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// ACCESSING KNOWLEDGE //

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Everyone is part of human society.

.....

**THIS ISSUE WAS INSPIRED BY AND IS DEDICATED TO SALVATORE IACONESI.
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ACCESSING KNOWLEDGE

What do internet activist Aaron Swartz, actress Angelina Jolie and anthropologist Marshall Sahlins have in common? At first glance: not very much. But they have all been in the media this year because of issues that can be seen as linked to accessing knowledge. Should all authors retain their copyright so that information is freely accessible to everyone on the internet? What are the ethical implications of going public about one's decision for a preventive double mastectomy based on genetic testing? Should scientists use their expert knowledge for the greater good of society - and how?

The present issue endeavours to tickle your mind through exploring the difficulties of providing straightforward answers to such questions. Acero Araluce thus discusses whether knowledge accessible on the internet has more benefits than drawbacks for the global social fabric. The common assumption that information received from genetic testing necessarily confronts patients with heavy ethical dilemmas is challenged by Flaherty, who shows that some U.S. patients perceived it as bringing them a sense of certainty, rather than an ethical burden. And our reliance on expert knowledge is questioned by Bloemen in her investigation of the representation of radiation risk by scientists in the UK.

In a similar way, by drawing on its fieldwork among the Mapuche in southern Chile, Gonzalez-Galvez encourages us not to take for granted that what we mean by 'knowledge' is universally the same - suggesting that a different definition may no longer pose a problem in terms of its access. On the other hand, Melia demonstrates how access to historical knowledge can make us better appreciate the historical position of Brazilian slaves – uncovering an autonomy that is admittedly limited, yet nevertheless present.

The pieces by van Roekel and Nørtoft & Hansen put forward different avenues for anthropologists to access the knowledge they seek from their interlocutors in the field, either through Argentineans' use of humour or through the anthropologist's employment of film clips to provoke discussion among Copenhagen's elderly population. Last but not least, Gould demonstrates that anthropology can indeed make itself better understood by its student body - and beyond - through the innovative medium of an exhibition which engages tangibly with its audience.

We hope you will find this issue of *The Unfamiliar* – to which open access is provided, as always, by the University of Edinburgh – an enjoyable read, and that browsing it you will stumble across some new and perhaps thought-provoking knowledge!

Grit Wesser & Jona Fras

ESSAYS

// ESSAYS I //

REPRESENTING RADIATION RISK

// OLGA BLOEMEN

WITH PHOTOGRAPHY BY
DARREN NISBETT //

'Bedtime Stories'

radioactivity |ˌrādēōakˈtivətē|
noun
the emission of ionizing radiation or particles caused by the
spontaneous disintegration of atomic nuclei.

Consisting of moving subatomic particles, radioactivity is invisible, has no smell and makes no sound. Its presence can only be detected with Geiger counters and other measuring instruments. Its transformations and symptoms are more real to us: the iconic mushroom cloud of a nuclear bomb, barrels of nuclear waste, cancer increases in exposed populations, or contaminated wastelands. Recognition of radioactive risk, or its denial, depends on those who employ the measuring instruments, assess cancer or toxicity rates, or set safety standards. In a society greatly relying on empirical evidence and technical expertise, it is scientists who have first access to knowledge about radioactivity.

NATURE'S REPRESENTATIVES

With the birth of modern empirical science, scientists have come to be seen as representatives of an entity called 'nature' (see Latour 2004). The perceived separation between nature and culture fuelled expectations of 'nature' as tractable and promised human flourishing through scientific and technological progress. These beliefs were challenged with the rise of environmentalism and public awareness of risks, before but significantly since the 1960s. However, as environmentalism became more integrated in 'mainstream' political institutions, science and technology were again elevated as the solution to 'environmental issues' rather than part of the problem (see Grove-White 1993, Yearly 1993). In the development and implementation of recent environmental policies and regulations, scientific experts are front and centre.

Two quotes taken from web-articles on the nuclear disaster in Fukushima in March 2011 exemplify this:

> But just how much [nuclear] fallout does the government need to remove in order to protect human health? On that key question the science is *frustratingly inconclusive*. [Bird 2012, my emphasis]

> 'What impact this radioactive contamination has on marine life and humans is still unclear… this is *not a fully developed science* and there are lots of uncertainties.' [Grozman 2011, my emphasis]

Implicit here is the expectation that science, if 'fully developed', *should* be able to provide conclusive evidence on matters like the impact of radioactivity. As will become clear, scientists walk a tight rope: they need to balance the high uncertainties in their knowledge with the high demands for facts from policy-makers, industry and members of the public. At the same time, the (empirical) *is* question is tied up with the (normative) *ought* question: what impacts of nuclear technologies are *acceptable*, or in other words, to what extent should human and environmental health be compromised under the banner of technological and social progress?

In September 2012, I conducted fieldwork at the 'International Symposium on Environmental Radioactivity: Implications for Environmental & Human Health' in Plymouth, England. Speaking to radio-epidemiologists, radio-biologists, radio-ecologists, radio-chemists, radio-physicists, geo-chemists and geologists, as well as to policymakers and members of industry, I tried to gain access to otherwise secluded knowledge about environmental radioactivity.

ORDINARINESS

The church-turned-conference venue at the edge of Plymouth's University campus was characterised by swift-gliding doors and a lack of natural light. The programme of the conference was packed with presentations, mostly concerning pieces of research, case studies and protection frameworks. The socio-political dimensions of environmental radioactivity were packed into six presentations in the last session, with the mouthful title of 'Regulation, Policy and Risk Assessment; Research Need; Socio-Economic Impact; Public Perception'.

In the mornings and soon after lunch, only the front benches of the lecture theatre were filled. Many of the senior researchers seemed to know each other ('It's a small field', I was told) and used the gathering mainly for meetings and catch-ups. PhD students admitted to be hunting jobs, while delegates from industry and policy stayed on the fringes. Differences were smoothed out, however, on the evening of the first day, when I accompanied the delegates to a fancy fish dinner in the National Marine Aquarium. Rays and small sharks witnessed us from behind the glass wall while wine was being generously poured.

For most of it, the symposium stood out in its appearance of ordinariness. A visit of a local journalist to the welcome reception was the only indication that the conference topic was of any public importance. But the devil, as always, was in the detail – or, perhaps, in the discourse.

DEFINITIONAL STRUGGLES

Taking a Foucauldian discursive approach, scientific discourses can be seen as 'normalising discourses' whose power lies both in their ability to define experience in a particular way and to efface this particularity and their underpinning power relations by framing these as natural. Scientific definitions of, for example, risk, pollution and harm partly determine how people perceive and interact with the environment.

In the field of environmental radioactivity, however, scientists are constantly challenged in their role as authorised representatives of radiation risk. Rather than simply imposed on a supposedly pliable public, its discourse

'Weeping Tree'

seems to emerge from constant 'definitional struggles' between stakeholders over the very nature of these risks (Beck 1992). Kath Weston (2011) describes how in the after-math of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, radiation risks did not only become the subject of definitional struggles over the interpretation of knowledge, but also of what she calls 'techno-struggles' over the *production* of knowledge, as worried Japanese citizens began to question information released by the government and built Geiger counters to measure radiation themselves.

At the Symposium, scientists would define radioactivity to me mostly in direct response to what they considered public fears of radioactivity:

> People think immediately about fish with three eyes!
>
> Even the word 'radioactivity' scares people. If you say you can measure radioactivity, they think it's contaminated…

They would then go on to downplay radiation risks by comparing human-induced radiation to natural background radiation or to other allegedly bigger risks.

POLLUTION BELIEFS

While radiation might be real in the sense of material, its *reality status* (Adam, 1996) - as dangerous, desirable, risky, polluting or natural - arises in a process of competition, conflict and negotiation among different actors: scientists, publics, politicians and members of industry.

Here we can draw insights from Mary Douglas' famous framing of dirt as 'matter out of place' (1966, 2002): Pollution beliefs, she argued, are physical boundaries drawn to distinguish between the moral and immoral and, as such, reflect a particular social order (Idem: 36). In later work, however, she refused to extend this argument to scientific claims (1982, 1999). Still, as I will show, when and for whom radioactive matter comes to be considered 'out of place' reflects value orientations rather than facts.

For opponents of nuclear technologies human-induced radiation has come to embody in its invisibility both pollution and danger. It is matter out of place, or even more so, matter that should not have been created and released by humans in the first place. For them, it has taken on strong moral significance too: Nuclear risk, symbolic of the problems of contemporary society, emerged as the flagship of the environmental movement in the 1970s (Strydom 2002: 22).

However, during the Symposium, when delegates discussed human-induced radiation, terms like *pollution* or *contamination* were used only to denote extreme, 'high-exposure' scenarios. They casually spoke of *radionuclide behaviour in terrestrial ecosystems, radioactive discharges* or *routine emissions*. They discussed the *effects* and *impacts* of radionuclides on people and the environment rather than their *harm*. In other words, it became clear that when human-induced radiation is *measured* by scientists in the environment, it is not necessarily *classified* by them as pollution or contamination. Where are these boundaries drawn? Douglas and Wildawsky describe what they call 'technical' or 'objective' pollution as 'some *harmful* interference with natural processes' (1982: 36). In international environmental legislation, pollution is also commonly defined with reference to 'harm' (Warren 1993). Scientific definitions of radioactive pollution thus partly depend on shifting, subjective categories of 'the natural' or pre-polluted, as well as of 'harm'.

MUTANT ECOLOGIES

Everyone, everywhere, is exposed to 'background radiation'. Although the exposure differs per geographical location, we get irradiated from naturally occurring radionuclides in the soil, in our diets, in the air; we are exposed to cosmic rays and to radiation emitted by certain types of rocks. But background radiation is not only 'natural': In the UK about 15% of the background radiation comes from cumulative effects of industry: in the majority from medical applications of radioactivity, followed by the residues of nuclear disasters and nuclear weapon tests, and operating nuclear power plants. This low-level 'background exposure' to radiation, partly caused by humans and continuing to rise, is possibly already changing the genetic structure of plants, animals, and people. Current work on the consequences of the Fukushima disaster found mutations among birds and butterflies, at levels of exposure 'way below anything we'd expect from the literature', one informant tells me: 'If they are correct, that might change all the protection criteria'.

Mutations can lead to irreversible evolutionary change, cancer, deformities and so-called 'genetic noise' that neither improves nor injures the organism but does affect future generations (Masco 2006: 301). It is 'a specific kind of break that reinvents the future' (Idem). Mutagenic processes blur familiar analytical dichotomies such as nature-culture, subject-object, human-animal and natural-artificial. What does this mean for 'environmental protection'? What counts as 'harm' when we speak about mutations, and what is acceptable? Perhaps what is at stake here is no longer the *protection* of nature but 'the choice of what sort of nature and society we want' (Hajer 1996: 259).

UNKNOWABLE FUTURES

To develop environmental regulations and safety standards, scientists are required to predict future 'harm' caused by human activities. This is problematic not only because what constitutes 'harm' is open to debate, but also because scientific innovation by definition cre-

ates 'unknowable futures', as time theorist Adam writes (1996: 95-6). While mechanistic knowledge is required to devise new technologies, the knowledge required to study and predict their real-world impacts is of a different kind: both natural and social processes are networked, non-linear and as such inherently unpredictable (Adam 1993). The result is that 'our predictive knowledge falls behind the technical knowledge which nourishes our power to act', as philosopher Hans Jonas asserts (1974: 10). This turns our world into a living laboratory in which new technologies come into use and new industries roll out with little pause, unanticipated consequences bouncing back at us further down the line.

Paradoxically, while knowledge about the future is more and more reduced to the present, the effects of activities extend more and more into the future. For example, a radionuclide never ceases to be radioactive, however slightly. Since we cannot usefully talk about the 'life' of a radioactive source, the concept of 'half-life' is used: the time it takes for its level of radioactivity to fall by half. For example, an average nuclear power reactor releases varying amounts of tritium, radiocarbon (C-14) and Plutonium-239 into the environment, with half-lives of 12 years, 5,700 years and 24,400 years respectively. Equally, spent nuclear fuel can remain radioactive for at least 10,000 years, or even 250,000-500,000 years if the fuel contains plutonium (Fairlie 2011). At the symposium, one presenter discussed the environmental risk assessments undertaken for a permanent burial facility for nuclear waste in Finland. There it was decided to work with a time-scale of 10,000 years, as beyond that, it was 'just guessing'.

Scientists are asked to represent a future they cannot access empirically. On the basis of experiments and environmental monitoring of irradiated areas, they try to predict future effects through models, which enable them to coin certain safety thresholds for the release of radionuclides in a particular locality. A French marine biologist explained to me that, in the laboratory, his team conducts experiments 'in which we have only one parameter that is changing, which is the stressor, the polluter.' Ethnographies of laboratory practices confirm that scientists tend to study controlled, cleaned and purified phenomena about which models can be more easily made (Latour & Woolgar 1979, Knorr-Cetina 1983). As such, experiments cannot account for all the interactions and different stressors in the environment, including, for example, the synergistic effects of radionuclides with other (chemical) particles.

Mutagenic effects also escape from the scientific gaze, due to empirical science's limited material, spatial and temporal focus: in lab experiments and ecological fieldwork, predictions of the future are generally formed through an analysis of causes and effects, on the basis of what observably happened in the past. Mutagenic effects, however, often only manifest themselves in our bodies and in eco-systems long after the harm has been done. Here links between causes and effects are hardly detectable. Occurring far away from the source in time and space, field sampling cannot fully capture radiation effects either. As such, embodied in latent processes, future effects are denied reality status by empirical science (Adam & Groves 2002). They are real but not tangible; they are underway but not yet materialized into empirically accessible phenomena (Idem).

UNCERTAINTY & HUMILITY

My informants often refused to give their personal opinion on the unpredictable, long-term effects of radiation induced by nuclear technologies:

> As a scientist, I cannot say that the impact of radioactivity which is added to the natural radiation in the natural environment is actually killing species. *I can't say that because we can't see that!*' [My emphasis]

The nature of radioactive ecologies seems to challenge the expectations of science held by the public and policymakers alike. Nature-culture configurations characterised by mutations defy any take on nature as knowable and manageable – if indeed it ever was. Mutant ecologies are unpredictable and uncontrollable. As such mainstream environmentalism's focus on physical and demonstrable 'limits' of the environment, trespassed by humans, hits the wall of scientific uncertainty.

Jasanoff observes that in fact most questions regulators ask of scientists cannot adequately be answered by science (1990: 7). The scientists I interviewed indeed admitted that the environmental assessments they undertook and the numerical criteria they provided to policymakers were clouded in uncertainty. At the same time, they stressed they had to answer to demands for facts by regulators and other authorities. One informant working for the International Commission for Radiological Protection told me they will eventually start adding uncertainty ranges to the numerical protection criteria they develop. He added:

> But the difficulty is: how do you interpret that information? [*Grinning*] We always laugh. We say that regulators - bearing in mind I used to be one - wear their simple hats: 'Yes! No answers!' Providing numbers is a much clearer way to be able to explain to people this is safe and this isn't safe.

Science fixes our attention on the knowable. The combination of scientific uncertainty and demands for facts can allow for inaction on potentially destructive 'externalities' of human activities: A lack of conclusive evidence on any long-term consequences is all too readily taken as a legitimation for business as usual. Jasanoff argues that what our age needs is *humility*: humility 'about both

'Menace on the Horizon'

All images courtesy of Darren Nisbett and used with his kind permission.
For more images and information visit http://www.darkoptics.net/

These photos are from the UK photographer's series 'Chernobyl: Alienation'. Nisbett visited in 2011, 25 years after the Chernobyl nuclear accident, the 2,600 km^2 abandoned Chernobyl Exclusion Zone in the Ukraine. Pripyat, now a ghost town, was built in 1970 as a home to the thousands of people that worked at and around the power plant. The day after the explosion, the inhabitants were given two hours to pack their belongings and were told that they would be away for a matter of days. But they would never return to their homes.

the limits of scientific knowledge and about when to stop turning to science to solve problems' (2007: 33). Practicing humility would lead 'policy-makers to re-engage with the moral foundations for acting in the face of inevitable scientific uncertainty' (Idem).

My informants did not see scientific uncertainties about impacts as a barrier to the use of nuclear technologies. One informant who worked and researched in environmental management in the UK, told me:

> We're left in a situation where we have to make decisions now because things are being developed now, things are *happening* now (…) Uncertainty can't stop you from taking decisions, because otherwise, development would stagnate completely. (His emphasis)

Most of my informants were outspokenly in favour of nuclear energy and technologies. They often held a utilitarian stance: nuclear technologies were simply a case in which the benefits outweighed the risks, and over-caution should not hinder 'development'.

CONCLUSION

If science cannot reliably predict the long-term effects of the build-up of human-induced radioactive particles in the environment, questions arise: What level of harm and risk to both human and environmental health is acceptable? What kind of environment and what kind of future do we want, or ought, to create?

Perhaps what is needed first is recognition that the process of establishing safe and acceptable levels of radiation is indeed a subjective one. Scientists cannot adequately predict the long-term impacts of nuclear technologies, and questions of what we *ought* to be protecting bring us from the empirical into the normative realm. Representing radiation risk is, as any act of representation, a political act. Once we recognise that, we can address decisions about the use of nuclear technologies more openly and more humbly. It is time to ask: who should be representing radiation risk, the environment and the future? This is thus not only a question of access to knowledge, but also of the allocation of agency and authority in decision-making processes.

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NORMATIVE HORIZONS

READING ENSLAVED AFRICANS' AUTONOMY THROUGH PRIMARY SOURCES IN COLONIAL BRAZIL [1690 – 1806]

// MICHAEL B. MELIA

ABSTRACT // This essay is an exploration of historical knowledge: how it is authored and, more importantly, how we can access it. Through in-depth inspection and careful combination of primary source documents from 1690 to 1806, the text is a result of my attempts to reconstruct Brazilian slave autonomy as a kind of historical knowledge. Disassembling the language that framed colonial encounters, I argue that historical knowledge from primary texts must first be framed within the everyday 'encounters' of others in 18th century Brazil social life. Utilising a socially situated textual analysis, the essay accesses the often overwritten autonomy of slaves through historical documents: (1) the text of a friar writing on slaves' fantastic religious accomplishments, (2) two colonial mandates prohibiting slaves' promiscuous and suggestive fashions, (3) a history of slave rebellion against colonial powers and (4) a list of demands composed by slaves offered as a peace treaty to their owner. Through exploring the 'normative horizons' of the authorial point-of-view of each text, what follows is not merely an ethnohistorical experiment in accessing historical knowledge, but an ethnographic exposition in imagining the lives and futures of slaves in the past.

THE RUNAWAY

Runaway Slave Advertisement in O Mercantil [1845]

> Fled on December 3 of this year from the plantation of Major Antonio de Campos Freire one of his slaves named Jose Antonio of the Benguella nation (though he says he is a creole) from 25 to 30 years of age with the following characteristics: short in stature, thin, well-made body, dark color, face rather long, pale jaw, almost no beard, lips rather full, round head, and is in the habit of going about with long hair, small eyes, long eyelashes, good teeth, nose medium large, […] He is a master blacksmith […] He is accustomed to getting drunk and in that condition becomes violent. He took some work clothes, a poncho with a yellow lining, a firearm, a hat of rough straw; and whenever he runs away he usually claims to be free and changes his name. Whoever captures him and takes him to his master will receive 100$000 reward, in addition to expenses, which will be paid separately.
>
> (Conrad 1984: 362–363)

Even a brief look at runaway slave advertisements evidences a unique way of writing, with latent 'assumptions, attitudes' and 'antipathies' (Novick 1988: 218). Exhibiting a 'well-made body', with a 'face rather long', 'round head', 'good teeth', and a 'nose medium large', any hint of humanity this slave could have is obliterated between a constellation of anatomically disembodied features. Falsely claiming his creole heritage, any notion of intelligence is dissolved thanks to the due diligence (and strategic parentheses) of the advertiser, who reasonably assures us the slave originates from the Benguella nation. 'Accustomed to getting drunk', he fails even to display primitive movements of consciousness: moved by the alcohol, his 'violent' condition seems to be activated purely by exterior forces. Aside from the fact that he is a 'master' blacksmith, it appears that the slave is little more than a mindless brute who, 'whenever he runs away', is simply captured and returned like livestock.

> The runaway emerges from this literature […] as an animal driven by biological constraints, at best as a pathological case.
>
> (Trouillot 1995: 83)

Although a postcolonial example, this advertisement indicates shared ways of writing that produced documentary knowledge of enslaved Africans in 18th and early 19th century Brazil. The runaway was a disturbed, neurotic, muddled, unstable juvenile. Incapable of higher cognitive functions, the runaway constituted a set of fixed actions and reactions that could be curtailed, contracted, and above all, controlled. Cases of resistance towards white owners were separated from wider sets of relations, each episode amounting to little more than independent pathology: 'Slave A ran away because he was particularly mistreated by his master. Slave B was missing because he was not properly fed. Slave X killed herself in a fatal tantrum' (Trouillot 1995: 83).

NORMATIVE HORIZONS

Portuguese colonists could not ignore these acts of defiance. In addressing them, and to make sense of them, colonists committed enslaved Africans to particular arrangements of powerful ontological, epistemological, ideological and practical analytical categories. These categories produced the 'enslaved Africans' that we receive today in literature from colonial Brazil. Not to implicate theoretical 'discourses' (e.g. Foucault 1980, 2001), this observation is only to emphasise the ways in which daily life is permeated by shared exercises of conceptual and practical discrimination, identification and recognisabiltiy.

> There is a language that frames the encounter, and embedded in that language a set of norms concerning what will and will not constitute recognizability.
>
> (Butler 2005: 23–24)

This manuscript is a brief exploration of 'language that frames the encounter' between Portuguese colonists and slaves as evident in historical documents. My interest in this language is to explore history not as a 'single idea, but rather [as] a sprawling collection of assumptions, attitudes, aspirations, and antipathies' (Novick 1988: 218). The selections below textualise various *'normative horizons'* around these 'assumptions, attitudes' and 'aspirations', where each author 'sees and listens and knows and recognizes' enslaved Africans differently through specific language that always 'frames the encounter' (Butler 2005: 22).

ACCESSING KNOWLEDGE

I have borrowed Butler's notion of 'normative horizons' as a historiographic heuristic in attempts to access certain kinds of historical knowledge – in this case, slave autonomy. Following Hayden White, I argue that there is 'an irreducible ideological component in every historical account of reality' (1973b: 21). Historical knowledge is never a purely scientific object because 'the historical record is both too full and too sparse' to merit objective, holistic analysis (White 1973a: 281).

This means that historians always subjectively 'interpret' their materials. They 'fill in gaps' in order to 'construct a moving pattern of images' that present a cohesive, sensible story to readers (White 1973a: 281). Just as any form of ideology is determined by a 'specific idea of history', so too any form of history is determined by 'ideological implications' of the present (White 1973b: 24). 'History',

therefore, is never *simply* history. It is always 'history-for': it is 'history written in the interest of some infrascientific aim or vision' (White 1973a: 288). And my aim in the historical analysis below is straightforward: to access Brazilian slave autonomy as a kind of historical knowledge.

Making use of 'normative horizons', I situate primary source texts within the everyday 'encounters' of others in 18th century Brazilian social life. The documents I present condense particular 'conditions of address' between authors and subjects into 'normative horizons' dependent on lived encounters between one person and another (Butler 2005: 24). In other words, the 'normative horizon' of each primary source is based on social encounters where other subjects are 'fundamentally exposed, visible, seen, existing in a bodily way and of necessity in a domain of appearance' (Butler 2005: 25). Exposed to public space, social encounters between subjects are mediated through the 'operation of norms' (Butler 2005: 25) or, as I have explored above, each author's own 'assumptions, attitudes' and 'aspirations' (Novick 1988: 218). And by highlighting and exploiting these sets of norms, or sets of assumptions, through primary sources, I am interested in situating each particular text into wider constellations of social life to gain access to historical knowledge of slave autonomy.

THESIS

Framing these encounters within a wider 18th century social context allows me to 'fill in the gaps' of the historical record, thus enabling me to 'construct a moving pattern of images' that brings out the contours and shapes of slave autonomy.

Through dismantling descriptive mannerisms, deconstructing particular vocabularies, breaking down vocal registers and – most importantly – highlighting omissions, erasures and trivialisations, these sources will be taken apart to draw out lived experiences of slave autonomy in colonial Brazil. To analyse these texts I begin with James Clifford and how 'literary processes – metaphor, figuration, narrative – affect the ways cultural phenomena are registered' (1986: 4). Exploring literary processes in accounts of (1) black Christian brotherhoods, (2) styles of dress, (3) the famous *Quilombo* of Palmares, and (4) a slave peace treaty, this manuscript foregrounds enslaved Africans' autonomy in texts that have since cast them into a history of silence.

I want to sidestep winding philosophical disputes over 'agency', the 'rational individual' and 'free will'. Exploring autonomy through historical documents, my concern is not with 'uncovering' or 'revealing' aspects of enslaved Africans, but with writing for autonomy as a kind of uncoerced self-making.

CONTEXT

18th century colonial Brazil was composed of diverse peoples, ethnicities, religions, colonial directives, political projects, regional laws, formalised modes of oppression and improvised moments of freedom. To begin to understand these intricacies, one must be well acquainted with direct testimony of those who lived in the time period. Robert E. Conrad (1984) offers an insightful collection of primary sources that provide excellent insight into colonial Brazil. Including travel stories, sermons, newspaper advertisements, personal letters, political disputes, legal debates and more, Conrad's selection of documents is comprehensive in introducing the complexity of Brazilian social life. Below I explore four sources from his contribution, chosen over a variety of places, times and from a variety of authors in order to replicate Conrad's complexity on a smaller, less ambitious scale.

I. WORSHIP: REWRITING TERMS OF OPPRESSION

The Black Brotherhood of Our Lady of the Rosary in Recife [1757]

> The black people […] have proved themselves so devoted to the service of the Mother of God, Our Lady of the Rosary, that they themselves, although poor, resolved to establish a beautiful church, in which they alone are the founders and administrators.
>
> (Conrad 1984: 179)

Immediately, friar Domingos forefronts how the 'black people' 'have proved themselves'. A sense of accomplishment is imaged here in a way that humanises the slaves by recognising their conscious, deliberate efforts. Distributed along contours of anonymity, an element of self-making is no doubt foregrounded by the author, though not narrated in a materialised, individualistic sense.

Poor in earthly goods, the slaves are rich in their heavenly attainment: 'a beautiful church'. This structure differs from others that slaves built (houses, animal sheds, barns, fortifications) insofar as it is a structure that is truly their own. This is an instance of self-making where the physical result of their labour does not belong to another – it is *theirs*: 'they alone are the founders and administrators'.

> It is certainly highly inspiring and touching to witness the fervor, zeal, and expense with which they serve Our Lady. […] On Saturdays at five o'clock in the afternoon they chant a recital, and at seven at night again the third part of the rosary. […] At three o'clock in the afternoon they chant another rosary and at night at the door of the church yet another. On the second Sunday of October they worship Our Lady with great solemnity, and to increase the fervor of their devotion, they engage in dances and other licit

> entertainments with which they devoutly gladden the hearts of the population.
>
> (Conrad 1984: 179)

Indexing them between Catholic categories ('fervor', 'zeal', 'inspiring', 'worship'), the friar animates the slaves through terms of the religion they perform. Catholicism may be a religion of their choosing, but for some scholars the institutional terms and articulations that the slaves appropriate are the systemic mechanisms of their own oppression (see Trouillot 1995: 76). However, I would argue that slave autonomy is unique here as it is an instance of *rewriting these terms of oppression*. Through organising and scheduling their time (down to the hour!), singing and chanting of their own accord and dancing and entertaining themselves otherwise, the slaves transformed religious practices to fit their own abilities, skills, enjoyments and interests.

In an interesting aside by the author, one might wonder how the 'dances and other licit entertainments' relate to conventional Catholic forms of worship. Making sense of the dances as merely a *means* of increasing 'the fervor of their devotion' to an *ends* of worshipping 'Our Lady' and to an *ends* of 'devoutly' gladdening 'the hearts of the population', the friar's treatment of the dances and entertainments as an *intermediary technique* to these ends in particular is, at second sight, quite odd. By rationalising the dances through specifically religious ends (that he can relate to), the friar submits what may be foreign, indigenous celebration to a strictly Catholic system of meaning.

This points to a hybridisation of Catholicism that the friar either could not conceive (he receives it as devotion) or that he wished to hide in his account (for one reason or another), by framing it within a purely orthodox Catholic understanding. It is in this sense that enslaved Africans drew out the ritual conservatism of Catholicism into their own indigenous African worldviews and rituals, absorbing the entire articulation of religious practice as an extension of their own autonomy.

II. FASHION: EVERYDAY RESISTANCE

The Banning of Lascivious Dress [1709]

> Luis Cesar de Menezes, Friend. I the King greet you cordially. Having seen the petition which the officials of the Chamber of that city sent me concerning the licentiousness with which the slave men and women are accustomed to live and dress in my Overseas Conquests, going about at night and inciting the men with their lascivious apparel, […] I order that you not allow the slave women to make use in any way of silks or woven cloth or of gold in order that they may thus have occasion to incite sin with the expensive adornments that they dress themselves with […]
>
> (Conrad 1984: 247)

This passage is descriptively understated if only because of its political gravity, in that the city Chamber decided to involve the King himself in these matters, instead of resolving them locally. To petition the King over matters of the 'licentiousness' with which slaves 'live and dress' indicates that these material matters were not only of frequent occurrence, but that they were unrelentingly persistent.

In writing out the slaves, motivated entirely around the 'occasion to incite sin', the King dehumanises them as bodies coated with 'expensive adornments'. These bodies are the problem: mindless, automatic and carnal, the King's ordinance strips their external material existence to curtail their internal animal instincts.

Reading the King's rhetoric, one can identify a kind of *everyday resistance* of tangible self-making through the appropriation of specific materials (fabrics, cloths, jewels). That this activity is of such concern to include the King (all the way in Lisbon) is only a testament to the success of this resistance.

A Prohibition of Certain Types of Clothing and Ornaments for Slaves and Free Blacks and Mulattoes [1749]

> Having been informed of the great inconveniences which result in my conquests from the freedom of the blacks […] I prohibit the above, regardless of sex, and even if they have been liberated […] the use not only of all kinds of silk, but also of cloth and fine wool, of fine Dutch linen, and such fine cloth either of linen or cotton; and […] ornaments of jewellery, gold or silver, however minimal.
>
> (Conrad 1984: 248)

The 'great inconveniences' of slaves wearing 'silk', 'cloth', 'fine wool', 'fine Dutch linen' and 'other fine cloth either of linen or cotton' and 'ornaments of jewellery, gold or silver', yet again concerns Lisbon. Forty years between them, these two mandates in tandem illustrate the pervasiveness of these material forms of everyday resistance for slaves.

The political and social concern of these items of clothing, on the one hand, is an instrument of systematic classification and material oppression: resigning and authorising restrictions on certain types of clothing for a particular socio-ethnic group. On the other hand, by reading into documents authorising this oppression, we can dismantle their descriptions to pinpoint the trivialisation of what must have had to be a commonplace (and threatening) act of everyday self-making for enslaved Africans.

III. PALMARES: A COUNTERINSURGENCY

A Report of the Facts of the War with the Black Quilombolas of Palmares [~1690]

> The inhabitants of Algoas, Porto Calvo, and Penedo were constantly under attack, […] by the blacks of Palmares. The blacks killed their cattle and carried away their slaves to enlarge their quilombos […] forcing the inhabitants and natives of those towns to engage in fighting at a distance of forty leagues or more, at great cost to their plantations and risk to their own lives, without which the blacks would have become masters of the captaincy because of their huge and ever-increasing numbers.
>
> (Conrad 1984: 370)

Contrary to every above account of slaves – the neurosis of the runaway, the devotion of the worshippers and the sin of the lascivious dressers – this account writes blacks as a threat, an army and a kingdom. 'Killing their cattle' and carrying 'away their slaves' to strengthen their own forces, the blacks are acknowledged as a 'constant' 'risk to their own lives', where because of 'ever-increasing numbers', they could have 'become masters of the captaincy'.

After sending 'twenty-five probing expeditions' into Palmares to begin a military excursion against the blacks, every single group suffered 'great losses' and failed 'to uncover the secrets of those brave people' (Conrad 1984: 369). Looking to Sucupira, the war command and training centre for the blacks, the author describes it as 'fortified, but with stone and wood. Nearly a league in length, it contained within its boundaries three lofty mountains and a river' (Conrad 1984: 369). Encapsulating fortresses, armies, rivers and mountains, this show of autonomy is a full-on *counterinsurgency* against colonial power.

The author doesn't trivialise the peril of this situation (although it would indeed be easier to dramatise retrospectively, since a status quo had been re-established). In exploring strategic movements, moments of conflict, geography of enemy territory and recounting the speeches of generals, the author writes about the (enslaved?) Africans like a war historian might recount the battles between European nations. The slaves are granted, for the first time yet, full autonomy over their actions, mobilised through battle tactics and organisational measures.

> [the peace terms] were the following: that they agree to make peace with the king of Palmares, acknowledging his obedience; that they [the blacks] be granted the site where they would choose to settle, a place suitable for their dwellings and their farms; […] that they were to return all the runaways who had come from our populated places […] that their king would continue as commander of all his people.
>
> (Conrad 1984: 376)

Drawing up a peace agreement with the blacks, the Portuguese extend European civility. By permitting them an autonomous region, with an autonomous people and a (mostly) autonomous king, the Palmares counterinsurgency is an exceptional case demonstrating enslaved African resistance to Portuguese rule: one of the most vivid images of slave self-making in colonial Brazil.

Relaying this instance to the runaway slave advertisements in the introduction, we can trace interesting dissimilarities. Whereas the runaway slaves were always neurotic, pathological individual cases of incapable and irritated creatures disobeying their masters, we see in this account the power of an amalgamation of runaways in *quilombos*. Moving from one position to the other – the isolated juvenile to the disciplined warrior-kingdom – we encounter a critical textual slippage. This descriptive dissimilarity between different vocal registers spotlights the 'normative horizon' of different authors to pinpoint conjoined contours of slave agency: people motivated by freedom, aspiring for a more hopeful future, taking up independent action to achieve collective success. This authorial disarming of slave autonomy is more than evident: clouding the actual motions of self-making that characterised everyday life and thoughts of enslaved Africans.

IV. THE PROPOSAL: CONTRACTING FREEDOM

The Royal Magistrate's Letter [1806]

> Illustrious and most Excellent Sir: […]
> The above-mentioned Manoel da Silva Ferreira being master and owner of the aforesaid engenho with three hundred slaves, including some of the Mina nation, discovered the majority of them in rebellion refusing to recognize their subordination to their master. […] taking control of part of the engenho's equipment, they fled to the forest refusing not only to give their service or to obey their master, but even placing him in fear that they would cruelly take his life.
>
> (Conrad 1984: 399)

Manoel de Silva Ferreira's slaves refuse 'to recognize their' (inevitable) 'subordination' as if subjected by God himself. The author paints slave resistance neither as a movement of rational beings nor as an autonomous grasp for freedom. Instead, it is their cognitive inability to recognize their 'subordination'; it is their susceptibility to follow the 'principal leader of this disorder', the slave George Luis, as a pack of wild dogs follows the alpha wolf (Conrad 1984: 399). But 'refusing to recognize their subordination' is not a small, short-term concern: the sugar plantation they rebelled against has 'remained inactive for two years with […] notable damage' (Conrad 1984: 399). The author paints the motivations of the slaves as

if they were disobedient children, misunderstanding the precepts they are expected to follow, and causing violent disruption in their irritable, juvenile state.

Yet, one might be amazed to hear that these juveniles managed to send 'emissaries to their Master with a proposal' of a treaty for peace (Conrad 1984: 399).

Treaty Proposed to Manoel da Silva Ferreira by His Slaves During the Time that They Remained in Revolt [1806]

> My Lord, we want peace and we do not want war; if My Lord also wants our peace it must be in this manner, if he wishes to agree to that which we want.
> In each week you must give us the days of Friday and Saturday to work for ourselves not subtracting any of these because they are Saint's days.
> To enable us to live you must give us casting nets and canoes.
> […]
> You are not to oblige us to fish in the tidal pools nor go gather shellfish, and when you wish to gather shellfish send your Mina blacks.
> […]
> The present overseers we do not want, choose others with our approval.
> […]
> We shall be able to play, relax, and sing any time we wish without your hindrance nor will permission be needed.
>
> (Conrad 1984: 400)

This extraordinary document is one of very few from colonial Brazil written by enslaved Africans themselves, and as such, it is a key text from which we can textually elucidate dimensions of slave autonomy. The elegance, sophistication and intellect of this document falsifies the vindictive and condescending remarks of the magistrate in his letter. The opening demand – '[peace] must be in this manner' – documents the slaves in a cerebral, creative and politically conscious moment. They exploit their leverage, after two years of disrupting the plantation's operations, and through adopting methods of their oppressors (emissaries, philosophical implications of a peace treaty, well-composed legal text) the enslaved Africans forge a process of *contracting freedom*.

Demanding autonomy over time, materials, other slaves, their work environment, their white managers and over their own bodily movements, this document presents the slaves in a way that no other historical document can. The rambling list of demands calls to mind a group of shouting, debating, discussing slaves, all eager to get their demand in, or their requirement written. Even though this was likely the brainchild of one slave in particular, George Luis, the entire group was coordinated in the protest and treaty (the emissaries, those who took control of plantation equipment, those who caused 'notable damage'). These articulations condense into this document a moment of liberal negotiation: an arrangement whereby hopes, futures, interests, desires, preferences and aversions of slaves are foregrounded and reworked through the very political principles their oppressors abide by.

FINDING FUTURES IN THE PAST

Accessing historical knowledge through these texts leaves us with a kaleidoscopic picture of 18th century slave autonomy. Images of slaves leading worship with dance and entertainment, dressing with silk and jewellery against the law, fighting off colonial oppressors in *quilombos* and composing demands for a peace treaty illustrate the diverse contexts of self-making for enslaved Africans in colonial Brazil. As a 'moving pattern of images', (White 1973a: 281) these examples present slave autonomy as historical knowledge dispersed across 'a sprawling collection of assumptions, attitudes, and antipathies' (Novick 1988: 218).

Borrowing Butler's notion of 'normative horizons', the 'conditions of address' between subjects in 18*th* century Brazilian social life do help us access slave autonomy as a kind of historical knowledge, but the autonomous acts of slaves further allude to their desires and ambitions. While we can access historical knowledge to dissect issues of representation, authorial perspective, oppressive vocabularies and descriptive mannerisms, the rewarding aspect of this process is neither the scholastic pleasure of analytical deconstruction, nor the political satisfaction of sketching forms of resistance. The most rewarding anthropological moment is when we can begin to imagine how, like us, enslaved Africans lived through their own hopes, dreams and aspirations. When we can begin to imagine how they lived for their futures in the past, much like we live for ours in the present.

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ACCESSING EMOTIONS THROUGH HUMOUR IN THE CONTEMPORARY ARGENTINEAN TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE TRAJECTORY

// EVA VAN ROEKEL

ABSTRACT // This article is based on qualitative fieldwork on current human rights trials regarding crimes committed during the last dictatorship in Argentina (1976-1983). The study focuses on emotional experiences surrounding the trials in and around Argentinean federal courts and analyses these experiences from a phenomenological perspective. However, in the legal context, people's experiences of emotions related to violence are constrained due to judicial rules and social norms in general. Analysis of local humour practices related to the human rights trials provides a heuristic tool that unveils uncomfortable emotions that often remain inaccessible. Studying humour in this legal context is thought-provoking and provides alternative insights into transitional justice trajectories in Argentina.

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE AND EMOTIONS

Scholarly debates on transitional justice and reconciliation following collective violence often employ words like 'guilt', 'anger', 'forgiveness', 'sorrow', 'remorse', and 'revenge' to address the emotions of people (Arnould 2006; Bloomfield et al 2003; Elster 2004; Findlay & Henman 2005, Minow 1998; 1999; Nino 1996; Osiel 1997; Roht-Arriaza & Mariezcurrena 2006; Teitel 2000). Nonetheless, it often remains unclear how such different emotions are experienced in practice. The so-called Cartesian divide between reason and emotion is unfortunately still implicit in much academic work on reconciliation and transitional justice. Furthermore, when we read judicial records many of these emotions are left unspoken. Emotions seem to have been forgotten, or deliberately left out because they are considered hazardous and subjective (Lupton 1998: 85). Notwithstanding that, the law is part of a system of cultural norms that influences choices about behaviour, and it is therefore impossible to consider emotional effects as external to the law (Finkel & Parrott 2006: 87). Subsequently this article springs from the premise that reason and emotion are mutually inclusive. Emotions are not disruptions of our otherwise calm and reasonable experience; they are at the very heart of every experience and a fundamental part of being alive (Finkel & Parrott 2006: 64; Lupton 1998: 4; Nussbaum 2004: 5; Solomon in Wierzbicka 1999: 18). Understanding the Argentinean human rights trials with a focus on felt experiences regarding collective violence continues the contestation of the long-lasting neglect or, rather, contempt towards emotions in positivistic thought in general and Western law in particular (Bandes 1999; Bandes & Blumenthal 2012; Maroney 2006; Minow 1999).

In addition, this article argues that when researching a novel social environment, humour practices can offer alternative insights into the various ways that people deal with collective violence, and provide insight beyond the official and socially accepted emotions regarding the violent past and present trials in Argentina. The state, however, does not sanction these emotions in the current trials; as we will see, they are articulated by other means. Moreover, this article sees humour as a heuristic 'tool' to access these alternative and often silenced emotional experiences. It sees local practices of humour as a methodological instrument to research uncomfortable emotions from a sensorial, bodily and discursive perspective. Vengeance, especially, is often considered an 'uncivilized' emotion. Also, guilt and shame are both uncomfortable emotions and are difficult to acknowledge in public and difficult to feel for the people I met in the field. Therefore I have decided to change the names of the informants in this article in order to protect anonymity, but persons with a public profile and those who are officially involved in the described human rights trials have not been altered.

Finally in line with Al-Mohammad, we should explore the tensions between what we see and experience and what we cannot, and how this tension feeds into our lives (2011: 134). Instead of staring blindly at the difficulties of grasping other people's emotions, we must explore what we do perceive in the course of fieldwork, and discuss their epistemological and methodological implications. As you will see in the next empirical sections, ridicule articulated by a satirical column, a smothered laugh, derisive games and the amused response of a human right's lawyer to a smell on a researcher's body can be understood as such alternative hermeneutic resources (Cerwonka & Malkki 2007: 36). They can tell us something about how people feel when direct questions have not been asked. Proceeding from such bodily awareness in an intersubjective field, this hermeneutic principle for the construction of knowledge on emotions will, however, be partial. Thus, fully understanding the emotional experience of alleged perpetrators and victims of political violence and state terrorism and its judicial aftermath is impossible. However, instead of ignoring humour and these emotions, if we pay attention to them we will better understand the dialectic between official justice at the courts and justice-as-lived, which is at the core of my ongoing research project on the Argentinean transitional justice trajectory.

A NEW DISAPPEARANCE

After decades of political violence and military interventions in Argentina (Robben 2005), in a political environment of escalating violence, a civil-military regime once more seized power on March 24, 1976. Following more than seven years of state repression involving illegal detentions, torture, assassinations and the disappearance of thousands, a democratic government was elected in 1983. The Alfonsín government almost immediately initiated a process of truth telling and retributive justice. It established the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons (CONADEP) and opened prosecution of the nine highest members of the three successive military juntas, Legal Case *13/84*. After this brief official moment of truth and justice, while prosecutions against middle rank military officers continued, civil-military tensions rose. The rising turmoil forced President Alfonsín to execute two amnesty laws for the armed forces: the Full Stop Law and the Due Obedience Law.[1] During the 1990s, under President Menem, the former junta members were pardoned and families of the disappeared received state compensations. However, the Argentinean truth, justice and memory initiatives were not put on a hold following these payments. On the contrary, the social struggle against oblivion and impunity continued and the need for retribution still lingered for several family members and survivors.

[1] In 1986 the Full Stop Law (decree 23.492) set a deadline for the filing of new charges of alleged perpetrators of the last dictatorship. In 1987 the Due Obedience Law (decree 23.521) undid responsibility for crimes committed by the lower rank and file. The law argued that they acted under subordination to a superior authority and followed their orders.

When the Kirchner government came into power in 2003, human rights groups in Argentina gained momentum in their long struggle for legal justice for the crimes committed during the last dictatorship. After the Supreme Court annulled former amnesty laws in 2005, hundreds of accusations and thousands of victims' cases began flooding the Argentinean judicial system. Almost 1,500 people, mainly military officers of all ranks and files, have since been charged at federal courts throughout the country for crimes against the disappeared and survivors of the former clandestine detention centres (CDC). The illegal adoptions of babies born in CDCs and cases of notorious death flights above the *Rio de la Plata* and the South Atlantic are also included, all under the umbrella of crimes against humanity and the legally hazardous term of genocide in international law regarding political violence and state terrorism in Argentina (Lozada 2008: 72-75).

In September 2006 in La Plata, a provincial town near Buenos Aires, just one day before the Tribunal No. 1 announced the verdict against former police officer Miguel Etchecolatz for crimes against humanity, a witness, Julio López, disappeared. López was a retired construction worker illegally detained during the last dictatorship. For several weeks, police squads searched for him but seemed to have hit a dead end.[2] In the year 2013 Julio López has still not reappeared, and the ones responsible for his disappearance are still unknown. A protest group of López's supporters emerged and organized large rallies in his hometown La Plata. Pictures of his silhouette and slogans regarding his whereabouts have appeared all over the streets of Buenos Aires and La Plata.[3] This sinister 'new' disappearance of a witness, at a time when legal justice for thousands of the disappeared is the very thing aimed for, has become a stepping stone for many rumours and conspiracy theories (Van Drunen 2010: 234). Julio López has also become a matter of serious concern for a local magazine *Barcelona* which elaborates on the disappearance in a humorous column. Since 2008 *Barcelona* has been publishing a column on the fictional whereabouts of López that satirises this disappearance under the Kirchner government. Entitled 'Day by Day: What has been done in the search for Julio López?' the column ridicules a lack of accountability for López's disappearance and amnesia among local media and the government. It voices the tensions between the human rights policies of the Kirchner government and this new form of 'injustice with impunity'.

During my first short stint of fieldwork in Buenos Aires in 2009, I worked briefly with a local research team on an evaluation project of the human rights trials regarding the last dictatorship, with specific emphasis on a witness protection programme. After the disappearance of Julio López, and the emergence of new threats against future witnesses, in 2007 the government initiated a programme to protect witnesses in human rights trials. One day during a break one of my fellow researchers, Olivia, pointed to the López column in *Barcelona* and asked me, 'Have you seen the latest Day by Day?' I told Olivia that I had not read the column or even seen the magazine yet. With a smothered laugh she replied that it would probably be too difficult for me anyway to understand such jokes. I was puzzled. What could be so funny about a recent disappearance?

After eight months in the field I had completely forgotten about the column on Julio López. Then, my eye accidentally fell on a copy of *Barcelona* in a kiosk. On the back page I read the headline, 'August 2nd: National Son of a Bitch Day.' Underneath were nine black-and-white photos of military officers involved in current human right trials, each captioned 'Happy Son of a Bitch Day'. I thought this hinted at the commercial excesses of these contrived celebrations, like Secretary's Day and Teacher's Day, which both happen in September. Recalling what Olivia had said about the López column, I bought a copy of the magazine. After months of fieldwork and trying to understand what justice means for survivors, family members of the disappeared and alleged perpetrators, the faces of the military officers made me stifle an almost inaudible laugh. I felt a mix of discomfort and pleasure, as if I were not supposed to laugh. That was the moment, I think, that I started to grasp the complexity of *Barcelona's* humour that Olivia had hinted at.

In retrospect, I am sure my suppressed laugh indicated that I was finally starting to comprehend this gallows humour. This humour may also reflect the difficulty with defining boundaries of complicity and accountability in the grey areas following collective violence and state terrorism. Moreover, this unexpected laughter at the kiosk while looking at those pictures positioned me morally. Endorsing a certain humour implies complicity and belonging. Approving a joke is accepting a moral point of view on a certain matter, and it constructs a sense of solidarity (Buckley 2003: 5). I believe a requirement for any deep comprehension in contexts of previous collective violence involves liberation from official memorial culture, as Huyssen accurately argues. He suggests that we must look for alternative narrative strategies, including irony, shock and black humour (Huyssen 2001: 39). Satirical humour fuses evaluative, judgmental and emotive dimensions (Hutcheon 1994: 37) and, as Oring notes, can unveil the uncomfortable to a certain extent (Martin 2007: 43). Through my long-term fieldwork I gradually began to decode humour practices, which discerned other, more uncomfortable emotional experiences regarding the violence, the memories, and the justice practices of the last 30 years in Argentina. Humour practices, such as in the Argentinian magazine *Barcelona*, provide us with a

[2] See newspaper clipping: Missing Witness Awakens Dark Past by Trigona, 22-10-2006.

[3] Ana Longoni, an Argentinean art historian, spoke at a conference about the recent cultural practices regarding López disappearance. She called it artistic activism. I attended this conference at IDES, an academic research institute on April 16th 2010, Buenos Aires. See also online publication Todos somos López. Available at: www.cuadernos.inadi.gob.ar [Accessed on 24 October 2011].

tangible insight into such emotions.

However, emotions are not simply out there or inside us, waiting to be found. Emotions are shaped in relation to others in a particular environment, and hence experienced through the conscious body. Rosaldo sees emotions as social practices organized by stories that we both enact and tell that are structured by our forms of understanding (1984: 143). Other important contributions to the anthropological understanding of emotions have shown how emotional experiences are embedded in a particular locale and are a product of social interaction, and also the emotions of the researcher (Abu-Lughod 1986; Beatty 2010; Briggs 1970; Davies & Spencer 2010; Leavitt 1996; Lutz 1988; Lutz & White 1986; Rebhun 1999; Rosaldo 1984; Scheper-Hughes 1992; White 2010; Wikan 1990). Beatty, however, argues that the ethnographer's emotions lose their explanatory power away from home as they belong to different narratives (2010: 433). There will always be fundamental differences between the fieldworker's emotions and those of his or her informants (Hage 2010: 144-149). Yet knowledge about emotions is neither purely about the other, nor purely about oneself (Corin 2007: 243). It is about the intersubjective field in which we experience such emotions, where the researcher's felt experiences are meaningful data (Lorimer 2010: 100; Luhrmann 2010: 213). Embodied knowledge, accumulated by being-in-the-world, is intrinsic to the process of learning about emotions, about oneself and about others (Gieser 2008: 303). Such a phenomenological approach to social life starts with the personal and the affective and shows how our understanding emerges out of interactions and experiences with others in the everyday world (Jackson 1989: 5).

Also what or how people feel is often different from what they express in public, or what they reveal in an interview or informal conversation. I often asked the people I had come to know what emotions they felt were important in the transitional justice trajectory in Argentina. The direct descriptions of their emotions in relation to the human rights trials were very valuable, but they were not always in line with my own participatory observations of others, or of my own emotional experiences. Lila Abu-Lughod marvellously describes immoral feelings: those feelings that stand outside the official system of honour in a Bedouin community, and can only be communicated through the language of poetry (1986:256). In line with her argument, I believe there is sometimes a discrepancy indeed between what we believe we ought to feel, what we desperately try to feel, and what we actually manage to bring ourselves to feel (Rebhun 1999: 187), and this can be communicated, in this case, through humour. The next empirical section will elaborate on this notion.

JUSTICE AT PLAY

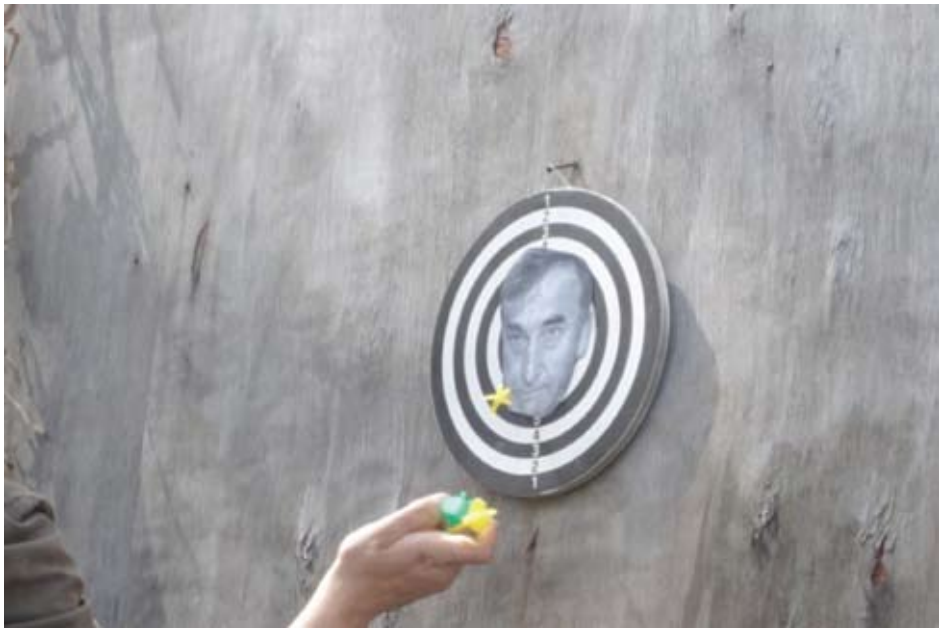
It is spring. I have just returned from a few days away from fieldwork and I feel mellow and able to submerge myself again in another human rights trial. This mellow state seems in slight contrast with the field of legal justice after state violence. But the warm spring sun cultivates my relaxed mood, and I am eager to see Emilio Váldez whom I have not seen in a while. Emilio is affiliated with one of the splinter parties of the left. His uncle disappeared in 1977. We often go together to court or street events. Today we are attending the opening of the trial against former police officer Luis Patti, de facto President Reynaldo Bignone of the last dictatorship and three other defendants at Tribunal No. 1 at the Federal Court in San Martin. All men stand accused of crimes against humanity. Luis Patti is an iconic figure. Besides working in the police force, he entered local politics in the 1990s as a leader of the Federalist Union Party, and became the mayor of Escobar, a town in the province of Buenos Aires. During the first years of the Alfonsín government Patti faced several trials against alleged torture and assassination. These were put on hold, until the latest annulment of the amnesty laws.

Emilio is waiting for me at San Martin Central Station. He is fumbling with a flag decorated with a picture of Che Guevara. Emilio tells me that his *compañeros* (comrades) made it especially for this new human rights trial. We head off to the court, and Emilio seems animated. One block before the actual court building, HIJOS Capital (a local organization of children of the disappeared based in Buenos Aires) is prepping their rally.[4] They are unloading loudspeakers from an old orange school bus and stringing tiny flags and colourful balloons, printed with 'trial' and 'punishment' in the trees and fences. The local media cameras are rolling and many (professional) photographers are taking pictures. At the back of the patch of grass, someone fires up a barbecue for lunch. The smoky scent of *asado* (barbecue) is slowly filling the air. *Asados* are a social custom in Argentina and mean far more than pieces of grilled meat. It is an act of solidarity and social belonging. Intrigued by the smoke, I lose sight of Emilio. He probably went off to greet some of his *compañeros*. I wander to the Federal Court. It is sealed off with fences and the police are guarding the entrance. Today only a lucky few are able to attend the opening of the trial. People from the neighbourhood are making themselves comfortable in the shade; many do not bother to access the actual court room.

As I walk back to the HIJOS gathering I look more closely at other things around me. Photos mocking Patti in the notorious black-and-white striped prisoner outfit fuse with children's games, like a hopscotch between truth and justice. People are tossing plastic handcuffs (instead of rings) at various counters depicting the armed forces. A game of darts has Patti's face for the bull's eye of the dartboard, and people are tossing at tins to 'win' the highest punishments (see Figures 1 & 2). Someone invites me

[4] Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio (Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice against Oblivion and Silence).

Figures 1 & 2



Photos by the author

The games were organized by HIJOS Buenos Aires at the opening of the Luis Patti trial at the Tribunal No. 1 at the Federal Court in the San Martin district, a province of Buenos Aires, on September 27, 2010. The top picture shows 'the tin toss.' Each tin can has a different penalty, such as life imprisonment, 15 years' imprisonment, common jail or acquittal. The bottom picture shows a game of Patti darts with Patti's face as the bull's eye.

to play a game. I hesitate for a second, but turn the opportunity down. People around me laugh and cheer when someone's dart scores a bull's eye.

The *choripanes* (popular spicy sausages served on a bread roll) are sizzling on the barbecue when we hear a rumour that the main suspect, Luis Patti, has been brought into court on a stretcher, due to a severe illness. The rumour produces a simultaneous wave of laughter and indignation in the small crowd. People around me groan and smile, telling no one in particular that they find Patti's – perhaps staged – appeal for pity outrageous. The festive atmosphere somehow matches my own mellow feeling. It changes only with the speech by the son of a disappeared, and a girl singing *'Como a los Nazis les va a pasar, a donde vayan los iremos a buscar'* ('What happened to the Nazis, will happen to you, wherever you go, we will find you'). This is a famous protest song of the human rights groups in Argentina, often chanted at public demonstrations. Today people join in the chanting with less zeal.

When I speak with Tomás, a human rights lawyer, he tells me he is delighted with today's gathering. Unfortunately he has to return early to the city centre because he has to attend an important oral hearing. I ask Tomás to drop me off at the *Plaza de Armas*, where a handful of family members of the accused military are gathered. They are protesting against the human rights trials in front of the Ministry of Defence building. Their physical arena of dissent is right behind *Plaza de Mayo* where every Thursday since 1977 the mothers of the disappeared walk to demand information on the whereabouts of their children. Tomás looks at me and says with a laugh, 'Are you going to these *fachos*, smelling of our *choris*?!' *Fachos* derives from the word 'fascists'. In this context it means the conservative right who supported the authoritarian regime. *Choris* is just an colloquial abbreviation of *choripanes*. The big smile on Tomás's face expresses a kind of self-satisfaction. I smile in return, and in an unreflective sense I understand immediately what Tomás just communicated. In retrospect I comprehend even more what Tomás's joke meant. He was laughing at the idea of a foreign researcher, smelling of the victims' *choris*, going to meet the relatives of the alleged perpetrators. They represent the legal other and my body bringing this *choris* smell into their comfort zone symbolizes another victory for the victims.

The derisive attempts to mock the main defendant Patti are only possible on the fringe of the legal world. Creating games that poke fun seems a way to fight boredom and avoid repetition, and attracts people to participate in the many human rights trials in the province of Buenos Aires. Informants from the human rights movement often explained that a festive atmosphere underlines their civilised search for justice. However, there is more at stake with these games and it is crucial to grasp the value of play as a cultural factor in life (Huizinga 1970:22). Humour is often considered a 'weapon of the weak' (Scott 1985). When little power is at your disposal, humour can provide space for subordinate persons to voice resistance (Fernandez & Taylor Huber 2001: 17; Goldstein 2003: 10). But humour has been analysed from many different perspectives (Herzfeld 2001; Hutcheon 1994; Kidron 2010; Kuipers 2011; Pedrazzini 2010; Scott 2007). In general it is said that humour is another way of turning incongruities or distressing experiences into moments of non-serious play (Martin 2007: 19). Bakhtin argues that humour provides a way to silence certain emotions, as ironic wordplay often says the opposite of what is meant, and can be seen as a substitute for silence (Fernandez & Taylor Huber 2001: 5).

Since the mid-1990s, HIJOS has struggled to end impunity related to the last dictatorship, and their former *escraches* (street protests to expose the alleged perpetrators of the last dictatorship) already had 'joking' features (Strejilevich 2010: 239). It is said that humour can realign power relations. It strengthens one paradigm at the expense of another, and affects the hegemonic status quo (Kidron 2010: 432; Kuipers 2011: 76). In the long run, humour can even produce social change to some extent (Kuipers 2011; Lewis 2006: 203). If we look more profoundly at this experience – the comical games, the cheerful response to the news that Luis Patti had been brought into court on a stretcher, and my body reeking with the smell of *choris* – and place it in its current political context, we can see important vicissitudes of meaning.

Under the current Kirchner government, the meaning of mockery regarding alleged perpetrators has changed. Such humour is a risky practice in a country still recovering from almost two decades of violence, chaos and impunity (Foster 1989: 61). Yet that day at Patti's trial shows that humour is not just a weapon of the weak, or confined to the fringe. As political constellations change, so too does the meaning of local satirical humour. What started as an alternative form of legal justice has now become an 'add on' to the current legal proceedings, with traces of – perhaps understandable, yet publicly denied – revenge and extra-legal retribution. Jokes and scornful performances provide an alternate space for rebelling against, judging and avenging the opponent, without altering or transgressing formal rules. They seem to be substitutes garnered from beyond the legal framework that shape the sense of justice people try to hang on to after collective violence. When physical aggression is forbidden by law, or simply impossible or undesirable, it can be replaced by efforts to make our opponent small, inferior, despicable or comic; and in a roundabout way we achieve the pleasure of overcoming him (Freud 1960: 102-103). Practices of humour function, so to speak, as an extrinsic moral law governing social interactions (Haynes 2006: 37).

CONCLUSIONS

Mockery of the last dictatorship in Argentina has changed over the years due to political changes in transitional justice policies and new forms of injustices. In the face of

changing transitional justice politics and low faith in judicial power, it remains a valued practice. This humour is still an important element in the daily struggle against inconsistencies and injustices in Argentina (Cascioli 2005; Foster 1989; Fraticelli 2008; Pedrazzini 2010). Besides potentially providing relief, functioning like a coping mechanism or resistance strategy against powerful institutions such as the judiciary, playful aggression might also be part of this humour (Martin 2007: 19). It is a way of simultaneously communicating and silencing what produces discomfort, as Oring aptly notes (Martin 2007: 43). Humour definitely has a dark side – a two-face character (Freud 1960: 155). Furthermore, addressing delicate matters with jokes leaves room to deny meaning and escape accountability (Kuipers 2011: 71), as supposedly it is not intended to inflict direct physical harm (Martin 2007: 47).

These are all worthy insights, but this article primarily argues that the humour practices it describes provide access to complicated emotions in the lives of people burdened with (inherited) experiences of collective violence and impunity. Certainly, humour practices can account only partially for the emotions of others. Yet, paying close attention to comical expressions provides another valuable source of insights into the felt experiences of others. Ultimately, exploring local practices of humour can broaden knowledge about the tensions between what we do or do not see and experience in ethnographic fieldwork. Analysing the local meanings of a satirical magazine column, a smothered laugh, mocking games outside a court and the smell of *choris* on a researcher's body provide further insight into the emotions of others. Humour that at the beginning of my fieldwork seemed incomprehensible is a sound response to a moral and legal system that had long been incapable of addressing the grievances of the victims of the last dictatorship. Even now, when the court is finally addressing certain of these grievances, people still turn to ridicule to express emotions and thoughts that are excluded in formal legal interventions, and produce another, albeit momentary, sense of justice and comfort.

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II

ESSAYS
INSPIRED BY SALVATORE'S CASE

// ESSAYS II //

ACCESSING KNOWLEDGE IN A DISCONTINUOUS WORLD.

A BRIEF COMMENT FROM SOUTHERN CHILE[1]

// MARCELO I. GONZÁLEZ GÁLVEZ

// [1] This paper was written as part of the FONDECYT postdoctoral research project Nº3130415, entitled: *'El mundo, la realidad y el conocimiento: la versión de los mapuches'*.

'I would like to know what it is to be a Mapuche', I told Juan, one of the most prominent elders in Elicura, trying to explain to him the purpose of my doctoral research. Elicura is a small valley in southern Chile, where I carried out fieldwork between September 2009 and October 2010. It is inhabited by approximately 1,500 people, of which half are self-declared Mapuche, the most numerous indigenous people in Chile. As Juan was listening to my claim, he looked at me puzzled, and after a few moments he smiled and replied: 'That's impossible! You cannot know what it is to be a Mapuche. […] The only way to know what is to be a Mapuche is to be one, so to know it you would have to be born again! [This time as a Mapuche]' Disappointed by Juan's reaction, I did not fully comprehend the depth of his assertion until a few months later. When Juan claimed the impossibility of my ethnographic effort, he did not intend to be rude or unsupportive, as he also did not point out that I could not know what is to be a Mapuche because I was an outsider who, additionally, was not a Mapuche 'racially speaking'. Rather, as I understood later, he was implicitly maintaining a twofold principle that is obvious for most rural Mapuche people I have met, and which might be explained as follows.

Firstly, Mapuche people usually uphold that any meaning of anything, even of what the term 'Mapuche' means, is deeply personal. This is regardless of those aspects one may externally and prima facie assess as 'evidently' collective. Thus, for instance, although there might be a collective of people one might externally label as 'the Mapuche', it is expected that what it is to be a Mapuche for each one of its members would be something radically different (Similarly, each personal perspective on the nature of this so-called 'Mapuche collective' would be different for those who comprise it). Although Juan thought I could not know what it is to be a Mapuche because I was not what he considered Mapuche people to be; for him, additionally, there was not even a tiny possibility that I could know what is to be Mapuche to his view. Although one could make up one's own mind about certain things given certain circumstances, any possibility of knowing what is on other peoples' minds seems, for the Mapuche, to be simply beyond discussion. This issue has several practical implications in Mapuche rural life, and it may be observed in a strong reluctance to give advice, or in the ubiquitous doubt people maintain towards what is really meant by other peoples' words (see González Gálvez 2012).

Secondly, and intimately connected to the former statement, by denying to me the possibility of understanding the other, Juan was simultaneously sharing with me one of the key principles of what can be loosely labelled as a 'Mapuche philosophy'. Although this principle may be very simple, its implications are enormous (as we will see later), and exceed by far the small aspect I address in this paper. In short, the principle states that *the only way of really knowing about something is by experiencing that something yourself.* It was also due to this principle that Juan was actually one of the most renowned people in Elicura. It is common among the Mapuche, as elsewhere, to assert that some people 'know' more than others. However, in Mapuche life this cumulative and quantifiable conception of 'knowledge' is conceived of as inextricable from the several first-hand experiences that people have had in life. Thence, it is generally supposed that the older the person, the more experience he has had, and the more 'knowledge' he has accumulated. This was the reason for Juan's fame: it was simply because he was one of the oldest people living in Elicura.

In this paper I intend to problematize the idea of 'accessing knowledge', considering my ethnographic experience among the Mapuche people of southern Chile. Drawing on the aforementioned principle underlining the relevance of personal experience, I will attempt a twofold comment. The first comment refers to the 'world' which knowledge makes reference to, which involves confronting two possible understandings: the one implicit in the project *'La mia cura',*[2] and the one summarised in asserting that the only way of knowing what it is to be a Mapuche is by 'being one'. The second comment refers to the potential that any knowledge has to be shared and/or accessed, which eventually involves challenging many assumptions that the idea of knowledge often implies (e.g. an intersubjective ethos). This latter comment will eventually lead us to deal with the problematic relationship between ontology and epistemology, which, as I argue, ultimately reclaims an always-contingent ethnographic solution.

THE WORLD

Since I first planned writing this piece, I wondered what my friend Juan would think about the project 'La mia cura'. In case the reader is not acquainted with it, in brief, this is a project carried out by Salvatore Iaconesi, an Italian artist who suffers from a brain tumour. Considering this, he has uploaded all his medical records to a free-access website, intending to share them with everybody. Through this, Salvatore aims to find a cure to his illness, which he expects to be suggested by any, some, or many of this 'everybody' looking at his files. A few times I have thought that perhaps Juan would dare to give Salvatore one possible cure, suggesting that he should take a plane to Chile in order to visit the powerful evangelical prophet who cured his wife from what she described as a 'stomach cancer'. Nevertheless, I am more inclined to think that Juan would not do that. This is not because Juan would not feel empathy for Salvatore's suffering. It is simply because, regardless of any compassion Salvatore's case may awake in Juan, he would probably think it extremely odd to find out what is good for oneself through another person's experiences. 'How can a person, who is not even related to him, know what is good for him?', Juan would probably ask. And, perhaps, Salvatore would answer:

[2] Inspirational piece for this issue of The Unfamiliar. See http://www.artisopensource.net/cure/

'because in the past he might have had the same illness I am now experiencing'.

In this fictional conversation lies the core of the point I want to put forward. I have the strong impression that what might be at stake here is an *equivocation* (*sensu* Viveiros de Castro 2004), involving two superficially similar references, which point to two extremely different referents. Supporting both Salvatore's and Juan's allocutions, we may discern two different premises responding, eventually, to two mutually incommensurate understandings of 'the world' (*sensu* Merleau-Ponty 2004). On the one hand, we have Salvatore's premise, which assumes (considering certain nuances) that there exists an overarching category (we can call it 'humanity') that is set out in an immutable setting ('the world', 'reality'), which is beyond human agency. It is nothing but this assumption that explains why it is worth sharing his medical records and why it is worth listening to other people's solutions: for Salvatore there is a given continuity (i.e. human biology) allowing the recurrence of certain phenomena (e.g. cancer), and because of this continuity it is possible to replicate certain ways of action (e.g. treatments) in order to obtain the expected results (i.e. a cure). Even though each human being is considered to be unique in a psychological sense, in this understanding there is a biological connection that brings them all together, allowing them to have the 'same' diseases and treatments.

On the other hand, we have the premise supporting the claim which, I suppose, Juan would make. In his view, contrary to Salvatore's, there is not a given continuity between different human beings (at best, this continuity must be created [González Gálvez 2012]) in the same way as there is not a transcendental unity inherent in 'the world' to be experienced. If, in Salvatore's case, there is an implicit subject/object dualism, which allows subjects to replicate their equivalent experiences of the same objects, in Juan's case such a dualism cannot even be claimed to exist (because subjects and objects do not belong a priori to 'the same' categories). Considering this, we can have a better grasp of the reasons behind Juan's assertion of the impossibility of acquiring certain knowledge (e.g. the meaning of being Mapuche): because to his view what may be labelled as 'world' and 'humanity' are discontinuous categories. What this discontinuity implies, fundamentally, is a denial of any given possibility of phenomenological replication. There is no reason to suppose one person is perceptively and substantially equivalent to another, and thus there is no reason to surmise that their personal experiences might be replicable by others. That is exactly why, to know something, each person must personally experience that something.

One immediate problem emerging from such a stance regards the notion of what so far I have called 'the world'. In Salvatore's case, due to its immutability, 'the world' appears to be frozen in *ceteris paribus* ('cancer', 'humanity', and 'cure' are concepts which are part of this unitary world, insofar as they are essentially independent of people), but in Juan's case the equation seems to go as follows: If the way we know what is 'out there' is by experiencing it, and if experience is something fundamentally personal, it is necessary to conclude that people do not inhabit one, but multiple worlds of experience. These multiple worlds lack, as might be expected, any necessary unity, and if they sometimes overlap, this is more due to the similarity of the people experiencing their own worlds than to an intrinsic characteristic of 'the world out there'.

ACCESSING KNOWLEDGE

Once discussed, the ontological relativity to which 'knowing' may be subdued, and taking seriously the path opened up by Juan, it seems that the questions one might ask regarding the subject of 'accessing knowledge' are very different from the ones one would ask if one takes, for example, a political approach. Indeed, following Juan, we are quite unexpectedly very far away from any sort of ethical discussion that argues against any form of restricting knowledge, and we are not even close to a celebration of any free access to it. Conversely, perhaps we may recognise ourselves discussing another dimension of topics, more related to defining knowledge in the first place. I think there are at least two critical, but interrelated, points in this sense. The first is related to challenging the social nature of knowledge, whereas the second refers to a denial of its potential for institutionalisation.

The first thing Juan's premise allows us is to challenge the notion of knowledge as an artefact, which may be traded and exchanged within social life. Even though – for Juan – knowledge is something one possesses, it is not something one immediately could share, due to the strict personal nature of that knowledge. As stated above, in Juan's view what is known and what is not known is entirely up to a person, in its pure singularity. This notion brings out two subjects immediately: 1) a veil of incertitude regarding the ways (if any) that Mapuche people consider it possible to 'transmit knowledge'[3]; and 2) the implications of thinking about knowledge not only as detached from its 'social nature', but also unleashed from the constraints imposed by thinking about it as a 'social artefact'. It is on this second subject that I want to focus my attention.

As stated before, thinking about 'the world' as something dependent upon each singular person posits a problem concerning the way we might think about accessing knowledge. It does not only challenge any preconceived idea of what constitutes knowledge, but it asks for a re-

[3] Eventually most knowledge can be partially transmitted if one follows certain ways of action, but this is a subject I deliberately chose to leave out of this argument in order to emphasise the discontinuity of the Mapuche way of thinking about 'the world'. If the reader is interested, these ways are described in González Gálvez (2012).

conceptualization of the ways we think one may access any knowledge. If people cannot necessarily replicate other people's personal experiences, and if one cannot really learn anything from others (the only way of really knowing about something is experiencing that something yourself), any access to knowledge seems to be limited to each personal engagement with 'the world'. In a literal sense, accessing knowledge appears freed from any social mediation, and seems to be entirely up to each personal agency. Knowledge is, thus, no longer a social artefact, but an inalienable personal possession resulting from an open-ended personal experience.

Perhaps the most relevant outcome of this 'new' and asocial notion of knowledge is that it resists the key problem of free access to knowledge: its institutionalisation. To consider knowledge as a social artefact, which may be exchanged and transmitted, is what eventually makes it something to be restricted, valued, and commoditised. On the contrary, if we take knowledge to be an intimate and personal possession, any possible restriction or commodification of it seems nothing but absurd. Why would somebody want to restrict access to something that cannot be *un*-restricted? (i.e. other people's knowledge-*s*). Why would somebody commodify something that only has value for the only person able to commodify it? Consequently, accessing knowledge is no longer a social problem but an epistemological one. Thus, we would not have to worry about the dilemmas involving the dissemination of social knowledge, and instead should introspectively consider our own personal potential to know what is good/bad for us in worlds that are entirely dependent upon that personal potential.

CONCLUSION

To conclude this brief set of comments I would like to clarify that it is not my intention to criticise the project *'La mia cura'*, which, regardless of what I seem to put forward in this paper, I find truly remarkable and in many ways admirable. To have employed it here is only for the sake of making a point I think of as crucial when approaching the subject of accessing knowledge from an anthropological perspective. Put simply, before dealing with a subject we must avoid taking any part of that subject for granted. If you want, before asking questions about the benefits or difficulties posited by the problem of accessing knowledge nowadays, it is compulsory (at least if one wants to keep *equivocations* [*sensu* Viveiros de Castro 2004] to a minimum) first to comprehend what is to be understood as knowledge and the means one may use to access it. In this sense, it seems that we should be constantly reviewing the relationship between ontology (what things are) and epistemology (the means employed to understand what things are). I sincerely think this relationship should be conceived as an open-ended mutual determination, which considers none of the terms involved as final and essentially established, but in a continual motion of being determined by, and simultaneously determining, the other. This implies denying the existence of an ultimate ontology and of a concurrent privileged epistemology in order to access this ontology. And, on the contrary, recognising the existence of multiple ontologies, which may be accessed and reproduced only by their own particular epistemologies. Denying the existence of one unitary and definitive ontology is nothing but breaking a continuity that we may see in 'the world', but which is *not necessarily* in 'the world'. Once 'the world' appears as discontinuous, we are thus forced to look at each possible ontology-epistemology relationship in particular, avoiding the imposition of our own terms on others.

This takes us, finally, to reflect about the fundamental place ethnography should enjoy, not only as a research method, but also as a means of creating relational bridges between the discontinuities of 'the world'. It is only by a deep and committed engagement between people that one may partially figure out other ontology-epistemology relationships. In anthropology, it is perhaps Martin Holbraad (2009) who lately has been most clearly maintaining this kind of stance, dismissing the classical representational approach (which assumes a natural continuity bringing together different cultures) in order to take one what he labels as 'ontographic'. Following this paper's subject, this implies that anthropology should not be about asking *why* Juan *believes* those things about knowledge, but *what* knowledge *is* in his view. However, it must be clear that none of these claims should be understood as definitive. If ontologies and epistemologies are always contingent, there is no problem at all if Salvatore looks for a cure employing whichever means he wants, as long as that means are coherent with the ontology he maintains. A problem would only arise if one assumed that the same methods and ontological assumptions are valid for everyone, including Juan, without even asking them if they are in agreement with that supposition.

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‘DEMOCRATIC’ KNOWLEDGE:
AN OASIS OR A MIRAGE?

// JOSÉ A. ACERO ARALUCE

The way we relate to information nowadays has definitely changed the way we perceive knowledge. For instance, the internet came to revolutionise the circumstances in which we approach knowledge and form beliefs as more people than ever before have been drawn into the whirlwind of information. (Un)fortunately, not all of this information appears to be reliable. In a positive sense, this indicates that laymen are taking an active role in the exchange of ideas. On the other hand, serious flaws in the quality of information can result in confusion at best.

The great variety of information and its quality, however, is not as unfortunate as we may think. One can certainly assume that with the explosion of information technology social moral frameworks have never before been put to the test as much by its adherents and outsiders. This challenge to what we believe and take for granted morally might be a necessary evil in order to gain more than we could lose in terms of social cohesion as we experiment with new technologies.

This phenomenon, in my opinion, has not yet been thoroughly addressed by anthropologists, and its potential as an analytic tool has been overlooked. I think the main reason for this is the fact that it is full of subtleties concealed by more visible social changes brought about by technology. Having said this, I believe social anthropological studies could benefit from acknowledging the value of this tangle of unreliable information. Although significance and value are very similar concepts, in this essay, they are not treated as the same thing; yet, as will become apparent, they are essential to each other. I understand significance as socially meaningful and transforming, and value as insightful and worth analysing. Hence, I would like to explore these two concepts in order to shed light on the effects of digital information on social moral frameworks and its usefulness as an analytic tool.

First we need to differentiate between critical knowledge and what I would term 'democratic knowledge'. The former originates when we are engaged, individually or socially, in serious and warranted thinking (e.g. professional or academic knowledge), while the latter refers to the type of knowledge engendered by the combination of reliable and unreliable information. 'Democratic knowledge' is generated by the public itself. It tends to be very fluid in terms of personal beliefs and emotions, and is (re)created through the constant sharing of information. Virtually anyone who wishes to share information can contribute to 'democratic knowledge'[1], which can be accessed effortlessly through the internet.

One can find instances of this democratic knowledge in websites like 'La Mia Cura – My Open Source Cure'. The latter is an open source website where everyone, irrespective of their cultural and educational background, can offer a cure to the creator of the website who was diagnosed with a cancerous brain tumour (Iaconesi 2012). The objective is for the website to become a source of knowledge comprised of everyone's ideas to treat brain cancer, and which in turn can be consulted by anyone who is interested and/or has the disease.

Another case which helps us visualise the potential of focusing on democratic knowledge is an ethnographic study of the internet in Trinidad and Tobago by Daniel Miller and Don Slater. In this ethnography, vertical – hierarchical – organizational models followed by 'Apostolic' religious institutions in Trinidad and Tobago have been consistently challenged by the 'horizontal' nature of opinion forums online (Miller and Slater 2000). In other words, the internet provides an arena where Christian believers voice their opinions even if they do not possess any relevant authority within the organized religion: '… the interconnectedness and flow of information afforded by the internet gave new powers and autonomy to individuals, which had then to be understood within and disciplined by their institutions' (Miller and Slater 2000: 18). According to Miller and Slater, online forums have democratised the discussions and hermeneutics of Christians in Trinidad and Tobago which were once under the sole control of elders and religious leaders.

In my personal experience, during Mexico's presidential election campaign in 2012 where thousands – if not millions – of posts flowed freely on Facebook in support of or against candidates, people were openly denouncing the vested interests of mainstream media. What I could gather from the many posts which inundated my Facebook page was the feeling of complete disbelief in any source of information not coming from the internet. The internet was held to be more reliable and objective. What struck me was the power of this 'messy' information synthesised as knowledge and shared around the web. On the contrary, for a student of Social Anthropology such as myself, this did not seem like a good indication of what was going on politically in Mexico since I was convinced that rumours were an unreliable measure of everyday activity.

I was sceptical of analytical approaches which dwell on rumour-type phenomena as discussed by the anthropologist Veena Das (1998). This concern can also be raised for the Trinidad and Tobago case, since the average believer does not possess the specialised knowledge of a religious leader. The effect that the forums had over institutions could be only superficial since the flow of relevant and irrelevant information from all directions might have hampered any palpable change. This could also apply to 'La Mia Cura – My Open Source Cure' and similar contemporary projects; we need to wait and see how these phenomena unravel.

Das thinks that, if used in research, the rumour-panic phenomenon only offers a half-complete picture of what is

[1] I use 'democratic knowledge' in this sense throughout the paper, but without the quotation marks thereafter for ease of reading.

relevant. As it is basically a proliferation of ideas which do not entail critical thinking from the individuals to whom the information is passed on, it behaves more like an inevitable contagion rather than a 'well-absorbed' medicine. In other words, it has a 'contagion-effect' (Das 1998). She implies that information which has rumour-panic characteristics lacks value, as it tends to be superficial: 'There seems a transformation from social exchange to communal trance' (Das 1998: 187). Henceforth, one can conclude that the value of democratic knowledge as a research tool is hampered by this effect.

However, Das is only concerned with the phenomenon of rumour-panic itself and not with the means used to spread that rumour. The very nature of the internet prevents this from happening, since there are more parties participating in the sharing of ideas. Moreover, the mix of information comprising democratic knowledge also comes from websites which provide critical knowledge. There are news pieces and articles that can be read for free online from renowned magazines and newspapers like the Economist, freely accessible talks from experts on Ted.com, open access journals like HAU[2], and posts on critical thinkers' personal blogs.

Within anthropology itself, there is in fact a new phenomenon introduced by cultural anthropologist Michael Wesch – 'digital ethnography' – which 'explore[s] mediated culture, seeking to merge the ideas of Media Ecology[3] and Cultural Anthropology' (Wesch 2012a, 2012b). Besides the project analysing the democratisation of ideas through YouTube, it definitely is in itself educational, counting as critical knowledge. I embrace the view of Daniel Miller (2012) that 'the digital might make anthropology exciting, but more than that, significant' (Miller 2012: 390) – not just for the field of anthropology but more generally, providing a voice to everyone that can have access to free – unconstrained – internet.

From all this I would say that democratic knowledge is actually insightful and hence valuable. It has somehow been indirectly analysed by anthropologists, but if we are to reap the benefits of this approach, it seems in real need of being addressed directly.

Yet, does this type of knowledge possess any significance for society? Is it an oasis of change or simply a confusing and irrelevant mirage? Since misleading information created and nurtured by the public is no better than deception contrived by the mass media and political leaders, one is right to question its significance beyond its mere value as an analytical tool and its significance as a contemporary global occurrence. Does it have a meaningful edge over mainstream disseminated knowledge, does it have any real power, or is it only a fad?

In everyday life, one can assume that judging one's ordinary actions is merely a routine which does not involve critical thinking but only matching those actions to one's moral framework: 'Practice is merely socialized routine' (Miller 2010: 419). However, when our ideas are confronted on a grand scale with other people's view of the world through digital media, I believe that 'words…do, act, produce and achieve' (Malinowski 1935: 52). Democratic knowledge engendered on the internet represents democracy and the possibility for faster social change, since it allows for greater human participation and exchange of information. One can think of social change as the transformation or mutation of the social moral structure. Zigon (2007) and Robins (2007) showed that moral values can be challenged, modified, and rejected in what Zigon called 'moral breakdowns'.

In line with Michael Lambek's (2008) theoretical framework[4], I argued in my dissertation (2012) that ethical values embody the freedom to exercise one's will to choose the best moral values amongst those available. In other words, ethics is equivalent to freedom of expressing your choice of moral values. It must be noted that freedom and choice is essentially different for different cultures and societies at any given time. Therefore it is not only helpful but fair to acknowledge the fact that to a greater or lesser extent, in any society, there are options and thus decisions to make in the many areas of life, in this case, in the moral arena.

I think this framework is helpful when assessing the significance of democratic knowledge, since the moral structure of a given culture/society is constantly put to the test by the overwhelming amount of relevant and irrelevant information found on the internet. One can think of a society experiencing changes in the way they see their culture and other cultures based on ideas coming from people living different realities (and in different places), sharing similar situations, or simply because knowledge previously held in specialised literature has become publicly available.

Therefore we can conceive, in a Bakhtinian sense, of social forces which challenge a cultural framework and move 'outwards' (centrifugally), as well as forces which attempt to bind the framework together (centripetally). Centrifugal forces are especially at play online since the internet represents the 21st-century's democratic tool par excellence: 'Centripetal forces reassert ideologies and moral frameworks and promote social cohesion whereas centrifugal forces challenge the establishment and strive for change and individuality' (Acero Araluce 2012: 12). This is not to say that there are not centripetal forces online, such as governmental, religious, and mass media

[2] HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory is an international peer-reviewed open access journal that focuses on the central role of ethnography for anthropological theorizing.

[3] Media Ecology is the theory which claims that technology not only influences our lives but also has a direct impact on our concept of things.

[4] In my MSc dissertation (2012) I substituted his version of economic values for my version of moral values.

broadcasters, as well as newspapers websites. But the internet possesses a broader scope that other sources of information lack; that is, it is democratic in terms of 'ordinary' people's participation.

Thus even if we consider democratic knowledge to be deficient, it may be useful to conceive of it as providing more benefits than disadvantages. I believe its significance resides particularly on the questioning and reshaping power of moral frameworks that it informs. This in turn can have a direct or indirect impact on cultural, political, and religious frameworks: '[V]irtuality provides a kind of social laboratory or even liberation in which the performative character of all social realities and identities can be brought to light, deconstructed and transcended' (Miller and Slater 2000: 5).

Two phenomena appear to be at play whenever we contribute to or are influenced by democratic knowledge: 1) acting ethically, that is, freely but with personal responsibility for choosing the best moral values available; and 2) questioning the validity of the pool of moral values when they do not seem to be beneficial for the public as a whole or for our personal lives. These, without a doubt, are the priceless corollary of starting the flow of democratic knowledge: 'We can transform the role of knowledge, we can be human' (Iaconesi 2012).

The accelerated sharing of information perpetuated by the internet has definitely had an impact on our social environment. The value of analysing data which has the potential to provide us with more in-depth information beyond its numbing 'contagion-effect' – such as democratic knowledge – is certainly worth delving into. I believe that there is more to it than only a messy display of pseudo-knowledge and general information which may say more about certain groups or individuals than about the population as a whole, or perhaps more about the subtleties of a culture's moral systems than about group or individual ideologies. It is necessary to keep an eye on the nuances of this information and be more creative in the way we approach them, as we might be overlooking what could conceivably be of great value to social anthropology and other social sciences.

Exploring the effects of the digital on cultural moral frameworks in light of the value and significance of what I called 'democratic knowledge' is, I believe, one of the many possible ways one can address how cultures are dealing with new information technologies. More than that, I think the effect that this type of knowledge is having on moral values is more beneficial than detrimental since people take more action over their ethics – selecting the most appropriate moral values available culturally – and do not relegate this obligation to others. In other words, the direct – and not mediated – participation of laymen online has become more active and as a consequence has provided the opportunity for personal expression and choice (though this may be constrained by their societal norms), and the chance to debate and exchange their ideas with others such as in the instances mentioned above. This in turn has the possibility of engendering a more just society where everyone with online access and IT competency has the chance to think actively, engage in the exchange of ideas, voice their concerns, and also be accountable for their actions and thinking.

While the effects of accessing knowledge online have already been felt across the globe, there is without doubt much more to come. It depends on us how we make use of future technologies, and must inevitably entail a careful assessment of the knowledge made available through them.

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ACCESSING GENETIC KNOWLEDGE:
A CASE FOR A HUMANIST VIRTUE ETHICS

// DEVIN FLAHERTY

ABSTRACT // This essay presents an ethical argument for the value of taking a theoretical perspective that privileges the particularities of individual lived experience over a priori categories of subjecthood. This argument is made through the examination of one practice – disclosure –among American patients who have recently been diagnosed with Huntington's disease, a fatal genetic disorder. Disclosure is understood in this context as the expected sharing of a Huntington's disease diagnosis by the patient with those close to her (primarily family). It is modeled on the practice in which a medical professional informs a patient of her diagnosis. Through advancing an account of disclosure that constitutes it as an ethically obligatory practice within the realm of bioethics, the essay demonstrates that a particular set of ethical priorities is assumed by insisting on the salience of disclosure in the lives of patients diagnosed with Huntington's disease. Two case studies are presented to illustrate that patients' lived experience in the wake of a Huntington's disease diagnosis does not necessarily include disclosure as an ethically important practice.

In the era of genetic medicine, there exists the possibility of access to a new kind of knowledge: knowledge of the micro-physiology of your own, or someone else's genes. This new possibility provides the chance to know about future harm that may come to you or your blood relatives in the form of a genetic disease. How can we best understand the ethical questions entailed by this new possibility? Are patients who are given a genetic diagnosis also given new ethical obligations, for example, to share their diagnosis with their genetic relatives who may also be at risk? If so, how, and when are they obligated to do so, and what responsibility must they take for the outcome if they do choose to tell others that they are at risk? In considering this novel medico-ethical phenomenon, what kind of ethical framework is appropriate for capturing the situation of patients who receive a diagnosis of a genetic disease?

The individuals I study have recently been diagnosed with Huntington's disease (HD) and live in Southern California. In this essay, I draw on case studies that were collected by my supervisor Carole Browner and her colleague Mabel Preloran during their 2010 study of the meanings and uses of genetic testing for patients suffering from degenerative movement disorder symptoms, their family caregivers and their clinicians. HD is inherited in an autosomal-dominant fashion: if one parent is affected, there is a 50 per cent chance that it is passed on to the child. Although HD is congenital, it is typically a 'late onset' disease, and symptoms do not usually appear until middle age. First symptoms include movement disorder with loss of muscle control, shaking, memory loss, and personality changes. As it is a degenerative condition, the pathology aggravates over time. There is no cure, only palliative treatment, and it is ultimately fatal. Once symptoms start, individuals live for an average of 15 years.

When the individuals in this study were diagnosed, they acquired prognostic knowledge about their life course. Since the discovery of the first genetic test, the access to this kind of knowledge, both on the part of patients and on the part of those individuals the patient then chooses to tell has been the object of many studies in the social sciences. Very often, gaining access to this knowledge is framed as 'disclosure'. The first disclosure, between the medical professional and the patient, necessarily entails the possibility of future disclosures between the patient and others. Once patients are informed of their diagnosis, they face the choice of whether to inform genetically-related family members.

The question of what patients do in this situation is often explicitly framed as an ethical concern (Featherstone et al. 2006, Klitzman et al. 2007, Lehmann et al. 2000). The ethical dimensions of how, what, and when patients disclose their genetic disease have been problematised particularly in the case of disclosure to patients' genetic relatives, who may, unknowingly, have the disease as well. By taking disclosure *a priori* as an object of study, we assume a biomedical ethical framework that assumes disclosure to be of ethical concern. However, this framework may or may not coincide with the ethical commitments and worries of the concerned individuals.

In this paper, I argue against a rendering of the ethical situation of patients diagnosed with a genetic disease that privileges disclosure as the focal point of ethical experience. I will suggest, in fact, that a focus on disclosure presupposes a moral framework that precludes an examination of the particular ethical experience of these individuals. In arguing for an investigation of the ethical valence of these individuals' experience, what these individuals consider to be of ethical concern for them must be examined. This examination attends first and foremost to their experiences as first-person selves always already in the midst of the risk and vulnerability of everyday action. I suggest that what might be seen from an outsider's perspective as being ethically-charged (a locus of ethical decision making) may from a more experience-near perspective not appear to carry any ethical weight at all. In doing so, I respond to Cheryl Mattingly's recent call for a more humanist ethical platform that is 'equally attentive' to *both* 'moral traditions and already articulated practices of subjugation' and to 'processes of ethical judgment grounded in singular events and the formations of selves who have their own particular history' (Mattingly 2012: 180). Here, I will strictly focus on promoting the latter, first-person component of this formulation, in an effort to re-balance ethical investigations in this field of inquiry that have largely focused on third-person analysis.

A HUMANIST VIRTUE ETHICS

Among the many voices that have come to the fore in the recent resurgence of directly attending to morality in anthropology is Cheryl Mattingly. In her 2012 piece 'Two Virtue Ethics and the Anthropology of Morality', Mattingly's call for a readjustment of anthropology's moral focus draws our attention to the divergent assumptions underlying two ethical frameworks commonly employed by anthropologists. These are two varieties of virtue ethics, which she argues have mistakenly been merged in recent approaches to the anthropology of morality.

The first of these two virtue ethics is 'third-person' post-structural virtue ethics, largely influenced by Foucault. The second is a 'first person' or 'humanist' virtue ethics, drawing largely on Aristotle. The post-structural virtue ethics, which she refers to as taking a 'third-person perspective' (Mattingly 2012: 169) is characterized by an ethical actor who is a *subject produced* by certain socio-cultural and historical conditions, whose 'self is not so much a cause as it is an effect' (Mattingly 2012: 173). In this tradition 'a dominant place [is given] to social structures in shaping the moral' (Mattingly 2012: 175). The ethical work for individuals in this model consists of the 'striving toward the occupancy of a 'subject position' (Faubion 2011 in Mattingly 2012: 172).

The 'first person' or 'humanist' neo-Aristotelean strain of virtue ethics, on the other hand, is concerned with a self 'identified with the very first-personal *givenness* of the experiential phenomena' (Zehavi 2008 in Mattingly 2012: 169). This model is concerned with the individual's experience of what it is to be in the world from a first-person perspective, to 'inhabit particular lifeworlds' (Mattingly 2012: 170). In this model, the ethical work for individuals is done by building a virtuous character through *practice*, which takes the form of actions in ordinary, everyday life. Central to this position, however, is that these everyday actions are precarious and risky through and through, and that individual human actors will never be able to truly control the consequences of their actions or the circumstances in which they find themselves. I will next show that taking disclosure as an object of focus in studies of patients diagnosed with a genetic disease is a case of applying a third-person, rather than a first-person ethical framework to their situation.

THE ETHICS OF DISCLOSURE

'Disclosure' is a term native to biomedical ethics. Canonically taken in this framework to be an ethical imperative (Hertogh et al. 2004), disclosure is achieved when a patient is officially informed of her diagnosis by a medical professional. In the majority of studies of genetic diagnoses, this model, in which one individual delivers a discrete piece of information to another, has been implicitly laminated onto those who receive a genetic diagnosis and those they choose to tell or not to tell. In employing this term, authors index the biomedical ethical framework in which disclosure is an ethically pivotal action. This thrusts patients into a pre-established subject position in which they, upon receipt of their diagnosis, have a number of choices to make: who, when, and how to tell others of their diagnosis. Pre-determining that disclosure will be an ethically salient concern in these actors' experience presupposes a particular subjectivity. In so doing, I argue, it takes the third-person perspective of post-structural virtue ethics.

I suggest that the cultural saliency of disclosure and the dominance of the bioethical framework in all questions regarding disease has steered social scientists and other scholars away from a humanist, first-person ethical analysis of the way genetic diagnostic knowledge shapes, or fails to shape, the ethical experience of the patient. Particularly, it presupposes that the receipt of diagnostic information is inherently a matter of ethical valence in that it necessarily changes patients' ethical responsibilities and their understanding of their own ethical position. However, patients who gain access to such knowledge may not experience any shift in their ethical commitments or concerns. The institutionalised terminology of disclosure glosses over the possibility of 'considering humans as "self-interpreting" moral beings whose perceptions, interpretations and actions help shape moral subjectivities' (Mattingly 2012: 171). Following Mattingly, I argue for attending to the singularities of each individual's first person perspective to improve our chance of grasping what the true ethical struggles for them are.

Next I present the details of two cases of individuals recently diagnosed with HD in Southern California. While both of these individuals had just had their positive HD status disclosed to them, the access to that knowledge did not entail finding themselves in the midst of a new ethical problem. I outline their first-person perspectives by way of sketching, however briefly, their particular lifeworlds. It will be illustrated that for these two patients, as for many others in the study, the knowledge of their positive HD status was not ethically valenced and did not constitute a pivotal point in their ethical experience.

ANA[1]

When Ana received her positive test result for Huntington's disease, she was 37 years old. Recently divorced with two school-aged children, she had been searching for a diagnosis for 14 years. In 1990, 17 years before the study took place, Ana watched her father die of what had been clinically diagnosed as HD (the genetic test was not yet widely available). Ana described watching her father's death with horror. The anxiety that she would one day suffer like him was a reason why she was searching for an HD test[2]. But Ana was not afraid for herself. Her two children, and her ability to care for them in the future, were her utmost concern:

> I was worried because I have the experience with my father and I know that HD could destroy you, and my main concern is who is going to take care of my children. Nobody even with the best intentions could take care of them like me. I am the mother. It is horrible to think about these things…

Ana was devoutly Catholic and considered her fate to be in the hands of the Lord. For example, when an appointment at the neurology clinic that she had been set on attending became available at the last minute, Ana explained this as proof that 'nothing is impossible for the Lord.' Ana was also considerably depressed. She frequently attributed her depression to her situation as a fatally diseased mother who would gradually become less and less able to care for her children. Ana recounted having felt this way even before she received her positive HD test result, a testament to how certain she was of having the disease. When Ana received her diagnosis, her deep, continuing anxiety was mixed with relief and a renewed conviction

[1] This case was originally discussed by Browner and Preloran (2010: 37-47).

[2] In the U.S., HD testing is never done as part of any routine clinical work-up. People are tested only if at least one blood relative is known to carry the Huntington's gene or because they are manifesting symptoms consistent with the HD trajectory.

in her own ability to interpret her bodily experience. Previously, Ana had felt that everyone she consulted or even told about her symptoms 'thought she was crazy'. As she explained, 'I wanted to have it [the test] because I knew that I have HD, like my father, but I couldn't prove it. Nobody believed me.' Importantly, it's likely 'nobody believed' her because Ana did not in fact show any physical symptoms. While she complained of 'sensations' in her arms and legs, and of trouble walking and keeping her balance, no professional she saw conclusively observed these phenomena. Ana seemed completely normal, although she was certain that she was not.

For her, disclosure of her disease was entirely expected. She had been searching for over a decade for a doctor who would take her claims of Huntington's seriously so that she could have the test and begin treatment. Ana's diagnosis did not provoke a new ethical problem, but precisely the opposite of what a bioethical or third-person virtue ethics might predict: instead of feeling burdened with responsibility, she felt vindicated and newly self-righteous.

ROLAND[3]

Roland was in his 50s when we met him at the clinic where he and his sister Mary had come to explore treatment options for his recently diagnosed Huntington's disease. Roland had been suffering from movement disorders for many years, causing him to lose his job as a jazz musician and take up another as a taxi driver, until his rapidly declining memory forced him to leave that job as well. He became homeless for several years. It wasn't until he was arrested for vagrancy that he called his estranged sister Mary to bail him out of jail. Since then, Mary has been Roland's devoted caregiver.

Roland's HD test result came when Mary, in her words, 'converted the entire family' into believing that their mother had died of HD. Roland and his brother had begun showing symptoms Mary recognised as similar to those of their mother in the early years of her illness. Mary had teamed up with their brother's wife to monitor the men's behaviour, and the women had decided together that all the blood relatives ought to get tested. In an interview with Roland, we can see the influence Mary had on Roland at this point in his life:

> **Int:** Did the opinion of those close to you influence your genetic testing decision?
> **Rol:** Yes, [Mary] was the one who thought I should get the test done in the first place.
> **Int:** Can you tell me how it influenced you?
> **Rol:** Well, she is the one who decided I should have the test.

Due to the experiential knowledge Mary acquired taking care of their mother in the last years of her life, Mary had, before having the family tested, begun bringing Roland to an HD support group. This is where Roland and Mary both learned most of what they knew about Huntington's disease, including information about potential treatments, clinical trials, and generally how to best go about seeking treatment for this relatively rare disease.

By the time Mary decided Roland should be tested, his symptoms were severe. He had lost much of his memory and other mental capacities, and sometimes had trouble speaking. He also sometimes had difficulty controlling his movements. During interviews with Roland as well as during his neurological consultations, Mary played a significant role in navigating the interaction, often speaking for Roland or encouraging Roland to speak. Mary also kept track of all of Roland's medical records, helped him fill out medical forms, and took notes during appointments.

Once Roland was diagnosed, Mary continued her pragmatic approach to his treatment, embodying a can-do attitude, focusing on the things that needed to be done over the inevitability of Roland's eventual decline:

> **Int:** Now that you have that information [the genetic test results] how do you feel?
> **Mar:** I feel that we made progress because we can concentrate on looking for help; search for treatment, look for some clinical trials…I like the fact that everything seems to be moving now.

Roland's attitude, while perhaps not as upbeat, was nonetheless in tune with Mary's apparent level-headedness. As Roland recounted:

> I just assume whatever the test you take, the results will be known, negative or positive (…) Whatever is out there is going to be out there. It's kind of 50-50, so. The way I see it, if I have it, somebody else doesn't have it, so it's not a real mind blower to get the news.

Neither Mary nor Roland were shaken by the HD diagnosis; both considered it to be a predictable result that fits into the life trajectory, or at least one of a few acceptable life trajectories, that they already took themselves to be on. The moment of disclosure, for Roland, did not pose a significant ethical problem. Already in the midst of an incapacitating illness when he received his diagnosis, Roland did not experience this disclosure as a shift in his ethical responsibilities.

ACCESSING GENETIC KNOWLEDGE AS AN ETHICAL QUESTION

I have presented here two cases of individuals who were

[3] This case was originally discussed by Browner and Preloran (2010: 86-87, 95).

recently diagnosed with Huntington's disease, a situation which might seem to weigh the patients with a certain ethical choice. What does one do with that knowledge, who does one tell, when, and how? I have argued that approaching the ethical question from this perspective is somewhat misguided in that it begins with the categories themselves instead of beginning with individual experience – a misstep, I believe, characteristic of a post-structural virtue ethics approach. The 'ethical' here cannot be captured by identifying subject positions that these individuals are striving toward, but rather only by attending to the unique specificities of each life and each character. Ana, depressed, horribly afraid of ending up like her father and putting her children through the same pain she experienced, asymptomatic to any observer, is faced with a different ethical struggle than Roland, even though the two might be considered to be in the same 'subject position.'

When approached from the perspective of a humanist first-person virtue ethics, it becomes clear that every case of accessing genetic knowledge, even in the case of a single disease like Huntington's, will pose a different kind of ethical struggle with different ethical considerations. It is not helpful, then, to gloss the further sharing of this knowledge as disclosure which indexes an ethical system (biomedical ethics) that shares with post-structural virtue ethics a foregrounding of the individual merely as occupying a certain subject role. Instead, we ought to attend to the access to this knowledge as part of the 'central human predicament of trying to live a life that one is somehow responsible for but is in many respects out of one's control' (Mattingly 2012: 179).

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VISUAL
ANTHROPOLOGY

// VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY //

EXPLORING VISUAL MEDIA IN THE PROCESS OF ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK

// KAMILLA NØRTOFT & ANNE-KATRINE HANSEN

ABSTRACT // This paper discusses the benefits of using film in ethnographic fieldwork. During the fieldwork for Kamilla's Ph.D. project about elderly people's health and social relations, we have experimented with the use of video. In this paper we focus on the results of and reactions to using self-produced film material in focus group discussions conducted in an activity centre for retired people in Copenhagen. The method applied turned out to be beneficial in expected but also positively surprising ways that enabled us to gain insights beyond those of solely word-based approaches.

Please view our short film clip *Bodil in the Snow* (at *http://vimeo.com/59180448*) which we used for accessing knowledge about health issues among the elderly in Copenhagen, as discussed in the article.

INTRODUCTION

In this methodological paper, we wish to discuss the use of film in ethnographic fieldwork and analysis, briefly touching upon issues of representation. Our collaboration as a visual and a non-visual anthropologist has led to fruitful discussions throughout the process about the place and possibility of film as an academic genre. If by scientific work, we mean contributing to theoretical discussions and academic knowledge about a certain theme, how can we convey this and present the different processes in doing so using film?

As part of Kamilla's Ph.D. project, we experimented with film at different stages of the anthropological research process:

- As a way to gain access to the field and sensory data about growing old
- To generate observational data
- To use the audiovisual data in analysis
- To convey results of the research

We believe that film can convey knowledge in a manner that speaks directly to the senses, and can convey an embodied knowledge or experience of the world. Furthermore, we wanted an open approach where we would experiment with the possibilities of the medium as the fieldwork progressed and our knowledge improved.

Our research addresses how health and health-related issues are expressed, spoken of, perceived and performed in different institutional settings. The project focuses on healthcare work with elderly people in the municipality of Copenhagen and deals with elderly people and social relations connected to health in a very broad sense.

The main methods used in the field have been participant observation (with and without a camera), formal and informal interviews, and focus group discussions.

The fieldwork took place in an activity centre for elderly people managed by the City of Copenhagen. The purpose of the centre is to provide a platform for social interaction and health activities. The people who attend the centre are retired from work and live in their own homes. Most of them visit the activity centre for socializing, using fitness facilities and taking part in organised activities. From a managerial perspective, the focus is on physical and mental wellbeing in an attempt to address the serious problem of loneliness among elderly citizens in the municipality.

FILM AS A KEY TO 'OPEN' THE FIELD

In recent years, visual anthropology has gained acknowledgement for the use of audiovisual media to capture, express and convey sensory and bodily aspects of informants' life worlds (MacDougall 2006: 59&268). Anthropological research had originally mainly been language based, but the growing recognition of the fact that not everything can be put into words has given visual (and sensuous) anthropology a lead in the study of these aspects (Ibid: 1ff, Pink 2009: 11). As MacDougall writes, the images of the world we experience through vision do not only become comprehensible to us through a thought-induced, language-based abstraction or categorisation, even if it often seems like that. They are included in the construction of our understanding of the world, which is based both on images and experience rather than on abstract knowledge (MacDougall 2006: 3ff).

These views inspired us to use film not only to register and create data and knowledge ourselves, but also to engage our informants in the process of knowledge production by letting *them* engage with filmic material. In this sense, the use of film facilitated an opening of the field: it broadened our perspective and we gained insights into aspects of the informants' experiences and their situation as elderly people. The notion of one's own body and health is necessarily an embodied experience that can be difficult to put in words. Even though bodily experiences are something we all share and can relate to (Pink 2009: 23ff), at our age, we can only imagine the bodily changes and problems that accompany old age. We thus intended to gain access to these notions, and to find a way of opening up these difficult aspects of our field to discussion.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS ABOUT BODIL

We have experimented with accessing such knowledge through focus group discussions, where we gathered a number of informants and showed them film clips to initiate conversation. In the beginning of our fieldwork, we experienced difficulties talking to our interlocutors about health and health-related issues without them consequently referring to measurable factors such as diet, smoking, alcohol consumption and exercise. We ascribe this to the fact that most public preventive health work in Denmark is centred around these so-called 'KRAM factors'.

We decided to produce our own filmic material and let our informants comment on it and discuss what they saw. We wanted to present material about a person our informants could relate to. At the same time, we wanted that person to be someone unknown to them, in order for them to freely comment on what they saw. We decided that Anne-Katrine would follow her grandmother, Bodil, with the camera for three days, and we made seven clips of approximately five minutes each. In each clip, Bodil is either doing something or talking about an issue relevant to our research questions, such as taking her medication, eating, engaging in hobbies, going shopping, and talking about loneliness, ageing and dying.

During the sessions in the activity centre, we proceeded to show one clip and opened the discussion before showing the next one. The informants' interest was evident through their comments and bursts of laughter. Between

Figure 1: A focus group watching film clips about Bodil

Figure 2: Still of Bodil stopping to catch her breath

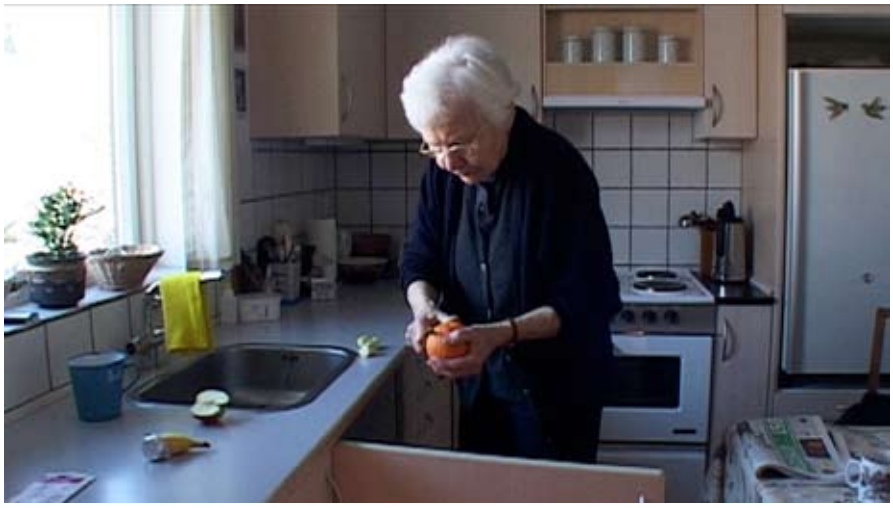

Figure 3: Still of Bodil peeling an orange

Stills from filmed material by Anne-Katrine Hansen

the clips, the informants' comments would be elaborated and clarified and at times more general discussions about a topic would evolve.

Results from filmic material as the basis of discussions

We could have chosen objects, photos, case stories etc. to represent different themes or topics as the basis of discussions; but while these might also have gotten us beyond the focus on the KRAM factors, our clips of Bodil turned out to give the bodily affiliation or experiential resonance that we sought. Our informants saw Bodil in several daily situations similar to situations in their own daily lives, which resulted in recognition, empathy and a feeling of relatedness between Bodil and the viewers. They felt acquainted with Bodil after seeing her in different situations and talking about different issues relevant to their own lives.

The clips served their purpose in the way we had anticipated: our informants talked about their daily lives in a different manner than when we had chatted with them at the coffee tables in the activity centre. They did not just talk about diet, alcohol, smoking and exercise in a factual manner, but about their lives, everyday situations, and health problems in a much more detailed, experience-based way.

Bodil in the snow – an example activating a sensory experience

When seeing objects or bodies on film, the knowledge the viewer has of the world creates a sensory interchange that transforms the visual nature of an image into an experience of how it feels (MacDougall 1998: 51). Thus, a more experienced understanding of the informants' worlds is created when viewing the film. MacDougall further argues that film brings back a focus on physical objects, thus emphasizing the human environment, or 'social landscape', which he defines as: 'a distinctive sensory complex, constructed not only of material things but also of human activities and the bodies of human beings themselves' (MacDougall 2006: 58). These sensory aspects are examples of the advantage and quality of using film as method and representation within anthropology, providing

> …strategies for exploring dimensions of social life different from those already defined in verbal and quantitative terms. If we ask what aspects of culture are specifically accessible to such an approach, it is often mistakably assumed that it is those that are visible. It is therefore important to assert at once that the visible are equally a pathway to the non-visible, and to the larger domain of the feelings, the intellect and the remaining senses (MacDougall 2006: 269).

When we showed our informants the film clips of Bodil, we experienced this haptic quality of vision. The informants sensed and commented on issues that we had not noticed or thought about because we did not have a bodily experience of them and, therefore, had no frames of reference to them. For example, in the clip where Bodil walks through a forest in the snow to get to the supermarket, we saw an old, yet strong, woman who adjusted her daily activities to her functional level and health condition. However, our informants saw a peer walking quite fast *with no support* through a hilly forest covered in snow. That she needed no support was their main focus point. A long, cold winter would have kept many of them inside their houses if they had to walk through a forest without any help. Our informants already had bodily experiences of getting old and being weaker than in their younger days, and they had daily experiences of scaling pavements covered with snow and ice in that condition. Therefore, they related to Bodil's rigours in a different way than we could.

We could have asked them how they were dealing with icy pavements and the like, and they would probably have answered that the snow and ice restrained their activities outside the house, or that they felt unsafe and were afraid of falling. However, instead of talking about what was hard for them, they talked about how well Bodil was walking and managing other daily tasks. To see Bodil moving and straining created resonance in our informants and brought out feelings and memories from their own experiences of walking in snow. Furthermore, their bodily reactions were visible to us while they watched: when Bodil walks uphill and stops, out of breath, the informants responded by also breathing in deeply. Such reactions made their experiences clear to us in a very concrete manner as compared to when they told us about the same things (rather than doing them with their bodies).

Long term effects of the 'opening' of the field

Bodil and the film clips became a common frame of reference between our informants and us in the longer run. After seeing the clips, our interlocutors would often refer to them during our conversations at the coffee tables. It was obvious that our informants felt that they knew Bodil in some way, and would talk about how she did different things. But they did not actually know her in person and, thus, it seemed completely appropriate to talk about her and discuss her in connection to various topics: it did not compromise any social relations but gave them instead a new topic for their daily chats.

The film about Bodil thus helped in creating a rapport in the field as well as in making the informants create *different* kinds of descriptions of their daily lives than previously experienced. They no longer talked about the concept of health framed within the Danish official discourse of the KRAM factors, but instead about their own experiences.

DISCUSSION: DIFFERENT WAYS OF USING FILM AS A METHOD

The themes of health and everyday experiences that we tried to bring into focus in the clips with Bodil definitely came across and evoked the bodily resemblance in the informants that we had hoped for, giving us a good point of departure for understanding what health meant to our informants. As we have illustrated, using film as a means to open the field can be quite productive, since film can communicate on a non-verbal level, bringing into play factors that did not arise when we only addressed the topic verbally in the initial talks with our informants.

Showing the clips proved to be a fruitful method to gain sensory insight as well as bringing us closer to our informants. One reason that it worked so well might be that seeing the clips was a positive shared experience for our informants (and us). It also made our purpose and research questions clearer to our informants.. It was no longer about us trying to 'gain' something from them – we also positively contributed in a very tangible way to life in the activity centre.

A note on analysis

In comparison to the textual conveyance of an analysis, the film-based representation of an argument still may not be so simple. If analytical points are not explained with words during a filmic representation, the final analysis is left with the viewer. Some will consider this a weakness while others might see it as strength (Mermin 1997: 43).

We think it can be both. Not being told which points to focus on in the presented material allows the viewers to focus on the specific point(s) they find most relevant and interesting. It is a weakness in the sense that the anthropologist might not get his or her message across to the viewers and be unable to lead the viewers' attention to something which might be new to them.

This issue of conveying the analysis is not easily bought within the frames of anthropology, traditionally 'oriented to writing' (Marcus 1994: 37). If you cannot follow (see) the argument, how can you judge its validity? It also touches upon the ever-present anthropological problem of representation and authorship taken up by George Marcus and James Clifford's 1986 *Writing Culture* and the debate that followed. Who is entitled to represent whom, why and how? What about the problem of hegemony and power relations in representations, which are accepted as truth (Ruby 1991: 53)? And, citing the example of the viewers' reactions to Bodil in the snow, whose truth is it: that of the anthropologist, the informants or the viewers?

This raises the question about the visibility of analysis through a theoretical lens. Does it make sense to insist on this visibility when we are not able to direct or control the reception anyway? The material, of course, has a very high degree of autonomous life, living in a dialectic relationship between our selection and presentation of material and the receivers' experiences and attention.

Interestingly, almost regardless of the way we present the film clips *with words* accentuating our analytical points, the viewers still see and interpret them differently, depending on their perspective and their own experiences. This is, of course, not only the case for filmic material, but the process of showing the clips while we were together with our audience has made the point very clear. This can be illustrated with the clip in which Bodil peels an orange and afterwards eats it while doing a crossword puzzle. Ergonomists have noted how strong Bodil's hands and fingers are compared to those of her age. Dieticians have noted that she is skinny, and that she needs to supplement the healthy orange with foods that contain more calories. Our focus was that she eats healthy food, but also that she eats alone, having the crossword puzzle as her dinner company - a fact our informants also pointed out.

CONCLUSION: AN INVITATION TO CONTINUE THE DISCUSSION

The project has confirmed that the use of film in the research process has something distinctive to offer. Addressing our research questions by using film clips to evoke bodily experiences provided access to insights we could not have thought of or asked about otherwise. Being younger than our interlocutors, we have not had these experiences ourselves. The film clips made our informants talk about and show their own bodily experiences in ways that went beyond references to public health messages. The film clips also provided an effective way of connecting to our informants by creating a common ground to talk from. Not only did it give an entrance point for discussions, it also gave them an understanding of our interests and of why we were there. An additional benefit was the positive contribution to the daily life in the activity centre.

Using film has been fruitful in accessing knowledge, while at the same time calling into question how this knowledge may be communicated. Is it possible to convey an analysis only as visual representation? Is it a requirement to use words to explain an analysis in order to represent it? These are questions that visual anthropologists are constantly struggling with when debating with less visually oriented colleagues and among themselves (Pink 2009: 119ff). Our non-visual and visual background makes us constantly engage with these discussions as well, and these are questions that we are still struggling with in our work.

Presentations of our material for different audiences have indicated the benefits of combining visual and non-visual representation. The different qualities of visual and non-visual representational approaches underline how words and motion pictures create different reactions and kinds of knowledge, which do not exclude each other and can-

not be evaluated with equal measures. We thus agree that anthropological film has to be dealt with on its own terms. It does not make sense to judge it using the same criteria used to evaluate academic texts.

As a conclusion to this paper and an invitation to continue the discussion, we will pass on a question we were asked by a philosopher and former colleague of ours: is it possible, in a meaningful way, to answer and discuss a conveyed message in a different medium than it was originally conveyed in? Should film be answered with film, text with text, music with music and so on? Perhaps there is no one answer to this, but we think it is a good question to tickle the mind and engage in our understanding of academic communication.

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INNOVATIVE WAYS TO ACCESS KNOWLEDGE:
UNDERSTANDING ANTHROPOLOGY THROUGH OBJECTS

// TABITHA GOULD

During one week of the academic year, the University of Edinburgh promotes creativity and innovation in education amongst its students and staff through Innovative Learning Week (ILW). ILW is designed to broaden students' academic understanding of their discipline, but it also allows affiliates of the university to access knowledge on a variety of subjects through encouraging student and department led workshops, talks, socials and debates facilitating extra-curricular learning.

This year the Social Anthropology Society worked alongside the Social Anthropology Department during ILW to provide a platform aimed at favouring the diffusion of anthropological knowledge and to encourage students of other disciplines to learn about anthropology from a non-academic perspective through the creation of a stunning visual exhibition entitled 'Anthropology in 100 Objects'. The concept, proposed by lecturer Jamie Cross, was inspired by the recent BBC 4 radio programme 'History of the World in 100 Objects' and was realized through the hard work of the Social Anthropology Society. The motivation behind this project was to broaden people's perspective on what anthropology is: removing anthropology from the academic context in order to make people aware of the presence of anthropological implications in the objects we use and take for granted. Submissions for the exhibition came from a range of students across disciplines and thus showed how contributors were able to engage with anthropology within a non-academic framework. Similarly, viewers were also able to understand and engage with anthropology from a layman's perspective as each photographed object had a corresponding blurb about the submission answering the question: 'What makes this object anthropological to you?', rendering each item more personal and creating an interaction with the visitor. Some objects were considered anthropological because of the item's connection with places where their contributor had spent time researching, and often an article had been received as a gift from informants or friends during fieldwork. Other contributions, such as the string bag from Melanesia, became anthropological because owning a locally made bag made the anthropologist more approachable, thus transforming the object into a tool through which to access local knowledge.

The exhibition, curated by Jamie Cross, Emma Middleton and Lucy Bull was launched in the Community Café of the Chrystal Macmillan Building, on Thursday 21st February and attracted a crowd of about fifty viewers from across the university. One observer, a fourth year Classics student noted how the exhibition was 'illuminating to a non-anthropologist', and was 'visually very captivating'. The student also suggested that the idea should be explored in different disciplines by producing monthly departmental exhibitions, thus enabling more students to expand their knowledge within and beyond their own discipline.
The Public Exhibition was supplemented by its own semi-permanent online website www.anthropologyin100objects.com.

This webpage serves as the year long online site of the project, which received over 1,000 global hits in its first week of going live, including viewers from Brazil, Bulgaria and India. The exhibition pieces were displayed at the annual student-led Royal Anthropological Conference in St Andrews from April 12th – 13th 2013. The submissions aligned well with the theme of this year's conference: 'Close Encounters: Bringing Anthropology Home'. The conference was co-hosted by the University of Edinburgh, the University of St Andrews and the University of Aberdeen and enjoyed inspiring talks from Dame Marilyn Strathern and Tim Ingold.

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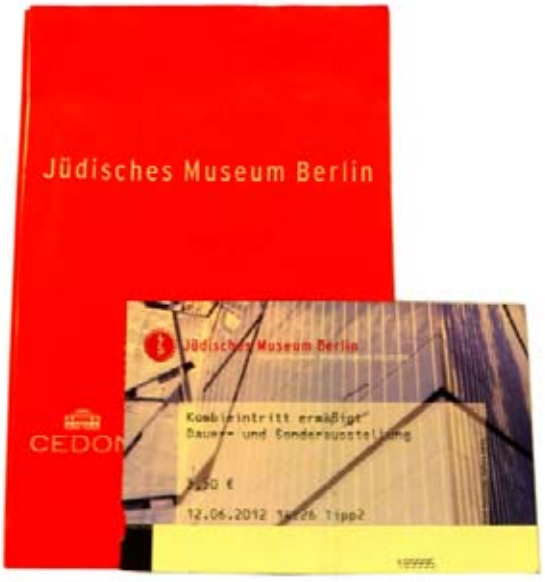
The exhibition could not have been successful without the hard work and dedication of members of the Social Anthropology Society in the organisation and publicity of the event.

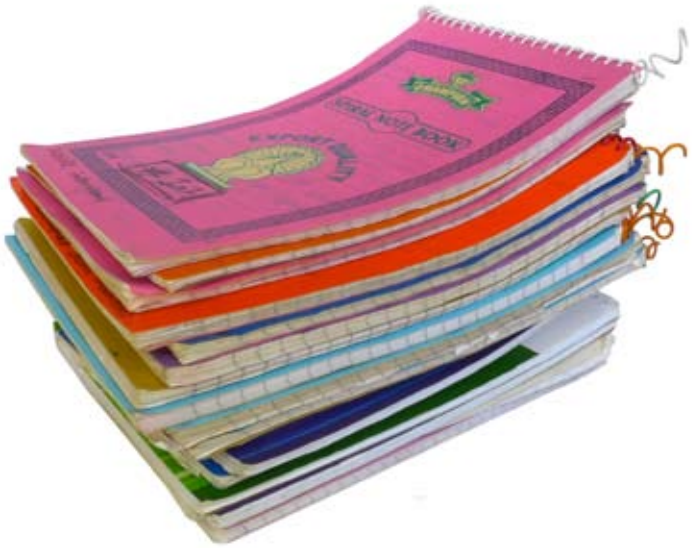
Thank you to Tom Spratt, Mai Ebine, Rebecca Chan, Katie Forrester, Emma Middleton, Lucy Bull and Jamie Cross for their inspiration and hard work.

Bast Shoes
Musteika, Lithuania, 2010
hand-woven, linden-tree bark

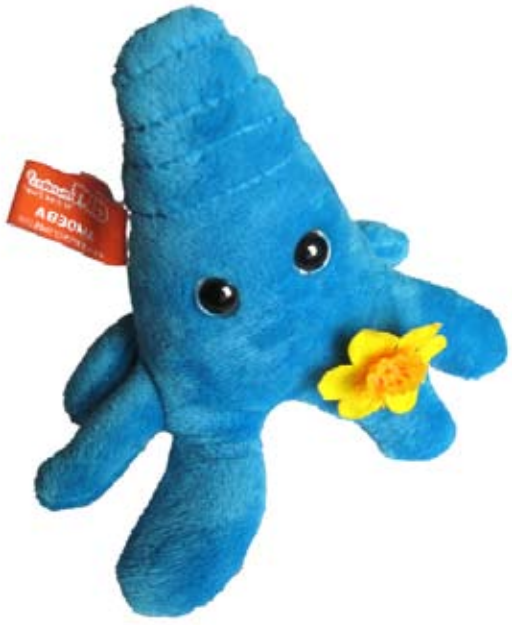
String Bag
Begasin, Papua New Guinea, 2011
bush materials



Jewish Museum Entrance Ticket
Berlin, 2012
paper



Notebooks
India, 2007
paper, plastic, metal spiral binding



Plush Amoeba with Daffodil
UK, 2012
polyester (plush), glass (eyes),
textile (leaves), plastic (stamens), metal pin

Sourvachka
Bulgaria, 2012
cornel-tree branch and yard, wool, popcorns,
dried red peppers, monkey-nuts, homemade sesame ring

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Please visit the website www.anthropologyin100objects.com to read the stories behind these objects.

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