

Editorial Foreword

BIOLOGICAL TRANSLATIONS

Biology, the body, and “embodiment” are entrenched in the working vocabulary of the human sciences, yet there is little consensus on what such terms mean. It seems that the body must always be set in a particular narrative strategy before it can speak. Sometimes the narrative is about historical constructedness—biology and the body as complex social texts. Sometimes, on the other hand, biology is leveraged toward human universals instead of construction: universal human rights, for example, or universally shared cognitive capacities. Biology, not least in the form of the “body-count,” serves as forensic and historical evidence for holding perpetrators legally and morally accountable. The problem, of course, is that the body as a social text and the body as a universal point of reference sometimes work against each other. One thing is sure, biology and the body are ever more complex.

In vitro fertilization (IVF), now a half-century old, transformed human reproduction. Politically, socially and commercially, it shook the biomedical world and, as much as any other medical invention, translated science into meaningful popular purposes. Nevertheless, after an initial flurry of coverage of the first “test-tube baby,” it has long flown below the radar in comparison with developments like stem-cell research or the Human Genome Project. It’s time to take stock. In “Developmental Landmarks and the Warnock Report: A Sociological Account of Biological Translation,” **Sarah Franklin** presents a close analysis of the 1983 Warnock Report in Great Britain, which established the “14-day rule” that became the globally-recognized benchmark for all embryonic research, including embryonic transfers. As such, it was also a declaration that became crucial in the precisizing of “the human.” **Victor Igreja’s** “Negotiating Relationships in Transition: War, Famine, and Embodied Accountability in Mozambique” considers the question of accountability in the face of famine. How are people held responsible for violations committed not during war, but during more ambiguous periods of suffering along “the famine continuum”? Igreja shows the shifting forms of evidence in one community in Mozambique, as liability was contingently made from fragments—collective imagination, kinship, individual (or at least single-bodied actions), and spirits.

MOBILITY AND SEDENTARIZATION

The power of mobility versus the impotence of being stuck in place expand out to broader social histories. The terms build a bipolar network in which certain actors move, as agents making history, while others are rooted on the margins.

The juxtaposition of mobility and immobility is a kind of “world-making,” as Bourdieu called it—a vision of divisions. Though the comparison of oceans and their circuits may provoke intriguing comparisons, **Sanjay Subrahmanyam** warns against oversimplified histories of seas. Comparison is not equivalence. Mediterranean Studies is not Atlantic Studies; and the Indian Ocean is very different from both. Subrahmanyam’s essay, “Between Eastern Africa and Western India, 1500–1650: Slavery, Commerce, and Elite Formation,” uncovers sources rarely seen to illuminate the western Indian Ocean and its travelers, especially the slave trade’s distinctive features like African slaves who became important military actors in the Muslim states of India. Meticulously retracing the routes between Ethiopia, the Swahili coast and Gujarat and the Deccan, Subrahmanyam shows both the power and the limits of oceanic comparisons.

If Subrahmanyam’s essay points toward conditions of mobility on the high seas, **Divya Subramanian’s** work attends to how two so-called tribal populations were forced to stay put on land. “Legislating the Labor Force: Sedentarization and Development in India and the United States, 1870–1915” compares 19th century sites—one of them the internal colonization of indigenous Americans, the other external, the British occupation of India. Both were versions of settler colonialism based in conquest. Sedentarization was secured and enforced by law, the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 in India, and the Indian Appropriation Acts of 1851–1871 in the United States. Subramanian teaches us how, though settler colonists may have seen “tribal populations” as homogenous nomads in need of civilization, what they in fact demonstrate was a pernicious pan-Anglo fear of nomadic overmobility and the threat it posed to land ownership and a narrow evolutionist view of “social improvement.”

SELF-HELP

“Selves” are notoriously difficult get a bead on, given how they shape-shift, expand and contract, disappear in one instance and loom large in the next. Selves can be persons, individuals or both; located in one body, or spread over many. Even a so-called unified self is split between a “me” and an “I,” as William James once wrote, making it difficult to determine the boundaries between who is doing, and who is being done to. One thing sure is that “selves” change—through literature and practice in one of the papers here, and through inheritance and schooling, in the other.

Dale Carnegie, born in Missouri, wrote a bestseller in 1948, *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*. The book had a significant influence on Islam in Egypt. How so? Stop worrying, start living, and read on, friend! **Arthur Shiwa Zárate’s** “The American Sufis: Self-Help, Sufism, and Metaphysical Religion in Postcolonial Egypt,” traces the rise of an influential and growing genre of literature, “Islamic self-help” and “theological therapy.” Zárate shows that this genre shouldn’t be misrecognized as simply neoliberalism recast. Instead, “self-help” has been reworked in specifically Islamic terms

that shift the notion of the “self” as much as the idea of “help.” Instead of autonomy, dependence on Allah; instead of self-reliance, an Islamic ethic of charity and voluntarism. **Resto Cruz’s** “An Inheritance that Cannot be Stolen: Schooling, Kinship, and Personhood in Post-1945 Central Philippines” situates the self within wider frames of personhood, kinship and inheritance—inheritance in a broad sense of intangible transmissions, that include the gift of *edukasyon*. In situations of scarcity, the inheritance of *edukasyon* entails the possible expansion of one body’s potentialities via the sacrifice of others. There is a ritual quality to its transmission, then, with rules and procedures of its giving and reception. Then too, *edukasyon* has a temporality, with implications lasting for generations down the road. It invokes a whole social system and sensibility of value between parents and children that is constantly under construction—being redeemed, completed, compensated. But schooling can also foster an autonomous self that shrinks from kinship ties, forgets them or overpowers them. Transmitting an inheritance of *edukasyon* is, among other things, an allocation of resources that is also a risky wager.

MORAL VIOLENCE AND RESTRAINT

François Duvalier’s secret police called the *tonton makout*, familiar in their worker costumes of denim, sunglasses, bandanas and hats, have long been seen as a brutal arm of terror, death squads carrying out arbitrary killings on the whims of a dictator. **Marvin Chochotte** uses oral histories gathered in rural Haiti to show how one-sided was that portrait of the *tonton makout*. In “Making Peasants *Chèf*: The *Tonton Makout* Militia and the Moral Politics of Terror in the Haitian Countryside during the Dictatorship of François Duvalier, 1957–1971,” Chochotte argues that the peasants who later made up the *makout* were marginalized from economic prospects or political voice, and terrorized by back-country military police installed by the U.S. By joining the *makouts* under Duvalier, peasants gained rights and “achieved personhood” for the first time. They joined the *tonton makout* voluntarily to oppose the military (VSN) and its policies of taxation. The *makouts* were as often defenders of local communities against the military, and so the enforcers of restraint, as they were its violent abusers. **Max Bergholz’s** “To Kill or Not to Kill? The Challenge of Restraining Violence in a Balkan Community” documents another case of ambiguous violence, and violence alternated with the resistance to it. When do armed groups use restraint as a tactic? The scene is northwest Bosnia, 1941. Killings and revenge killings are escalating between those defined as Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats, and Muslims. Yet occasionally, and locally, the violence stops. Why? Bergholz shows that sometimes restraint was tactical, based on the perceived need to mount sustainable insurgencies with an interethnic composition. Or because of the need to institute some ruling order over a subject population, since there is otherwise nothing to rule. Then too, it was important that ideologies of restraint existed in some

form, as a possible repertory to draw from—perhaps in the history of a locality, or in the teaching of a well-known member of the community. Mostly, though, Bergholz argues, there are no macro-variables that convincingly work. The outbreak of violence or restraint, town by town, moment by moment, was radically contingent on the presence, or not, of a very specific person or act. What is needed then, is more microhistorical and ethnographic work on violence. Even more on its absence.

Remarkable essays all. We wish you engaged but peaceable reading.
