

*Volume 3, Issue 2*

## DEATH & RESURRECTION

This issue of *The Unfamiliar* includes contributions on a wide range of topics related to the place of death in human social life. Alongside explorations of life-cycle rituals in Georgia; commemorative practices and discourses surrounding a Russian monument for the deceased and a virtual 'death mask' image circulated by Turkish protesters, the issue also includes reflections on political violence in Iran; European Renaissance ossuaries; and a poem that provides a more creative take on the subject. A common thread running through these pieces is the well-studied anthropological theme of death as an - often ritualized - event of 'transition' from one stage to another, rather than a decisive 'end'. It produces persistent material reminders - such as bones, graves, monuments, and belongings of the deceased - that serve as loci for existing social ties to be maintained or new ones to be reconstituted.

Rather than merely a source of morbid fascination, the centrality of death to the social and cultural practices explored in this issue emerges as an important resource for the living - in the concrete acts of mourning and commemoration studied by Chabukiani, Prell, and Yaneva-Toraman, but also in the more diffuse reflective processes outlined by Shafafi, Tradii and Watt. For this reason at least, the different kinds of relationships human beings construe around and beyond death deserve sustained attention not only as objects of social scientific study in their own right, but also in a more compassionate, reflexive way - one which resonates with anthropology's sometimes neglected 'moral' charter, hinting at the universality of experience that underlies human cultural variability.

Perhaps not coincidentally, the issue also marks a different kind of 'transition' for *The Unfamiliar* itself. After two years of serving as executive editors - often stressful, but often also extremely rewarding - we are stepping down from our position. This will allow the journal to benefit from the fresh ideas and dedication of our successors, who - we are certain - will do a splendid job in continuing to manage the project that began so many years ago. They will thus continue to present anthropology in an accessible, but still academically rigorous form, one which can hopefully allow the vast range and intellectual dynamism of anthropological work to reach audiences beyond narrow, and often all too lonely, circles of academia. Here is to hoping that the insights of our contributors regarding the tenacious and creatively managed vitality of social life after 'death' will extend to this new phase in the life cycle of *The Unfamiliar*.

*Jona Fras & Grit Wesser*