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Top of the heap: Jamie Saris and Elizabeth Wilson

2013-05-02 12:59:27

By Maria Cecilia Dedios and Ekaterina Anderson



"Book tower"

For the latest "Top of the heap" we have lists from **A. Jamie Saris** of the Department of Anthropology at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth and **Elizabeth A. Wilson** of Emory University's Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies.

[A. Jamie Saris](#)

C. Jason Throop, [Suffering and Sentiment: Exploring the Vicissitudes of Experience and Pain in Yap](#) (University of California Press, 2010).

Angela Garcia, [The Pastoral Clinic: Addiction and Dispossession along the Rio Grande](#) (University of California Press, 2010).

Natasha Dow Schüll. [Addiction by Design: Machine Gambling in Las Vegas](#) (Princeton University Press, 2012).

I have been thinking a lot about addiction of late and the whys and wherefores of suffering and subjectivity. Meanwhile, consumption and pleasure have also been on my mind. These three recent ethnographies read together spark off one another very well. They come from very different theoretical angles in quite different settings, but they come across quite similar issues — understandings of choice and will, of memory and pain, of morality, and an imaginative inquiry into what the subject of all those processes might be. I would love to teach a class with just these three texts and some supporting articles as, it seems to me, in running the thick description of real people caught up in these (very often unhappy) webs of meaning against one another, there is some profound insight into how humans and human networks are produced and, of course, sometimes degraded.

[A. Jamie Saris](#) is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Anthropology, NUI Maynooth. He has been working for more than fifteen years in medical and psychological anthropology in Ireland, North America, and parts of Africa, where he has researched and published on such diverse issues as the social life of mental hospitals, the experience of major mental illness, colonialism and its aftermath, poverty and structural violence, drug use and abuse, and HIV risk and treatment. He is also the Co-Chair of the [Combat Diseases of Poverty Consortium](http://www.cdpc.ie) (www.cdpc.ie) and he was formerly the Deputy Director of NIRSA (National Institute of Regional and Spatial Analysis), a multi-disciplinary research centre of excellence examining space and society.

[Elizabeth A. Wilson](#)

R.D. Laing and Aaron Esterson, [Sanity, madness and the family](#) (Penguin, 1964).

I first read this as an undergraduate. It remains a formative book for me intellectually and politically. I have re-read it recently for class, and was delighted to find that it still feels powerful. As a visual accompaniment try: [Asylum](#) (Director: Paul Robinson 1972). It is a really excellent film of life in one of the houses set up in London in the early 1970s by practicing anti-psychiatrists. Crazy and brave.

Peter Kramer, [Listening to Prozac](#) (Penguin, 1993).

Still a sharp, thoughtful account of Prozac, even after all these years. Essential reading for anyone interested in the contemporary psychocultural landscapes of the US. And, in my opinion, this is a more feminist book than many of the other more obviously critical/political texts on antidepressants.

Ken Corbett, [Boyhoods: Rethinking masculinities](#) (Yale University Press, 2009).

Based on Corbett's clinical experience with the analysis of boys, this is a book that makes me happy because it shows how academic theories of gender and sexuality can still be shaped, twisted, enlivened by contemporary psychoanalytic practice.

Sigmund Freud, [Beyond the pleasure principle](#). In James Strachey, ed., trans., *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud Vol. 18*, 7–64. (Hogarth Press, 1920)

Because too much Freud is never enough.

Todd Meyers, [The clinic and elsewhere: Addiction, adolescents, and the afterlife of therapy](#) (University of Washington Press, 2013).

Meyers and I are stable-mates in the wonderful [In Vivo](#) series at the University of Washington Press (Editors: Robert Mitchel and Phillip Thurtle). His book further confirms my view that I am in excellent company in this series: it is a beautifully written ethnography of adolescents in and out of drug rehab in Baltimore.

Adam Frank, [Transferential poetics, from Poe to Warhol](#) (Fordham University Press, forthcoming).

I've just read the first chapter of this manuscript, forthcoming from Fordham. It is a virtuoso composition of Stein with Klein with Tomkins. I'm dying to read the whole book.

Yotam Ottolenghi and Sami Tamimi, [Jerusalem: A cookbook](#) (Ebury Press, 2012).

A cookbook; because I am finishing up a project on the gut. These are amazingly good recipes from Ottolenghi and Tamimi's home town. Treat yourself.

[Elizabeth A. Wilson](#) is Professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Emory University. She is the author of [Psychosomatic: Feminism and the Neurological Body](#) (Duke University Press 2004); [Affect and Artificial Intelligence](#) (University of Washington Press 2010). She is finishing a project (Gut Feminism) on feminist theory, depression, the gut and psychopharmaceuticals.

AMA citation

Dedios M, Anderson E. Top of the heap: Jamie Saris and Elizabeth Wilson. *Somatosphere*. 2013. Available at: <http://somatosphere.net/2013/05/top-of-the-heap-jamie-saris-and-elizabeth-wilson.html>. Accessed May 2,

2013.

APA citation

Dedios, Maria Cecilia & Anderson, Ekaterina. (2013). *Top of the heap: Jamie Saris and Elizabeth Wilson*. Retrieved May 2, 2013, from Somatosphere Web site: <http://somatosphere.net/2013/05/top-of-the-heap-jamie-saris-and-elizabeth-wilson.html>

Chicago citation

Dedios, Maria Cecilia and Ekaterina Anderson. 2013. Top of the heap: Jamie Saris and Elizabeth Wilson. Somatosphere. <http://somatosphere.net/2013/05/top-of-the-heap-jamie-saris-and-elizabeth-wilson.html> (accessed May 2, 2013).

Harvard citation

Dedios, M & Anderson, E 2013, *Top of the heap: Jamie Saris and Elizabeth Wilson*, Somatosphere. Retrieved May 2, 2013, from <<http://somatosphere.net/2013/05/top-of-the-heap-jamie-saris-and-elizabeth-wilson.html>>

MLA citation

Dedios, Maria Cecilia and Ekaterina Anderson. "Top of the heap: Jamie Saris and Elizabeth Wilson." 2 May. 2013. Somatosphere. Accessed 2 May. 2013.<<http://somatosphere.net/2013/05/top-of-the-heap-jamie-saris-and-elizabeth-wilson.html>>