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Boundaries and crossings

Eileen Moyer and Vinh-Kim Nguyen

As we get ready to go to ‘press’ with our second issue of *MAT*, we are struck by the convergence of ideas presented and questions asked by the authors of the pieces showcased in this edition. Collaborations, assemblages, entanglements, and liminality come together to remind us of the intellectual insights gained by anthropological interrogations of the soft edges of seemingly solid objects. ‘Betwixt and between’ academic disciplines, institutional spaces, disease categories, national boundaries, nature and culture, we are confronted in this issue with the shifting but ever-present boundary between epistemological and pragmatic concern that gives shape to the field of medical anthropology.

In this issue, we launch a new section, Found in Translation, with a seminal article by Annemarie Mol originally published thirty years ago in Dutch. ‘Who Knows What a Woman Is... On the Differences and the Relations between the Sciences’, marks the first in what we hope will be a rich collection of ‘lost’ gems in anthropology and science studies. It seems fitting to us as editors that Annemarie makes this first offering given that it was she who gave us the idea of providing a place in the journal for articles previously published in another language. Sketching out ‘the differences and the relations between the sciences’, she draws attention to the boundaries not just between disciplines, but also between academic and activist feminism, boundaries that are equally relevant today as they were thirty years ago. Revisiting another classic, Shirley Lindenbaum provides us with ‘An Annotated History of Kuru’. Exploring the boundaries between the intellectual histories and practices of medicine and anthropology, her genealogical meanderings bring fascinating new insights to one of medical anthropology’s founding myths.

This issue features two original research articles, each of which invites us to investigate other boundaries. Lukas Engelmann and Janina Kehr explore the epistemology of TB/HIV as an entangled object, while Laura Heinemann asks us to consider the diminishing boundary between institutional and home-based caregiving among organ transplant recipients in the American Midwest. Anne Pfister's photo essay similarly prods reader-viewers to contemplate the ways domestic life seeps into public spaces as deaf children in Mexico undertake twice daily three-hour commutes to attend a special school.

Samuel Taylor-Alexander's think piece on face transplants questions the social liminality of people with severe facial disfigurement and the extent to which transplant surgery is figured as a means to make their lives 'worth living'. Returning to the topic of TB, Emilio Dirlikov considers configurations of 'flexible' health collaboration among BRICS countries. Looking at 'networked thinking' and eHealth in Africa, Vincent Duclos explores the way that screens increasingly come to serve as portals between patients, health information, and caregivers. In a Nightstand essay, Sokhieng Au ponders the possibility of crossing disciplinary borders as she attempts to work 'for' and 'in' public health in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In addition to several thoughtful book reviews, the issue is rounded out by a conversation on the idea of open access in medical anthropology, curated by Emily Yates-Doerr and Jenna Grant. Sharon Abramowitz, Barbara Anderson, Emma Kowal, Todd Meyers, Eugene Raikhel, and Peter Redfield offer provocations, insights, and questions on the limits of openness, highlighting concerns related to privacy, security, ethics, and the politics of representation, among other things.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we've enjoyed editing it.

Eileen Moyer
Vinh-Kim Nguyen

Amsterdam & Paris
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