darjeeling district. Besky critically interrogates three "parallel visions of justice" (p.21): justice as property, justice as fairness and justice as sovereignty, represented by branding Darjeeling tea through geographical indication (GI), certification of plantations as fair trade, and the sub nationalist Gorkhaland movement for separate statehood, respectively.



Besky argues that these three movements and their visions of justice fail to incorporate female plantation workers' perspectives on justice and injustice. Instead, they operate with variants of what Besky calls a "Third World agrarian imaginary", which refers to "a fictionalized distant past from which plantation societies have (unjustly) diverged" (p.30). By this, she means that an imaginary of injustice is mobilised in these movements for a protected terroir (GI), the assertion of ethnic belonging and stewardship (Gorkhaland), and the rhetorical transformation of colonial plantations into gardens and farms, which thus makes them eligible for fair trade certification and eco-tourism.



These contending visions of justice are contrasted in the book with the moral economy of plantation workers, which Besky calls the "tripartite moral economy" (p.32). As articulated by female workers, this involves not only relationships of care and reciprocity between management and workers, but also between the management, workers and plantation landscape. This more-than-human moral economy between planters, pluckers and plants embodies a fourth vision of justice, nostalgically rooted in a past in which humans cared for tea bushes and management provided welfare to workers, a regime locally called *faciliti-haru*, in the form of housing, health care, or schooling. The piecemeal abandonment of *faciliti-haru* with economic liberalisation is the major complaint among the women of the plantation and is couched as a shift from *industri* to *bisnis*.

The Darjeeling Distinction shows that the dominant movements for justice are not only disconnected from the tripartite moral economy, but actually produce a double alienation that transforms plantation workers into imaginary agrarian subjects with little correspondence to everyday life on the plantation.



The book is structured in five main chapters (plus introduction and conclusion), of which three core chapters are each dedicated to one of the contending visions of justice – property, fairness, and sovereignty. After the introduction of Darjeeling tea as a commodity and the outline of the book, the very accessible first chapter (*Darjeeling*) outlines the political, environmental, and economic history of Darjeeling as well as the making of the colonial plantation system through the recruitment of Nepali labourers. The second chapter (*Plantation*) sets the scene of the monograph through a narrative ethnography, introducing the female tea labourers, their daily routine, the gendered division of labour, kinship and the social reproduction on the plantations – most importantly in their articulations of the tripartite moral economy in terms of *industri* and *faciliti-haru*. The third chapter (*Property*) critically engages producers’ efforts to secure intellectual property rights for Darjeeling tea under the geographical indicator (GI) regime established by the WTO. Besky discusses the flaws and contradictions of establishing notions of *terroir*, taste and craftsmanship in a production system based on semi-bonded labour. In this process, by activating a Third World agrarian imaginary in PR materials, historically feminised labour is transformed into traditional knowledge, and plantations into gardens. In chapter four (*Fairness*), Besky takes on fair trade initiatives and convincingly argues that that fair trade is part and parcel of a neoliberal logic of shifting the search for social justice to markets and consumers and away from state-led economic regulation. In the case of Darjeeling, this means that fair trade premiums are used to pay for facilities that plantations are required to provide anyway by the 1952 Indian Plantation Labour Act.

Fair trade recasts plantation managers as farmers and enlightened environmental stewards and is used to support arguments for a scaling back of the PLA. For workers, fair trade has neither improved their wages nor their living conditions, and is instead seen as part of the move from industri (socially embedded production) to bisnis and the deterioration of moral economy.

Chapter five (*Sovereignty*) provides a critical reading of the Gorkhaland



movement for regional autonomy. The vision of justice-as-sovereignty entails a recasting of colonial histories of migration and labour into a primordial vision of belonging of Indian Nepalis to the Darjeeling landscape and the imagined benefits that would come from redefining the relationship of region to nation state, without, however, questioning the political economy of the plantation system.

The conceptual achievement of Besky lies in bringing food studies and critical geography concerns into anthropology. Besky displays a remarkable will in remaining conceptually innovative and bringing to bear a variety of authors, concepts and frameworks on her material. Naturally not all of these ideas could be followed through and some of them seem like unfulfilled promises, the most regrettable of which is the fleeting engagement with a multi-species perspective (p.65). I would have liked to see a more consequential elaboration of the theoretical consequences of a more-than-human approach to agrarian relations and socio-natural commodities. In *The Darjeeling Distinction*, the third part of the tripartite moral economy, the relation between humans and agro-environments, remains ethnographically and theoretically below its potential. It would have been interesting to read much more about what the management and workers have to say about Darjeeling's plants, soils and climates, their health, fertility and the co-production of plants and political economy. The cursory treatment of the ontological challenge of the multispecies perspective, suggested but not elaborated in the notion of tripartite moral economy, may also be related to Besky's remarkable silence on the issue of organic certification on tea plantations, although most plantations seem to be certified organic on top of being fair trade. I take these and other loose ends in the book as promises of more to come.



To sum up, *The Darjeeling Distinction* is a brilliant and entertaining book to read. It is surely a milestone in the ethnography of industrial plantations in India and in the anthropology of food systems. Besky's unique access to tea plantations and the 31 months of fieldwork on which her book is based enable her to convincingly weave together a wide range of historical and ethnographic themes and give voice to a remarkable variety of situated actors. The book's accessible and narrative style, which moves between narrative ethnography, textual analysis and theoretical reflection, will surely appeal to a wide audience beyond the

anthropology. I am convinced that *The Darjeeling Distinction*, and in particular the chapters on geographical indication and fair trade, will find their way into most curricula on the anthropology of food and agriculture.

Besky, Sarah. 2014. [*The Darjeeling Distinction: Labor and Justice on Fair-Trade Tea Plantations in India*](#). Berkeley: University of California Press. 264 pp. Pb: £19.95. ISBN: 9780520277397

Beyond Fieldwork: emotions, facial 'disfigurement' and a PhD



#Fieldnotes

Anne-Marie Martindale

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What does it *feel* like to do fieldwork? How does one encounter experiences of suffering, trauma - even death - while maintaining the desired degree of objective detachment? Or is this even our shared ideal any more?

Today we are very pleased to open our summer Fieldnotes series with a personal account by [Anne-Marie Martindale](#) on the emotional side of ethnography. This post addresses a crucial element of our shared professional endeavour, yet one far too seldom discussed. Simultaneously it sets the mood for the series of Fieldnotes that we received via our [Call](#) a few weeks back. We feel very honoured for the privilege to share them during the forthcoming months, and to thus showcase the most exciting methodological aspect of our beloved discipline. (Allegra's Editors)

Beyond fieldwork: emotional work, facial 'disfigurement' and the PhD journey

'My friend had my three children after school and I went for this appointment. And I can remember standing at the bus stop and she told me to phone her and she would come over... and I can remember standing at the bus stop and... not wanting to phone her. I was going to get a bus home, I was going to be totally independent. I can do this! And it was dark and it was cold and I thought well all I have got is erm... actually they didn't tell me it was cancer then, he just said that there was something sinister so, I thought I am just going to get on with this and get it sorted...' (Sylvia).

When I set out to explore [the relationship between acquired facial 'disfigurement'](#)



[and identity shift for my PhD](#) I was very naive. Though already an experienced researcher I was unprepared for what my participants (like Sylvia) would disclose when I asked them about their lives and faces. I was also unprepared for the amount of emotional work that they and I would have to engage in. In the following paper I use my experiences and my interview with Sylvia to explore the relationship between qualitative research, researchers, participants and emotional work.

The concept of emotional work was developed by Hochschild (2003) who argued that all work involved not just physical or intellectual labour, but also emotional labour. In a research situation this might involve maintaining an outwardly calm countenance in light of distressing participant revelations during an interview.

However, few published academic accounts include the emotional work that the researcher has gone through during the research process (Lee-Treweek, 2000; Sampson, Bloor and Fincham, 2008).

'In order to be useful to other researchers, emotional accounts need to be discussed as data and in relation to the generally unspoken emotion rules of the setting under investigation' (Lee-Treweek, 2000, p. 114).

The issue of emotional work in its ethical dimension is worthy of exploration. However, I am not entirely sure I agree with Lee-Treweek's (2000) positioning of this work as data. I see emotional work as a normative aspect of human existence, and as both a tool and an outcome of the research process. To count emotional accounts as data without qualification potentially diminishes the years of professional skills, training and research experience the anthropologist amasses and applies in the pursuit of situated and complex cultural understanding. Though I do agree with Lee-Treweek (2000) that doing emotional work is an aspect of the research process and that it can enhance the production of thick description (Geertz, 1973).



Towards the start of the journey I thought I knew what to expect. As I was already working in an academic environment and I thought I could learn vicariously from fellow PhD students. Though their insight was incredibly helpful it soon became clear that emotional work was something that I had to experience for myself. When thinking what this might entail or when it might occur, one might be tempted to select the fieldwork phase with its new people, places, complexities and negotiations. However, I have learned that emotional work is an ongoing, evolving aspect of the whole research process.

Long before I sat down to listen to my participants facial 'disfigurement' narratives I had to build and maintain relationships with my supervisors, try not to get too stressed about navigating academic bureaucracies, and negotiate (sometimes unsuccessfully) with key gatekeeper organisations and individuals. After a while I realised that the challenge of the PhD wasn't just getting it done, it was getting it done whilst fitting in the rest of your life and making all of that work. In my case this meant remaining employed, getting married, moving house, maintaining relationships, keeping my vegetable allotment going and dealing with the loss of older, much loved family members.

The more I read about [embodiment](#) (Grosz, 1994) and [biographical disruption](#) (Bury, 1982) during the pre-fieldwork stage, the more disembodied and disrupted I felt. Anthropologists may advocate viewing people as embodied individuals, but academia perpetuates a culture of Cartesian separation, prioritising the development of mental capital and its outputs at the expense of the body.

I spent significant amounts of time sitting, reading, thinking, writing, editing, drinking coffee and eating chocolate to remain alert and productive. This took away time and energy from things I usually did such as sport, consequently I put on weight, slept badly and felt at odds with the inert, larger body-self I became.

The fieldwork and analysis phases saw a return to feelings of mind body connectedness through hearing participant's bodily focused stories. Like [William](#)



[Foote Whyte](#) (1993) I learned about embodied experiences, identifications and disruptions that I would never have asked about. These disclosures were a testament to the openness of a narrative methodology, where the participant is free to disclose what they feel is relevant.

However, I under-anticipated the degree of emotional work for both researcher and participant. As Williamson (cited in Hallowell Lawton and Gregory, 2005, p. 16) notes there are no 'safe' questions and no 'safe' participants. During the interviews I was told about thoughts of self-harm, feelings of inner ugliness, an episode of domestic violence, job loss and divorce. This was in addition to episodes of bodily, emotional and social suffering caused by the event of the facial 'disfigurement' and its disruptions to lives, relationships and perceived futures.

'I went home and I went to the mirror in the bathroom... and I had to take out this obturator, because I had lost my teeth. The obturator is an artificial part for the palate and enables you to speak, and I had to go and clean this thing and I just was in total despair thinking how can I live the rest of my life with this? This is unimaginable, I just can't do this. And then I heard the children coming up...the door was never locked, but I locked the door. From then on I started locking the door and I was aware that that image that I saw of myself wasn't one that I was familiar with...' (Sylvia).

I maintained an interested, calm demeanour at all times, though there were moments when I became distinctly aware of my own embodiment. I felt hot and sick when a couple of participants relayed their stories of becoming 'disfigured' through unanticipated car accidents. And I felt deeply upset when one participant told me he had previously contemplated suicide as he was unable to control his facial appearance, in the process illustrating that severity of 'disfigurement' did not necessarily relate to the extent of identity disruption and transition.

'I will never ever, as long as I live come to terms with this, what I will do is learn to accept who I am now. And that was the challenge, to actually reach that stage' (Sylvia).



An event occurred during the interviewing and analysis phase of the research which added an additional layer to my emotional work and my reconnection of mind and body. A much-loved Uncle died after a two-year battle with throat cancer. I chose not to tell the participants about this episode. Disclosure to the participants with a cancer diagnosis may have led to greater rapport and richer data. However I did not feel confident that I could control my own emotions. And, I may have changed the trajectory of the participant's narrative. I was there to hear their life stories, not mine. In addition, some participants were in remission, one with advanced (stage four) cancer. It would have been deeply insensitive to remind them of their mortality and that was not my role. However, it revealed some research tensions and formal training gaps.

Lee-Treweek (2000, p. 115) notes that great emphasis has been placed on safeguarding and supporting research participants. However, efforts to protect researchers have not been pursued with the same vigour. And until recently writings on researcher danger have largely focused on physical threats experienced during the fieldwork stage (Lee-Treweek, 2000, p. 115).

The advent of feminist research and reflexive discussions about the production of knowledge (Letherby, 2003) have by their nature opened up the topic of researcher risk and with it considerations of emotional investment and expenditure throughout the whole research process. Unfortunately the findings from this work have not yet permeated into all higher education researcher support mechanisms. To protect, or support my participants I asked for a period of two years to lapse between the 'disfiguring' event and the proposed interview.

'... I can remember reading your notes here it said, oh whereabouts is it erm... oh yes adults with an acquired facial difference which occurred at least 2 years ago, who will not be unduly upset by discussing their experiences. Whenever I give my presentations and lectures I always go back to those feelings and I never ever go through them without getting upset. It's, it's not upset it's, it is reliving it's opening that box, and taking out those feelings and sharing them because they are still there. They are part of who we are and our identity but they make us



richer people for it' (Sylvia).

I pointed out that if potential participants were in any way unsure about their mental health they were to seek medical advice before agreeing to take part. I developed information sheets with generic and specific facial 'disfigurement' support groups, explained in written documents and verbally that participation was voluntary and that participants were free to leave at any point. Prior to the fieldwork period I undertook a one day training course to become more sensitive to people living with a 'disfigurement'.

Whilst I wholeheartedly agree with these participant safeguards, at no point did the university ethics forms require the same effort be paid to the emotional well-being of the researcher during the fieldwork process or beyond.

When I undertook the analysis phase, which involved several months intensive listening, reading and thinking I experienced the most challenging emotional work of the project. Not only were many episodes and emotional states upsetting to hear again, I completed the analysis in isolation, partly to maintain confidentiality and anonymity and partly because I needed to work on my own to concentrate. I am inclined to agree with Exely (cited in Hallowell, Lawton and Gregory, 2005, p. 17), that '*the research world can be a very lonely place*'. My family, friends and supervisors all provided very satisfactory emotional support throughout. Though, I didn't always tell them how I was feeling, perceiving my emotional work as another aspect of analysis.

Through undertaking emotional work during the PhD a few things have become clearer. I have learned that being quiet and listening can yield rich rewards. In addition that identity disruption, reformation and facial 'disfigurement' is a complex, transitional and potentially lengthy phenomenon involving other life experiences and social actors.

I have also learned that emotional work takes place over the course of the whole



research project not just the fieldwork phase and that it can be challenging and enriching. Nevertheless, some things should not be left to serendipity. With a growing body of academic work, it is time to give equal time, energy and resources to supporting both participants and anthropologists in the emotional aspects of their research work.

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New and Old Wars. Organized Violence in a Global Era.

Davide Torri
May, 2015



An important book since its first edition, the third edition of Kaldor's *New and Old Wars* struggles to keep pace with the most recent outbursts of organised violence that rage constantly across the globe. Well aware of this, Kaldor adds a preface to address the new challenges whilst also taking the time to address some of the



issues raised by her critics and reviewers in an afterword.

A basic definition of the concept is given in the introduction, thereby providing a clear starting point:

New wars involve networks of state and non-state actors and most violence is directed against civilians (p. vi).

This differentiates new wars from civil wars through the merging of internal and external dimensions and an acknowledgment that despite being essentially localised, these conflicts “involve a myriad of transnational connections” (p. 2).

In the following pages, Kaldor identifies the source of instability and insecurity in state weakness that is the lost monopoly of violence granted to state apparatuses and the shift toward warlord’s private militias’ feuds and/or criminal networks or even hooligan mobs. Before starting analysing in detail the issues related to ‘new wars’, Kaldor outlines the concept of ‘old wars’, drawing mainly from Clausewitz and highlighting the topic of warfare as a defining moment in the emergence of modern states in the 18th and 19th centuries. The epitomising model of a new war, is for Kaldor the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict. Political fragmentation and the collapse of communist Yugoslavia gave rise to identity-based mobilisation patterns leading, ultimately, to “virulent ethnic nationalism” (p. 31) and sectarianism, up to the disturbing episodes of ethnic cleansing, conducted by multiple actors engaged in fighting operations on the terrain. Kaldor argues that by the end of the 20th century, local politicians, whose legitimacy was undermined also by





globalisation, started to compete for power by adopting chauvinism and fundamentalism to attract, appease and mobilise local communities. The fifth chapter is devoted to the analysis of war economies: wars are fought in an entangled web of exchanges, supplying almost everything needed in the combat zone by all those involved, from food to fuel, cash to ammunition, and up to weapons and sunglasses.

Remittances, assistance from the diaspora, involvement of foreign governments, humanitarian assistance: the fragmentation of the political landscape of the state has a striking parallel in the implosion of the war economies, through which multiple and diverse economic channels are activated and exploited (p. 109-110).

Since new wars are centred on particularistic aims, and grounded on the principles of exclusion, a cosmopolitan approach, the sense of a larger human community, sharing “rights and obligations” and “tolerance, multiculturalism, civility and democracy” (p. 123) should be recovered. Kaldor is well aware of the critics of military interventionism and the *humanitarian wars* in Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya (p. 120). How, then, to move on from this conundrum, termed by Chomsky no more than *military humanism* (Chomsky, 1999)? A crucial factor in conflict resolution appears to be the involvement of local groups and NGOs, “local advocates of cosmopolitanism” (p. 131), and especially those managed by women. A whole chapter is then devoted to the analysis of Afghanistan and Iraq wars, a strange combination of old and new wars, especially after the formal end of the conflict with Saddam Hussein and the beginning of the insurgency. In previous editions of the book, Kaldor stuck with the Balkans as the preferred examples of new kinds of wars, but the evolution of the Iraq situation that eventually spilled over into Syria and animated groups in the whole region, up to Libya and even beyond under the black banners of the Islamic State, is surely something that will require a much larger analysis in the years to come.

The last chapter, *Governance, Legitimacy and Security*, tries to map ways out of



the chaos. Opposing Huntington's theory of the clash of civilizations, and Kaplan's 'coming anarchy', Falks' 'cosmopolitan governance' seems, and rightly so, to strike a chord. Despite the intrinsic difficulties, unlike Huntington and Kaplan, Falks does not nurture and foster future conflicts. Or does he? Kaldor seems quite convinced that the most reasonable option is to create "agents of legitimate organized violence under the umbrella of transnational institutions" (p. 198).

The concept of new wars is certainly very interesting, and at the same time and to a certain extent, still very problematic: a number of critics have raised important issues that this new edition does not seem to solve, despite acknowledging them.

As pointed out by many critics, violence directed against civilians was a feature already well represented in old wars, especially in Colonial contexts (Ferguson and Whitehead, 1991) and in World Wars.

After WWII, too, civilians were almost constantly at the forefront of conflict fought under the overarching framework of the Cold War. Insurgency and in particular counter-insurgency forces targeted regular troops and civilians, conducting sweeping operations in open daylight and nocturnal kidnappings, torture-sessions and murders. Death-squads were obviously tied to local political forces, and those same forces were engaged in multiple entanglements extending well beyond the state boundaries. The reality of Cold War conflicts was already engrained with several of the mechanisms we see today within the theatre of war.

Talking about state weakness, Kaldor frequently uses the category of "failed state" to imply that a weak state is a threat to security due to the proliferation of non-state actors and criminal networks. However, the most recent wave of conflicts (Libyan, Syrian and Ukrainian wars) has seen the outburst of inherently internal conflicts *after* external influences, which fuelled the escalation of purely local demonstrations into armed uprisings, fostered by international actors siding with different groups to protect, in most of cases, their vested interests. Regarding Afghanistan and Iraq, instead, it seems that these countries were in fact the places where new wars, counter-insurgency and nation-building were



tested from above, especially in Iraq: for the creation of private networks of contractors to provide services for every aspect of public life; and for implementing an obvious *divide et impera* between the Sunnis, Shias and Kurds. The Petraeus turn, the so-called *Surge*, and the Human Terrain System experiment, moreover, constitutes a revolutionary effort by the US military apparatus to cope with the new challenges, rather than a return to old war concepts. Even the air-strike campaign through a grossly illegal use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles which worsened security conditions, can be seen as a shift towards a disturbing future of targeted killings, denying any legal framework to the supposed insurgents already included in the very problematic category of enemy combatants.

Regarding the role of cosmopolitan transnational institutions involved in law-enforcement, Kaldor herself is well aware that there is always an intrinsic danger lying at the core of every universalist project.

The most recent forms of new wars witnessed today are already remarkably different from the Balkan, Afghan or Iraqi wars.

The Islamic State, for example, contradicts many assumptions formulated so far: it is local, rooted in the Sunni insurgency in Iraq, but also international, attracting militants (a trend already seen in the jihadist movements of the 1980s) in order to fight for a universalistic project: inclusive (the creation of a state of the Ummah), and exclusive at the same time.

When the book was first published in 1999, Kaldor established herself as one of the key-scholars addressing the changing nature of warfare after the collapse of Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. The ensuing collapse of a previously united Yugoslavia, and the grim episodes of brutality against civilians on an ethnic basis on a scale never seen in Europe since WWII, seemed to constitute a model for a new wave of conflicts that were developing and simmering all across the globe. After 9/11 and the following war(s) on terror, the book became immensely popular. While non-state actors came to the forefront of almost every



confrontation, state actors too remained relevant: the privatisation of armed forces and contractors became integral parts of the state war-machine, and the boundaries between state and non-state became increasingly blurred. Further editions of the book (1999, 2007 and 2012) could be seen as an effort to keep track of changes as we see them:

the wave of conflicts that started at the beginning of the 21st century has not ceased, but has taken unexpected turns, and appears to be constantly evolving.

Kaldor is aware of the difficulties in defining what is happening to warfare, and hints herself at many of the critical assessments raised against her arguments in the different editions. The importance and strength of this book ultimately lies in that: it is still a good point from which to start thinking about the evolution of warfare and its implications on a global scale.

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A hundred years apart: An intimate history of Italian migration to the US

Francesca Piana

May, 2015



“...Here being my Italy -



Where memories spring like geysers,
Crying at me where I place my feet;
Italy which receives me with benignity
This shipwreck - my sick body,
And this feeble candle-light - my soul..."

[Emanuel Carnevali](#), *Furnished Rooms*, The Return.[i]

1913-2013: One century of temporary Italian migration to the United States. In late April 1913, my great grandfather, Attilio Piana, arrived at Ellis Island, in the New York City harbor, from the French port of Le Havre. At the beginning of November 2013, I also arrived in NYC through JFK airport for a few months of research at one of the universities in the city. Both Attilio and I were the same age, 32 years old. This is a brief intimate and parallel history of our respective migrations. I borrow the expression "intimate history" from the work of [Alisse Waterston](#), who coined the expression "intimate ethnography" in the book where she explores, as an anthropologist and a daughter, the life of her father throughout the 20th century and her relationship with him.[ii]

I knew very little about my great grandfather Attilio before reaching NYC. I was more familiar with the global migration that the Sicilian part of my family had experienced since the beginning of the 20th century. During my first few days in NYC, I looked at the Ellis Island website and found his name. The website of the National Park Service, which now manages the sites of Ellis Island, reports that between 1892 and 1954 nearly 12 million immigrants passed through the island.[iii] Attilio was one of them. A few days after my online research, I decided to go and see what was left of the buildings where Attilio was hosted one century earlier. At that point, I was already familiar with the architecture of Ellis Island.



Many movies, among them *Nuovomondo* (Golden Door) by Emanuele Crialesi, include images of the famous Registry Room (also called the big hall for its dimension) and many rooms through which immigrants passed.[iv]

When Attilio arrived in the United States, he was 32 years old, married, and the father of two young children.

One of them was my grandfather, who had been born less than two years earlier. Two other newborn babies had died due to malnutrition. The registry for the boat on which Attilio travelled is easily accessible through the website of Ellis Island. Attilio is number 0030 in the document. His final destination in the United States was the city of Winsted in Connecticut. He paid for his travel himself with the aim of joining his brother. The same boat registry confirms that Attilio was neither a polygamist nor an anarchist. Such a relief to read! More importantly, he was in good physical and mental health. First and foremost this meant that he was able to work and would not be in need of social help. Indeed, his height and weight indicate that he was a tall and broad-shouldered man. He had fair skin, blond hair, and blue eyes.[v]

Attilio's trip to the United States likely started at the beginning of April 1913. He made his way from the small house where he used to live with his family in the village of Sant'Urbano, in the northeast of Italy. The house where he used to live still exists, although the property ceased to be owned by my family some years ago. My father and his many brothers and sisters were born and raised in that house, before a newer and more modern one was built close by. The place has changed dramatically from my childhood memories, when it was used as a depository for various objects from a past epoch. The floor was made of soil, there was a big fireplace, and a narrow staircase led to a couple of rooms on the first floor. The windows of the old house were small, in order to keep in the warmth. They opened onto a hilly landscape, with land to cultivate below. Behind the house there is a hill where chestnuts, apple trees, wild roots, berries, and mushrooms provided food for the family.

When Attilio left, the region of Veneto was extremely poor. It was only at the end



of WWII that many industries were established and set the basis for what would become one of Italy's richest areas. Attilio was a peasant and most likely illiterate. He was looking for ways to support his family.

Attilio's migration to the United States was probably not meant to be permanent. He was one of the many seasonal workers who planned to save money and then go back to their countries of origin.

He travelled with other Italians in the boat, some of them from the same region and others from different regions. Attilio might have had a concrete sense of the newborn Italian state while travelling on the boat to the United States. From the 1890s to the 1920s nearly four million Italians migrated to the United States.[vi]

I can only image the fears and hopes, the preparation, and the steps that brought Attilio from his house to the train station in Vicenza. From there he crossed the north of Italy towards the northern regions of France, where Le Havre is situated. While Attilio may have already seen a train before his transatlantic trip, he most certainly had never seen the sea or a boat. He might have heard stories about them, as well as of foreign countries, languages, and habits.

There is much as a historian that I am left to imagine about Attilio's trip and life. This is because the only evidence about him that I possess is his portrait; the data of his passage in the Ellis Island registry; the dates of birth, marriage, and death that are kept in the church registry of Attilio's village; some vague and fragmented family memories; and an old yet restored table around which many of my family's activities took place and on which I enjoy working when I go back to my parents' place. The lack of evidence is also connected to Attilio's path. He stayed in the United States for less time than expected. One year after he moved, Attilio returned to Italy and soon passed away. Family legend says that he may have died of a broken heart. The story of my great grandfather does not correspond to the "typical" narrative of the American dream.

One week before going to Ellis Island, I myself had gone through immigration



control in one of the hangars of JFK airport. Like my great grandfather, I was also 32 years old. I was not married though, nor did I have any children or anyone else to support back home. There was just me, with my hopes, expectations, and fears. Contrary to him, I am highly educated and could speak English. However, when I stood in the Registry Room in Ellis Island, where migrants used to be interrogated by migration officers, I could not help comparing it to the big hangar of JFK airport. Did Attilio also feel as small and fragile in front of the immigration officer as I did? This is difficult to tell.

Travelling within Europe with a European passport, I never experienced the weight of the state or the restrictions of borders. Waiting for my turn in line in the hangar of JFK, I felt the tension of having to face the immigration officer, even knowing that all of my documents were in order. I felt the fear of thinking that access to this new chapter of my life would depend on someone else making decisions on my behalf.

I felt shame for feeling all of the above, for my lack of courage and self-reflection on the many privileges that I had never questioned before. I thought of the man whom I had met a few weeks before at the American consulate in Milan. While my visa request was approved, his was denied. It is not easy to be a young, colored, and bearded man from Morocco and travel to the US nowadays.

In the hangar of JFK, I hid my tension behind a smile and my credentials. A few days later, in the Registry Room of Ellis Island, there was nobody to smile at, just an empty space filled with large American flags. I cried. That was one of the many moments when I felt the extent to which history is more than the professional empiricism required by the modern standards of scholarly work. There was and there is another truth and other truths, one that no document or archive can recollect, especially when they do not exist anymore. On my visit to Ellis Island, there was a truth that passed through my veins and body before reaching the intellect.

Since then, I have carried out some research on my great grandfather. I contacted



the local city hall in Winsted to see whether there were any documents left. Unfortunately, I was not successful. I tried to connect with descendants of Italians in Winsted but their families migrated later than my great grandfather.[vii] My own father conducted some research in the church archives back in Sant'Urbano. For my family and I, the past seemed much closer all of a sudden. Questions of memory, wounds, trauma, and survival were once again brought to light. We empathized with the suffering of Attilio, who was separated from his family and could not cope with those tremendous changes. I thought of those who stayed behind, his wife who became a widower at a very young age and the two children who were raised without a father.

I cannot help but think that this part of my family has endured the experience of migration, physical and psychological privation, warfare, and the epigenetic silent consequences of violence. But I also know that, despite everything, there have been marriages, births, laughs, life, and much lively discussions. In one of the last interviews of [Tony Judt](#) for the book [Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945](#), he said “the historian’s first responsibility is to get it right – to find out what happened in the past, think of some way to convey it which is both effective and true, and do it.”[viii]

Questioning the history of my own family has brought together the methodological tools of my profession with the fact of facing the silent wounds that passed on from one generation to another.

A hundred years are what separate and bring together my great grandfather and I. Many things have changed and many others have not. Italians are no longer the poorest and least skilled migrants to strive for a better life. Global migration now has different geographies that push desperate people to embark on unsafe boats across the Mediterranean Sea. They risk everything and sometimes they lose it all. These voyages are on the front pages of newspapers on a daily basis. Governments, international organizations, and NGOs constantly struggle with the limits of national sovereignty and the imperative of helping migrants in need.



For how much my life is different from that of my great grandfather, I also did not have much choice about leaving my family and the hills and mountains of my childhood behind. Of course, there is Skype and many other ways to be in touch with those who count in your life. Surely it would be unfair not to frame my migration within a sense of curiosity and knowledge that has been a driving force in my life. However, my own experience belongs to a much larger phenomenon. The [47th report of the Censis](#), released in 2013, says that the number of Italians going abroad is constantly increasing. In addition to the largely discussed phenomenon of the so-called *cervelli in fuga* (running brains), there are several other reasons behind it ranging from the interesting opportunities offered by an interconnected world to the frustration and disenchantment with a country where there are very few jobs.[ix]

While there is something disheartening about being a historian and working on topics connected to migration, I also believe that, as a profession, we run into stories that we have the responsibility to understand and share, even when this entails opening up the history of our own families. In times of uncertainty, increasing xenophobia, racism, warfare, outbreaks, and protracted humanitarian emergencies, writing and sharing history is more than ever a political commitment.

My gratitude goes to my father, Attilio Piana, who conducted research in the church archives of Sant'Urbano and who mobilized our family in a spontaneous project of memory recollection. Thanks to the T-riders and my fellow colleagues at the [Telluride Association Michigan Branch](#) for engaging with my professional and personal query. Things that mature for long months can take only a few hours to be written.

Notes

[i] Emanuel Carnevali and Dennis Barone, *Furnished Rooms* (New York, NY:



Bordighera Press, 2006), 70.

[ii] Alisse Waterston, *My Father's Wars: Migration, Memory, and the Violence of a Century* (New York: Routledge, 2014). See the prologue. Thanks to Riccardo Bocco for suggesting it.

[iii] See <http://www.nps.gov/elis/index.htm> (last seen May 2, 2015). Since the early 1970s, an oral history project has been going on with the scope of recording the memories of those who arrived and were checked at Ellis Island, as well as immigration officers, military and medical staff. See <http://www.libertyellisfoundati on.org/oral-histories> (last seen May 2, 2015). See also the documentary "Island of Hope. Islands of Hopes."

[iv] Much has been written on the Italian emigration to the United States. For some references see Francesco Durante, *Italoamericana: Storia e Letteratura degli Italiani Negli Stati Uniti* (Milano: Mondadori, 2001). Emilio Franzina, *Gli Italiani Al Nuovo Mondo: L'emigrazione Italiana in America 1492-1942* (Milano: A. Mondadori, 1995). More generally, Piero Bevilacqua, Andreina De Clementi, and Emilio Franzina, *Storia Dell'emigrazione Italiana* (Roma: Donzelli, 2001).

[v] Registry of Ellis Island, States immigration officer at the port of arrival. Must upon arrival delivers lists thereof to the immigration officer. This (white) sheet is for the listing of STEERAGE PASSENGERS ONLY. Arriving at the port of New York, April 19, 1913.

[vi] Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1990). See the good book by Sabina Donati, *A Political History of National Citizenship and Identity in Italy, 1861-1950* (Stanford University Press, 2013), in particular chapter 4 "O Migrants o Briganti: Italian Emigration and Nationality Policies in the Peninsula," which tackles the changing attitude of the Italian liberal state towards first and second generation immigrants.

[vii] See the Cornelio Legacy Film, <https://winsted1948.wordpress.com/> (last seen



May 2, 2015).

[viii] “Postwar: an Interview with Tony Judt,” by Donald A. Yerxa, in *Historically Speaking*, *The Bulletin of the Historical Society*, Volume II, Number 3, January-February 2006.

[ix] *Rapporto Censis, La società italiana al 2013*.

The Anthropology of Islam Reader

D. S. Farrer

May, 2015



Great dilemmas of selection, inclusion, and exclusion face the editor of an anthology of the anthropology of Islam. The papers selected for this volume trace a logical narrative thread commencing in Part I with Michael Gilsenan, dodging through Clifford Geertz, Abdul Hamid el-Zein, and Talal Asad. Part II interrupts the theoretical flow of the narrative to tour “religious practices,” including daily prayers (Saba Mahmood; Heiko Henkel), fasting in Ramadan (P. J. L. Frankl; Samuli Schielke), pilgrimage to Mecca (Raymond Scupin; Barbara M. Cooper), feast of sacrifice (John R. Bowen; Pnina Werbner), and almsgiving (Holger Weiss; Jonathan Benthall). Part III resumes the theoretical narrative thread to reflect upon “methodology” and “representation” via Akbar S. Ahmad, Richard Tapper, Edward Said, and Daniel Varisco. Glossaries of anthropological and Islamic terms follow.



Clearly, this volume is designed for the undergraduate or postgraduate reader, whose first formal encounter with Islam is presumably through this volume. On this level the book is effective.

Cherry picked edited snippets from Gilson facilitate an immediate introduction to the central structural features of Islam such as *haddith* and *sunna*, and alert the reader to the multiplicity of Islam(s), or at least to the multiplicity of ways in which this 'religion' is lived. The subtle manoeuvres of Geertz's prose and the complexity of his thought should not blind us to his key insight - that "*oppositional Muslims*" (p. 73 ital. in original) were a product of the colonial encounter, where violence begets violence. El-Zein discusses Gilson, Gellner, and Geertz to reject the spurious dichotomy of 'folk' versus 'formal' (or elite) Islam (p. 89). One wonders if this solution should not also be extended to current debates concerning 'false' or 'true' Islam, where false Islam supposedly prioritises terror, and true Islam promotes peace. Asad closes out Part I, again rejecting the 'Great' and 'Little Traditions' (p. 97). Asad criticises the production of "dramaturgical" (p. 99) accounts of Islam, preferring historical, analytical, contextualised accounts, which is a not-so-subtle message to anthropologists to go and pack up their anthropological toolkits and settle back into their armchairs at home instead.

Mahmood's chapter, which commences Part II with the section on *Daily Prayers*, is one of the better contributions to the volume. Mahmood discusses the dispositions of women's 'piety' in Egypt (albeit with no mention of Simmel). Challenging Bourdieu's formulation of habitus, Mahmood (p. 129) says that she has "tried to argue that the body's conceptual relationship with the self and others, and the ways in which it articulates with structures of authority, varies under different discursive regimes of power and truth precisely *because the body's ritual practices endow it with different kinds of capabilities.*" Following Mahmood's chapter, Henkel's chapter looks more anecdotal than ethnographic, and concerns insider 'belief' and 'unbelief,' recounted at the cost of his 'outsider' exclusion from the prayer in Turkey.



Frankl's description of fasting in Swahili-Land introduces the next section, on *Feasting During the Month of Ramadan* - but this chapter had me asking, "so what?" Frankl's chapter lacks analytical teeth and should have been pulled from the volume. Schielke's accompanying chapter, set in Egypt, however, provides the very best essay, with a gritty and amusing account of Ramadan, criticising Mahmood along the way for the "problematic tendency to privilege the aim of ethical perfection" (p. 184), to offer an alternative focus on people's fragmented biographies and ambivalent subjectivities (p. 185).

In the following section, *Pilgrimage to Mecca*, Scupin traces the significance of *hajj* for Thai Muslims; Cooper follows up with a tightly formulated essay on narrating one's own narration in Hausa women's performance of *hajj*.

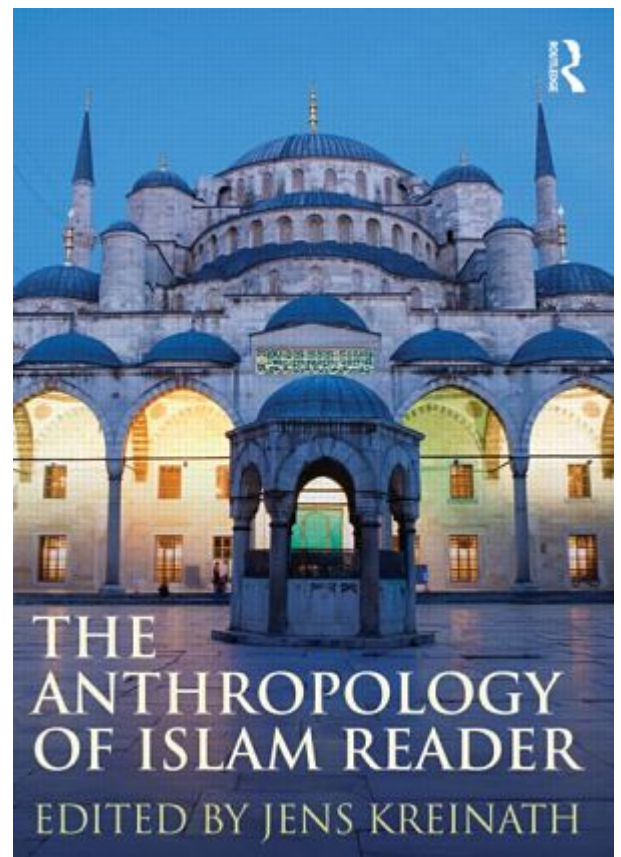
In the next section of Part II, entitled *Feast of Sacrifice*, Bowen straddles Sumatra and Morocco for a discussion of Muslim sacrifice. Given that his fieldwork was conducted in 1978 this reads like a memoir, even a memorial; one that is ultimately inconclusive (but whether this was his fault or the editorial selection remains unclear). Following this, Pnina Werbner's chapter on the ritual of 'Sealing' the Koran (*khatam quran*) among Pakistani migrants in Manchester had me again asking the "so what, who cares?" question, with her abstract "ontological" concern for "the role of fellow migrants as *ritual mediators*, effecting a desired transformation in the condition of individuals and their families" (p. 231). Werbner says that "The congregation were all friends..." (p. 235). *Congregations*, like *parishes*, *priests*, and *churches*, however, do not exist in Islam—these terms are Orientalist linguistic transpositions from Christianity. Ultimately Werbner's account makes her own informants look like fools reading the entire Qur'an in the vain hope that they can find the correct verse for whatever ill might befall them.

The final section of Part II starts with Weiss on *Almsgiving* in Northern Ghana. Here, once more, we see history supplement anthropology. More interesting, Benthall, who conducted research in Jordan and the West Bank, raises the question of a progressive *zakat* [taxation] as a possible solution to the evils of



communism and capitalism (p. 263) in a post-capitalist Islamic world.

Part III kicks off with *Situating Anthropology*, where Ahmed makes the case for an Islamic anthropology for and by Muslims. This is an interesting perspective, but unconvincing, because in my view to be an *anthropologist* one needs to be methodologically agnostic, otherwise the writer runs the risk of becoming an ideological *apologist*. Tapper attacks Ahmed's position as ethnocentric, but the debate is still situated at the level of text, whether Islamic approaches to anthropology, or anthropological approaches to Islamic texts. This confuses literary theory with anthropology, a 'postmodern turn' fashionable twenty years ago, but hardly reflective of the current state of the discipline.



In the final section, *Representing Islam*, Said's chapter examines how the media covers Islam. He concludes that to offset "many wars, unimaginable suffering, and disastrous upheavals," non-Orientalist antithetical scholarship must not put itself at the service of power, but instead "at the service of criticism, community,



dialogue and moral sense” (p. 320), which is, I suppose, another name for *science*, albeit a meaning Said may not have intended. The final chapter, by Varisco, at least mentions some of the many studies of Islamic mysticism in the anthropological canon, and even hints at transnationalism, but unfortunately does little more than list out the names of some of the more famous studies.

According to Krenait, “[t]he aim of this Reader is to go beyond information given in introductory textbooks on Islam and reflect upon the adventure of anthropological research, its consequences for the researcher, and most importantly, for the understanding of the lives of those upon which the ethnographic volume of this volume is centred” (p. 14). Such modest ambitions may represent a wasted opportunity to learn how the self-avowed “religion of peace” came to be represented as the “religion of terror,” and this raises key questions concerning the role of violence in religion, and religion in violence.

Does the anthropology of religion/Islam tell us nothing of contemporary troubles post-9/11? Surely a discussion of violence would be more pressing and relevant to anthropological students of Islam than endless stale postmodern diatribes over ‘representation.’

A discussion of ‘power,’ however, might disrupt this conservative and dated selection of materials, and raise the spectre of Orientalism, which even “antithetical scholars” (p. 319) of Sunni community Islam, or Islamic communities, seem destined to fail to overcome. Contra Geertz’s ‘observations’ of ‘Islam,’ claims Varisco, it is preferable to study ‘Muslims,’ because “[t]he anthropologist observes Muslims in order to represent their representations; only Muslims can observe Islam” (p. 337). Varisco’s circuitous conclusion to the volume demonstrates just how gigantic a theoretical muddle *The Anthropology of Islam Reader* is lost within.

To conclude, in the glossary, the term “mystic” has the following bizarre definition: “As a term in the study of religion, it refers to an individual who is introverted and believes in an invisible realm and reality of enlightenment beyond



human comprehension” (p. 362). This definition of ‘introverted believers’ is patently Orientalist. With this in mind it is just as well that the copious anthropological studies of Islamic mysticism, Sufism, are almost entirely absent from this volume.

Kreinath, Jens (ed.). 2012. [The Anthropology of Islam Reader](#). London and New York: Routledge. 420 pp. PB: \$60.95. ISBN: 978-0-415-78025-4

Why the differences between Lampedusa (the place) and Lampedusa (the play) matter

Valentina Zagaria
May, 2015



On April 19 I went to see “Lampedusa”, a play by [Anders Lustgarten](#), and found it both enlightening and misleading. Enlightening because it strives to make spectators think through the connections between how people are being left to die at Europe’s borders, and how migrants (and the poor) are scapegoated and exploited within European countries. Opening a discussion around these connections is crucial if we wish to [seriously address \(and end\) deaths at Europe’s borders](#). However, Lustgarten’s depiction of people’s scope for choice and action in Lampedusa is misguided. Unveiling the play’s inaccuracies could go further in building an understanding of possibilities for change when it comes to migration.

On April 19 between [700 and 900 people drowned](#) off the Libyan coast. The main political debate concerning migrant deaths that has been unfolding in the aftermath of this enormous loss of life has centred on bringing back a Mare



Nostrum style rescue mission. Mare Nostrum, the Italian military operation that took place in the Mediterranean in 2014, is undoubtedly preferable to Triton, the current EU border control mission. It had a bigger operational capacity and could therefore save more lives. Still, between January and September 2014, and thus during Mare Nostrum, at least 3072 people died. Despite their rescue operation status, both Mare Nostrum and Triton (even in its reinforced version resulting from the [European Council meeting of April 23](#)) should be understood as missions driven by a will to stop departures. Hence the heavy focus on combatting smugglers - the EU recently announced carrying out military attacks in Libya supposedly to this end - and the reinforcement of ties with police forces in countries of departure, such as Egypt and Tunisia. These measures do not aim to ensure safe travelling conditions. And they do not address the causes of migration. They are not the solution.

Striving to implement alternatives to these missions is vital. The [proposition](#) of opening up legal travel possibilities towards Europe from Libya could (and should) be picked up immediately. As for the long-term, rethinking the visa system and making freedom of movement a reality seem to me the only ways to end deaths at the border. Politicians in Europe, though, are not considering these options, and European citizens did not take to the streets to demand change in migration laws following the deaths of thousands at Europe's maritime frontier.

Despite the unbearable facts being widely available, opening the doors to Fortress Europe is a possibility that remains largely ignored by both governments and publics.

So where to start in thinking through change? Perhaps we could momentarily shift our gaze away from governments and publics to individuals. "Lampedusa" (the play) tells the stories of personal change of two fictional characters. One, Stefano, is a Lampedusan fisherman turned coastguard, the other, Denise, is a British-Chinese woman living in Leeds and working for a payday loan company. Both characters become friends with individuals whose realities are heavily



influenced by laws and policies that make some lives valuable, and others worthless. Change happens gradually. It becomes apparent when the characters must choose whether to act in the face of situations they now consider unjust.

However, the play is misleading precisely because it removes the question of how people make choices, and act upon them, from their context. In “Lampedusa” we learn that Stefano comes from a long line of fishermen in Lampedusa, and used to be one until there weren’t enough fish left to make ends meet. After three years of unemployment, he decides to join the coastguard. His new job is [“to fish dead migrants out of the sea.”](#) Stefano then strikes a friendship with Modibo, a mechanic from Mali, which makes him question his views on migration. When Modibo tells him his wife is on a boat heading from Libya to Lampedusa, Stefano decides to go to the rescue despite an impending tempest.

By romanticising the character of Stefano, the play de-politicises the context in which he operates. For one, Stefano’s choice of going from being a fisherman to being a coastguard is strange. Coastguards working in Lampedusa come from all over Italy; they are not from Lampedusa itself. More worryingly though, the play would have us believe that in Lampedusa there is a job post within the coastguard that involves recovering the dead from the sea. This job post does not exist. The Italian state does not automatically send coastguards to search for and salvage the dead. Of course, when confirmed shipwrecks occur, or when a dead person is signalled at sea, the coastguards intervene.

Yet in a huge number of [cases](#) it is people who have nothing to do with the state, police bodies, or with official rescue operations – such as fishermen, merchant ships, tourists, members of civil society – who rescue both the living and the dead.

Currently, under [Triton](#), coastguards cannot rescue boats – let alone the dead – beyond 30 miles from Lampedusa. As a result, they call upon civilian vessels to do the rescuing for them and to take people either directly to Lampedusa or within the 30 miles range. Things were not so different during the much-praised Mare



Nostrum operation. In 2014, merchant ships and other privately owned vessels [rescued 30,000 people](#). Civilian boats are not given any training or financial support, nor are they provided with extra life jackets, water and other means to successfully carry out rescue at sea. Ship owners and fishermen have to interrupt their work when asked to rescue migrant boats, thereby losing time and money. On top of this, on several occasions fishermen have been [arrested](#) for having helped migrants in distress at sea under the accusation of aiding illegal immigration.

Within this complex context, Stefano's decision to go out in the tempest to rescue his friend's wife would have been a lot less straightforward than Lustgarten's play would have it. The playwright missed an opportunity to expose the intricate maze within which people form decisions. The details that make up this maze are important. Coastguards (and the [Guardia di Finanza](#)) are officially meant to manage migration, while locals in Lampedusa are presumably kept out of the execution of migration laws. The reality on the ground though shows that the inhabitants of the border are made to become heavily involved in the management of migration while having no support nor a say in it.

What is more, rescue at sea has been made into both a burden and a risk for civilians. It is important to understand these structural constraints to thinking and acting according to one's moral assessments. Hence why the inaccuracies in Lustgarten's play matter: they prevent us from seeing the bigger picture within which people form value judgements and actions.

We are living at a time in which we are all aware that people are dying in the thousands at our frontiers, and yet governments continue avoiding the real solutions. Asking ourselves how our own choices are influenced by those same laws that are keeping people out might be the key to exploring possibilities for change. Understanding that laws have a direct, albeit at times unintended, impact on individual decision-making possibilities might lead us to question the values that lie at the heart of certain policies. This, in turn, might lead to productive



[struggles over value](#), which could lead to change. Anthropologist David Graeber, whose theory of value informs what I mean here by 'struggles over value', argues that "social theory is at something of an impasse, in part, because it has boxed itself into a corner where it is now largely unable to imagine people being able to change society purposefully." (2001:230) He proposes that to move beyond this rut, we should understand value "as how people measure the importance of their own actions within such structures" (2001:230). If struggles over value are about creating who we are and the social world we live in, then there is space for creative refusal, resistance, and for living by other values.

It is crucial to recognise that deaths at Europe's borders are a direct effect of migration laws, and that those laws inform a broader value system within which certain lives are dispensable. Change in migration laws and policies must happen at state level and at European Union level. In order for populations within those states to push for this change, understanding that what is at stake is how their own lives are being valued and framed is vital.

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Wives, Husbands and Lovers. Marriage and Sexuality in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Urban China

Roberta Zavoretti

May, 2015



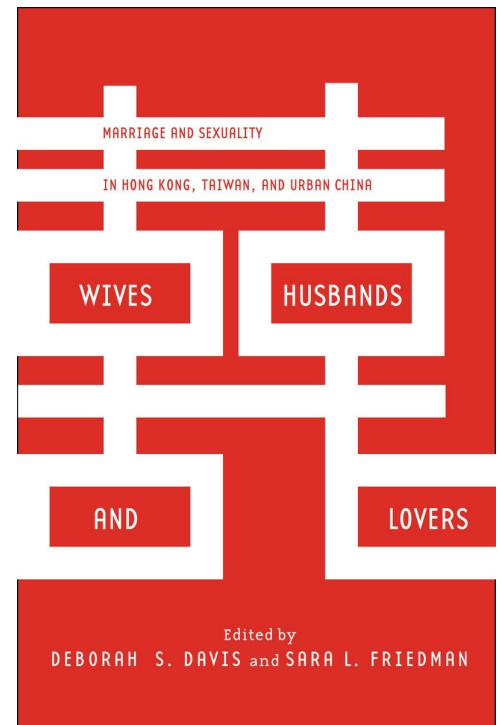
Social scientists have repeatedly looked at the institution of marriage, and at the pivotal role it plays in many societies' production and reproduction. In the case of China, different models of marriage and of domestic relations have been key to state-led projects of modernisation and nation-building in the past as well as in more recent times. With the volume [*Wives, Husbands and Lovers: Marriage and Sexuality in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Urban China*](#), Deborah Davis and Sarah Friedman offer us an excellent and much needed update on the state of marriage



in present day Chinese-speaking societies.

The volume's comparative organisation constitutes one of its main strengths, as the book draws on a remarkable wealth of ethnographic material from different locations in order to engage with sociological debates of global relevance. The most prominent of these debates is that on the resilience and the de-institutionalisation of (heteronormative) marriage, raised by the editors in their introduction. The comparative aims of the volume are reflected by the organisation of the book, which is composed of three sections, each of them with a different geographical focus. The book focuses on a region where linguistic, cultural and historical polis/es consistently exceed, question and destabilise national borders, while at the same time sustaining different, even competing projects of statehood. The book's organisation explicitly links the institution of marriage to the workings of state-led social order, rather than presenting it as a merely private issue that concerns only a group, namely women.

The authors largely build on works that looked at marriage and the family in China during the late 1980s and early 1990s, tackling many of the issues raised by that literature: courtship, family law, property and gift exchange, intergenerational relations and the nexus between production and reproduction. This continuity facilitates the acquisition of a historical perspective on these topics even for those readers who are not familiar with Chinese society and history. In addition, the papers in this collection touch upon topics that tend to be left out from research on marriage, precisely because they depart from the realm of official institutions: youth culture, love affairs, commercial sex, and the many entanglements between love and money, romance and duty, sexuality and reproduction.





These fresh reflections counterbalance the rigorous analysis offered in these papers, highlighting that such a complex institution as marriage cannot be deconstructed without attention to the unofficial practices that surround and often sustain it.

Readers who are new to the study of Chinese society will find in this book a reliable introduction to marriage, family politics and sexuality in mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong; scholars of China will enjoy engaging with the different, sometimes diverging arguments put forward by the different contributors. The variety of voices and opinions presented in the volume is not a weakness of this collection, but an adequate reflection of the urgency that pervades debates on marriage, family and sexuality in mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. These often heated discussions highlight that Chinese societies are far from being free from tensions and conflicts, as foreign observers tend to imagine them. Most importantly, however, the urgency of these debates points to the importance that the institution of marriage maintains for social reproduction in these societies.

In mainland urban China, in particular, the new provisions in family law and the richly-documented changes in courtship practices have not, so far, hindered the strength of heteronormative marriage; this institution remains a quasi-universal passage into adulthood, a pre-requisite for legitimate childbearing, and an essential milestone in the trajectory towards old-age material and emotional security. It is all to see whether the importance of heteronormative marriage in mainland China will soon diminish, as some authors suggest. This latter hypothesis seems plausible for discrete social groups in a large and cosmopolitan metropolis like Shanghai; on the other hand, the rest of the country may not be set on a progressive trend towards the values that many people in mainland China see as specific to the 'Shanghai middle class lifestyle'.

In this respect, while editorial limits may have prevented the inclusion of a section on small-town China, this comparative collection would have benefited from at least one contribution from a different city in the Mainland.



This book constitutes a timely and much-needed contribution to the study of marriage, family and sexuality in mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. The collection also exemplifies the value of interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration, bringing together ethnographic insights, legal competence and rigorous sociological analysis in order to deconstruct complex social and institutional conundrums. This book is a must-read for all social scientists working on love, marriage and the family in east Asia; it remains a state-of-the art publication on marriage and the family that students of contemporary China may use as key reference; finally, it would be of great help to all those social scientists looking at how courtship, marriage and family politics evolve around the globe.

Davis, Deborah S. and Friedman, Sara L. 2014. [Wives, Husbands and Lovers: Marriage and Sexuality in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Urban China](#). Stanford: Stanford University Press. 344 pp. Pb: £19.50. ISBN: 9780804791847.

Featured image (cropped) by [Hans Vivek](#) on [Unsplash](#).

Symbiosis, Avengers and resistance: some brief meditations on raising hell

Theodoros Kyriakides
May, 2015



Warning: Spoilers ahead. Do not read if you are planning to see Avengers: Age of Ultron.

This post comes in the aftermath of the last ASA meeting which took place at the University of Exeter this April. The last couple of days I have been thinking of this year's ASA theme, namely symbiosis, in relation with the new Avengers movie, *The Age of Ultron*. This was not intentional and rarely do I control what I think about. In any case, in this post I delve on some aspects of [Anna Tsing](#)'s plenary from the conference, and connect these to certain social, political and ontological dynamics from the latest Avengers saga (which was fun, but not as fun as the first Avengers movie. Or *Guardians of the Galaxy*).

In its etymology the term symbiosis (Greek for "living together") implies an organisation of two or more entities jointly working to sustain a functional



environment. Functionalism as a theoretical paradigm was popularised by the the sociology of Émile Durkheim and later Talcott Parsons, as well as the anthropology of Alfred Radcliffe-Brown and E.E. Evans-Pritchard (although their ethnographic richness in many ways exceeds their sociological foundations). These theories perceived society to be a holistic structure operating according to long term, harmonious interactions between its parts, thus granting this overarching system with long-term stability. Such perceptions were critiqued for not being able to account for social conflict and change, and were later complemented with nonlinear and agonistic theories of society, like Gregory Bateson's cybernetics and Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers's thermodynamics.

Like societies, very little is consensual and harmonious about symbiosis. In fact, consensus is probably the exception to the rule. Most of the time symbiotic relations are not balanced and reciprocal but deadly and destructive, as is the case with relations of parasitism, amensalism and antagonism. What I found interesting about Tsing's plenary was that she pushed the notion of symbiosis beyond its neo-functionalist suggestion of "working together." Rather than simply exploring it in terms of cooperation and mutuality, Tsing's lecture invited us to also think of symbiosis as resulting from processes of friction and disturbance. Following her proposition of landscapes as "enactments of possibility of living together" she went on to add that, above cooperation, such landscapes "come in existence through disturbance."

It is important that we receive this understanding of symbiosis. Speaking from the perspective of a social anthropologist, my impression is that if symbiosis as a concept is to attain relevance, it must be able to account for the violence and instability of present day socio-political landscapes. Amid such landscapes, peaceful symbiosis is often unattainable. Here, political alliances present themselves as fragile and volatile, forged and disrupted at the stroke of circumstance.

Following Tsing, rather than perceiving them as constant and anticipated, I suggest that we think of current forms of political symbiosis, especially activist



ones, as erratic yet tactical, momentary yet of particular power, emergent of alliances made and dissolved at specific point of time, according to particular events, projects and causes.

The relation of the Avengers to all of this slowly becomes evident. Like sociological and anthropological understandings perceiving society as operating in a state of constant disequilibrium, in the *Age of Ultron* one can similarly identify a metaphysics of chaos and disturbance permeating the Avengers squad and social relations in their entirety. Such metaphysics are alluded by the protagonists on several occasions. Vision says to Ultron that humans mistakenly “think of order and chaos as opposites”, Nick Fury says to Tony Stark that “no matter who wins or loses, trouble always comes around” and Quicksilver’s final words are “I didn’t see that coming.” All in all, such statements allude to the volatility of worldly circumstance, the friction and also decisiveness by which alliances in the film are forged, enacted and dissolved on both sides of the fence (it is not only the Hulk and Thor who momentarily turn against Iron Man; the Scarlet Witch and Quicksilver ultimately turn against Ultron), as well as the necessity for humanity to invent collectives of resistance capable of battling evil in its unpredictable manifestations.



The film hence exemplifies a concept of political symbiosis as unruly alliance. In addition, it does not take such alliance as readymade, but as a challenge to be achieved. None of the Avengers biologically or ecologically require each other to survive - they are indeed very different from each other and have difference objectives and moral viewpoints of the world - but nevertheless willingly enter into transient symbiotic arrangements, at particular periods of time. To this, Captain America's call to arms-"Avengers Assemble"-could be the political technology par-excellence, since in its urgent and pragmatic potency rallies together a gathering of resistance of divergent dimensions *which would not otherwise be possible*.

Such call to arms acts as the the starting point of a symbiotic, yet in many ways exceptional relationship between the Avengers, which arises at a specific juncture, according to a specific evil ravaging Earth.



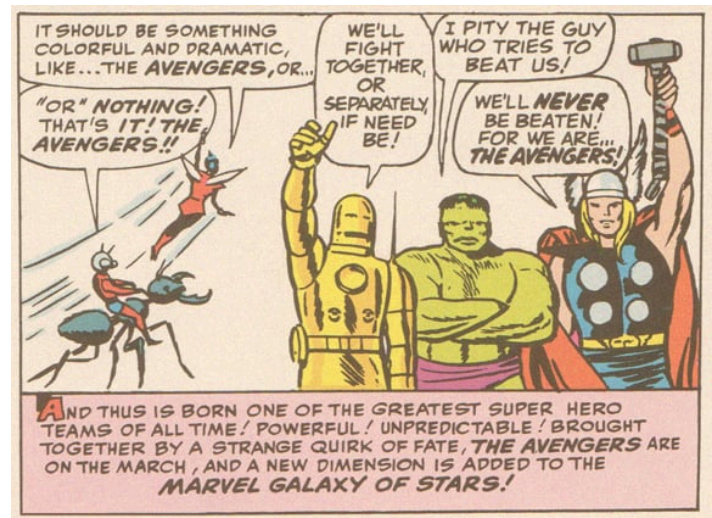
Thus, another element of such form of symbiosis is that the assembly of an unruly collective is always predicated and connected to the evil it fights. This because the conditions out of which evil emerges are, at the same time, *constitutive of the collectivity of those affected by it*, and thus trace the contours of possibility for the forging of alliances capable of countering the given evil. Ironically, the symbiotic glue which holds such alliances together is not some sort of mutual project or understanding of the world, but rather their mutual reaction to an all-encompassing, amongst them, enemy. Evil is, to use Tsing's words, "a historical circumstance which makes symbiosis a requirement."

Although I understood Tsing's plenary as mainly tackling the notion of symbiosis from an epigenetic and ecological register, its political intention was also evident. The necessity to make alliances was a central point in her plenary. As she said, now more than ever, we need to find "allies that can help us transform." The imperative for alliance and transformation implies that attention is not only given to maintaining existing "natural" milieus of symbiosis, but also creating new "unnatural" ones.

To frame these thoughts in real-world conditions, what I find interesting about current activist forms of resistance is that they emerge through the assembly of otherwise disparate collectives and their common reaction to a particular evil. What emerges through the connection of these collectives is a spectrum of transformative capacity which could not otherwise be achieved. Moreover, amid such impulsive gatherings, resistance is not directed to abstract notions of capitalism and state, but to specific culprits and villains which provoked such reaction in the first place - what Philippe Pignarre and Isabelle Stengers refer to as "minions" of evil. By concretely framing and announcing their enemies, collectives such as these unfold and backtrace the often hidden articulations through which evil emerges (the university in cahoots with the market and the corporation), and in return form aberrant counter-alliances of their own (the student in league with the activist, the journalist, the hacker, the artist, or even the politician).



As Virgil wrote long ago, “if I cannot access heaven I will raise hell”.



That is to say, when faced with forces of malign intention, and dispensed with possibilities of peace, harmony and cooperation, perhaps the only thing left to do is form deviant assemblies of our own. Raising hell exactly entails forming such unnatural – what Eduardo Viveiros de Castro calls “demonic” alliances of political symbiosis, capable of deploying friction and disturbance as creative forces of resistance and change. Alliances of these kind might be short-lived, yet of intense strength and importance. Shortly before I finished writing this piece, a long spell of occupation by the Free University of London – a collective of students which through its alliances became something much more – was dissolved because of legislative action by university management.

Like others of its kind, the urgency and fury under which this collective formed persist, and this means that its disbandment does not entail its destruction but, much like the evil it symbiotically opposes, its future recombination.

Further reading

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That's a big sun! Drawings on Mobile Childhood

Mari Korpela
May, 2015



Mari (the researcher), Tina (9 years), Lisa (9 years), Rose (8 years)

Mari : Think about a story of a child who is in Goa or comes to Goa, what happens to this child here?

Lisa: She came in a big red bus that was a fire engine before. They took the inside out and put sofas and beds and kitchen and everything inside and they drove with the bus from France. They started when she was two years old. All the way, they stopped in Spain and everywhere and when she was four they arrived in India and then they didn't have any petrol and any money, so they couldn't move the bus... that's why they stayed here.

Tina: Can I draw a bus?

Rose: I draw all the palm trees

T: I need a big flat pen. And then I need blue... I need red... and I need yellow and orange...

M: But tell me now about the story, the bus comes to Goa and it runs out of petrol and they stay here, what happens then? How do you think this child feels? Suddenly out of petrol and out of money in Goa.



R: Well, I think she would feel a bit different.

L: Then they need to make money. Her mum starts as a yoga teacher... she studies and earns money.

M: Here is a silver color if you have coins...

L: Dollars are colorful.

M: What is on top of the bus?

L: A tent and their bicycles

T: Her mum, dad, two brothers and her.

M: So what else, this child came to Goa, the mother started to work, so they got money. Where do they live? Does the child have friends?

R: Yes because they slept in a village and there was a restaurant and there was a house and there was a girl and a boy, the neighbors and they were best friends and then she started being friends with them.

M: And what do they do together with the friends?

R: They do loads of stuff, they go to the kindergarten together.

M: Are they all the time in Goa or do they sometimes go to France or somewhere?

L: They sometimes go to France, they only have a six months' visa.

R: I need yellow for the sun.

M: What do you like in Germany when you go there? Do you go to school in Germany?

L: I do home schooling.

M: In Germany, with your mum? Do you like that?

L: I don't know, it's ok; yes, it's ok.

R: Another flower here.

T: Let's do another flower here somewhere because it is so empty down here

L: That's a big sun!

R: Let's think what we put up here?



L: Some more rupees.

M: Some rupees? What they do with the money? For what do they need the money?

L: To go to school and food.

M: So here we have a lake and a palm tree; it is a coconut tree, isn't it? Then there is the bus with the bicycles on the top.

R: Maybe we draw a cow here?

The above discussion was recorded during a drawing session where I asked a group of three girls to tell me a story about a child who arrives in Goa, India. Such drawing sessions were a part of my ethnographic fieldwork among lifestyle migrant children in Goa.

Increasing numbers of “Western” families are involved in a lifestyle where they spend several months a year in Goa and the rest of the time in the parents’ native countries and possibly also in some other places. The lifestyle choice is motivated by a search for “a better quality of life”.

My research project “Mobile Childhood. Children of Lifestyle Migrants in Goa, India.” (2011-2013) investigated how 2-12-year-old children experience this lifestyle chosen by their parents. I investigated the social and cultural environment in which the “the Goa kids” live and I asked how they experience and view the transnationally mobile way of life. I also asked how they define their identities and belonging.

I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Goa for about ten months. My research material consists of field diaries of my participant observation, interviews with children, parents and people who work with the children (e.g. teachers) as well as drawing projects.

In groups of 3-5 children, I asked the children to draw me pictures related to my research theme (home, India, family etc.) and while they were drawing, I chatted with them about those themes.



In addition, I asked children to tell me fictional stories of children who arrive in Goa and to draw pictures to go with the stories. The example above is an example of such a drawing session. This method turned out to be an excellent way to get to know about children's views and discourses.

A short video presentation on the research:

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