

<http://somatosphere.net/?p=6610>

Beyond the blog: 2013 in review

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By Eugene Raikhel

Much has changed in the world of scholarly publication and communication — not to mention in the anthropology or STS blogosphere — since Somatosphere was launched in 2008. (Yes, it's been five years. Check out these posts compiling the [features](#), [book reviews](#), and [conference reports](#) that appeared on the site in its first half decade). I remember that time as marked by a particularly strong sense of crisis in discussions among anthropologists and other social scientists about the viability of our reigning publishing models, our forms of review and evaluation, and other aspects of scholarly communication.

Of course the conditions which prompted these conversations have not magically vanished over the past five years. What has changed (at least from my very particular and partial perspective on anthropology and the social sciences and humanities of medicine) are the questions being asked in these discussions — and even more significantly, the projects being undertaken to explore new genres of scholarly communication, new publishing models, new forms of review and so on. Academic presses are experimenting with [short books](#), [digital genres](#), [open-access \(OA\) monographs](#), and more generally, seem to be striking a [hopeful](#) tone about their future much more than they did five years ago. With its sixth issue, [HAU – the Journal of Ethnographic Theory](#) established itself in 2013 as a top-tier peer-reviewed OA anthropology journal. [Cultural Anthropology](#) plans to go [OA in 2014](#) and [Medical Anthropology Quarterly](#) has established an [OA post-print repository](#) for its articles. New publications like [Limn](#) are conjoining online and print publication in new ways, while also potentially assembling new audiences and publics for conversations which might otherwise circulate only among specialists. This latter project has also been taken up by [Public Books](#), an online-only site of short reviews, essays and interviews developed in conjunction with [Public Culture](#). Social media platforms, particularly Facebook and Twitter, which were either in their infancy or viewed with great skepticism by academics five years ago, now comprise another significant channel for scholarly communication and interaction (albeit interaction of a very particular and arguably limited kind).

Amid all of this change in genres of scholarly communication, the ecosystem of anthropology, STS and social science blogs continues to

develop and flourish. This year we welcomed several new interesting group sites including [Psychocultural Cinema](#) (a site exploring the intersection between psychological anthropology and ethnographic film) and [Allegra: A Virtual Lab of Legal Anthropology](#) — while old favorites like [Savage Minds](#) and [Neuroanthropology](#) continued to thrive — not to mention all of the fascinating individually-authored blogs. Not only has the legitimacy of writing in these kinds of venues changed significantly for many academics over the past five years, I think that we are at a stage where the distinction between “blogs” and certain other forms of communication is becoming somewhat blurred. Publications like [Anthropology News](#) which previously existed as newsletters for announcements, brief reports, and corridor-talk-like thought pieces are becoming virtually indistinguishable from some “blogs” in terms of their form and content; while scholarly journals like [CA](#) or [Critical Inquiry](#) are increasingly adding blog features which supplement the peer-reviewed work they publish and potentially bring it to broader audiences. At the same time, the kinds of conversations taking place on self-identified “academic blogs” vary widely, from feisty comment-thread-debates that sometimes descend into name-calling to the more formal discussions which take place on a site like the SSRC’s [Immanent Frame](#).

Under these conditions it is worth asking (and I am obviously a very interested party in raising this question) how we distinguish between, for example, a book review (or any other non-peer-reviewed type of writing) written for an academic journal and one written for a “blog.” Are we perhaps approaching the point where the distinction between the *genre* of publication matters less than other distinctions, such as “What is the editorial or review process behind the publication of a particular piece?” or “How interesting, compelling, thoughtful, etc, is the piece itself and the publication in which it appears?”? Of course the only time when such distinctions really matter is when we convert our texts into the currency of academia — publications, which is to say that such distinctions do very much matter for certain people at particular times.

The broader point is perhaps glaringly obvious: we are in the midst of a radical transformation (perhaps several intertwined transformations) of the modes, channels, genres and infrastructures through which academics communicate with one another and with other interlocutors. My hope is that in this setting Somatosphere can serve as a platform (one among many many other platforms) for experimentation in scholarly communication and publication. What do we – as editors, authors and readers – want new forms of scholarly communication to look like? What do we want them to do or what do we want to be able to do with them? If you have specific ideas or thoughts about these issues, I invite you to get in touch.

Somatosphere is the product of a deeply collaborative effort. It would not exist without the efforts of our editors and contributors — and those efforts would be largely meaningless without you, our readers. Below is a review of posts from 2013, intended as a “thank you” to all of you — editors, writers/contributors, and readers. I’ll mention all of the section editors below by name, but I do want to single out Todd Meyers for his work as Book Reviews Editor and general go-to guy, the products of which you can view in [a list of the book reviews](#) that ran on the site in 2013. Thank you Todd!

Here’s the review of all the significant posts of 2013, divided by section. Looking forward to exciting things in 2014!

Commonplaces

One of the most exciting new projects to appear on the site in 2013 is [Commonplaces](#). The idea for this “series of short entries... by scholars reflecting on the classical and contemporary sites in medicine and science” came from its editors, Tomas Matza and Harris Solomon, in conversation with Betsey Brada and other members of the SMA’s [Science, Technology and Medicine Interest Group](#). Each of the pieces takes an ordinary trope, artifact or object in the world of medicine and science and renders it strange – or in the words of the Commonplaces editors: “Rather than curiosities, we pursue here commonplaces: those unrecognized and yet central infrastructures of the everyday whose banal nature, once unbound, may very well become curious once more,” (Matza and Solomon 2013). Tomas and Harris worked for more than a year carefully conceptualizing the series, soliciting and editing individual entries by a phenomenal group of scholars, and working with designer Maarten Ottens on what turned out to be a striking front page for the site. I think the end result – which is still unfolding – is clearly worth all of time, energy and care that Tomas and Harris have put into it.

If you haven’t yet seen Commonplaces, it’s best to start at the [front page](#). Here’s a list of the pieces so far, along with brief excerpts (in place of abstracts):

Tomas Matza and Harris Solomon, [Introduction: The Cabinet](#)

“This unfolding project on Somatosphere aspires, then, to a “cabinet of commonplaces” in order to return, in an ironic sense, to the naiveté of the cabinet. If objects in the early *wunderkammer* were as-yet-uncategorized oddities, then our contributors cast a

denaturalizing (or, perhaps, to adopt literary theorist Viktor Shklovsky's term, enstranging) gaze on the objects, processes and sites that today populate our scientific and medical everyday. For Shklovsky, it was verbal art's power to "make the stone stoney" that was of central importance. For us, it is the denaturalizing and politicizing gaze of the author that leads us into the cabinet's boxes."

Ed Cohen, [Gut Wisdom, Or Why We Are More Intelligent than We Know](#)

"In evolutionary terms, the gut localizes and intensifies a paradox familiar to all living organisms: to live entails being simultaneously open and bounded. ...[T]he gut contains this lively paradox in the most literal way: it folds the outside inward in order to keep the perturbations entailed by that paradox contained. In other words, it helps us hold our shit together. And by incorporating the open/bounded situation of the living, the gut constitutes the paradox that we are. If the gut is the way the outside lives inside of us — which of course in a topological sense it must be — then we are twisted around our guts, rather than our guts being twisted up inside of us, no matter how often we might feel the latter to be the case."

Miriam Ticktin, [The Waiting Room](#)

"While one may be an impending patient, in the waiting room one is recognizable to oneself and others in *both* social and medical terms. In this sense, the waiting room is a place to diagnose not just bodies but the politics of bodies, and the politics of illness."

Diane Nelson, [Vitamin](#)

"Now we know what a vitamin is. We can produce these "natural" chemicals in a thoroughly modern factory. Yet for every promise, miraculous or mundane, it seems there's a danger or at least a caveat. Really, you just need a well-balanced diet. And that, in the long run, was what the Guatemalan revolution was about."

Jocelyn Chua, [Headache](#)

“My head aches. Not with the “good ache” in your biceps the day after lifting weights, that dull feeling of warm achievement that signals the regenerative growth of torn muscle fibers. Like a sore bicep, my aching head is also a muscle over-flexed from hours of heavy lifting (read: reading). But this particular hurt is not regenerative. It is damaging. And it is anything but dull. When I have a migraine, it is a sharp, pulsing knock-knock-knocking on my brain’s door.”

Gabrielle Hecht, [The Bananization of Nuclear Things](#)

“Fukushima: from the coasts of India’s Tamil Nadu to the halls of the German Bundestag, the word now stands for danger and deception, contamination and vulnerability. Every day brings new distress. Cesium-137 clings tenaciously to the soil and buildings of northeastern Japan. Radioactive fish promenade across the Pacific. Over 40% of children examined by the Fukushima Prefecture Health Management Survey have thyroid abnormalities. Contractors hired for cleanup operations rely on yakuza networks for a steady stream of disposable workers, and toss contaminated debris into forest glens and mountain streams when they think no one is looking. This “cleanup” is projected to take 40 years, cost 250 billion dollars. How could nuclear things possibly be commonplace?”

Joseph Masco, [Side Effect](#)

“Among humans, one of the most heinous criminal acts is to drug someone without their knowledge or consent. To slip someone a “roofie” is to take advantage of the colorless, odorless, tasteless quality of a drug to immobilize someone against his or her will – a form of assault structured by deception, ruthlessness, and biochemistry. Yet today, the wholesale medicating of an ecological space is not recognized as a collective matter of concern, let alone a felony. Slipping the biosphere a roofie is not yet a police matter,

even as the cumulative effects of a wide range of social practices are shifting the chemical composition of the atmosphere, ocean, and climate, and affecting species on a massive scale. Why? I'd like to suggest this lack of recognition and urgency has a lot to do with the conceptual nature of the "side effect." It is an effect of the side effect, to put it bluntly, to depoliticize inevitable forms of violence by marking them as either unwanted or unforeseen."

Barry Saunders, [Scan](#)

"A scan is a sense, or some sensory prosthesis, in transit through space-time, gathering without discrimination. The scan is not the glance—nor the rapt stationary gaze. It is observation in regulated motion."

And there are many more to come. Starting with "EEG," a piece by John Modern which will appear on the site shortly, new Commonplaces will be published most Mondays for the remainder of this academic year. We hope that you enjoy them.

Top of the heap

Another series we initiated this year was "[Top of the heap](#)" – in which we ask scholars what they've been reading recently. Maria Cecilia Dedios and Ekaterina Anderson have done a fabulous job with the series so far, as you can see from this list of entries:

- [Janelle Taylor and Hannah Landecker](#)
- [Emily Martin](#)
- [Jamie Saris and Elizabeth Wilson](#)
- [Richard Keller](#)
- [Geoffrey Bowker](#)
- [Angela Woods](#)
- [Junko Kitanaka](#)

We'll have more "heaps" in 2014.

Features

In 2013 the features on the site ranged from research reports and ethnographically-informed reflections on issues that have been widely in the mass media, like the Fukushima nuclear accident, the Le Roy, NY “mystery illness,” and the Pussy Riot case, to discussions of collaboration between the social and life sciences and many others. Here are the links to the features of 2013, along with excerpts.

Sarah D. Phillips, [Fukushima is not Chernobyl? Don't Be so Sure](#)

“Thanks to colleagues at the Japan College of Social Work in Tokyo, during October and November 2012 I visited Japan to participate in interviews, informal meetings, and conference roundtables with Fukushima evacuees, social workers, medical professionals, and community activists. It was an enlightening though sobering experience: many of the Fukushima stories I heard echoed nearly word-for-word narratives I have read and collected among persons affected by the Chernobyl accident in the former Soviet Union. Just like people who survived Chernobyl and the Soviet Union’s “rectification efforts,” Fukushima-affected persons and their advocates complain of government secrecy and misinformation, top-down decision making, generalized disorganization, and the social ostracism of nuclear accident “victims.””

Ryan J. Cook, [“I Didn't Want to be One of the Contaminated People”:
Confronting a Mystery Illness in a Rural American Landscape](#)

“A small-town high school in western New York became the focus of news media attention from late 2011 to early 2012. Nearly two dozen teens and one adult, all but one female, exhibited spasmodic movements and vocalizations with no easily detectable cause. The outbreak provoked a cascade of conflicts, leaving them largely unresolved even as the symptoms subsided and life returned to a semblance of normalcy for the afflicted and their neighbors. This post trains an ethnographic eye on the reporting of this “mystery illness”. It relies heavily on web-archived news,

mostly that which directly engaged with and was accessible to the principal actors—the afflicted and their families, local residents, medical practitioners and researchers, government and school officials, and the reporters themselves. The post sketches out the various narratives that these actors crafted to make sense of and grapple with the outbreak.”

Carl Elliott, [A Psychiatric Research Scandal and an Accidental Activist](#)

“In late 2003, a psychiatric researcher at the University of Minnesota used the threat of involuntary commitment to coerce Dan Markingson, a delusional, mentally ill young man experiencing a psychotic episode, into a highly profitable, AstraZeneca-funded clinical trial of antipsychotic drugs, despite the objections of his mother, Mary Weiss. For months Mary tried desperately to get Dan out of the trial, warning that his condition was deteriorating and that he was in danger of committing suicide. The psychiatrists ignored her, and five months into the trial, Dan killed himself in the most violent way imaginable.”

Anya Bernstein, [Post-Soviet Body Politics: Crime and Punishment in the Pussy Riot Affair](#)

“Strikingly, the Pussy Riot affair provoked unprecedented debates over the usefulness and varied meanings of *corporal* punishment in Russia, from flogging and birching, to even tarring and feathering. As time passed, the narratives around the trial increasingly came to focus specifically on the three convicted female bodies. These bodies first appeared to the public as anonymous and hidden behind their colorful balaklavas. They later came unmasked, only to be hidden again, this time behind iron bars and inside the glass cage where Russian courts keep defendants during hearings. What these bodies thematized and made increasingly visible to contemporary Russians and their observers around the world was the spectacular violence of sovereign power. Indeed, many Russians interpreted these young women as a threat to the very core of the Russian state and especially its recently elaborated doctrine of “sovereign democracy.” Drawing on the scholarship on sovereignty and the body—with an added attention to notions of gender at work in “the

political”—I argue that under conditions of postsocialist transformation in Russia, the bodies of the Pussy Riot participants became vital sites for the enactment of sovereignty for a wide range of citizens.”

Emily Sogn, [War Death and Epidemiological Imagination](#)

“The idea that military members may be more susceptible to death by self-harm than to enemy aggression challenges the quantitative coherence of the war’s official death tolls, archived and updated daily in digital monuments like the *New York Times*’ [Faces of Death](#) project or the *Washington Post*’s [Faces of the Fallen](#). While these projects facilitate the remembrance of a settled past, epidemiology gestures toward an anxious future. The present is left as an indeterminate space pregnant with risk, yet couched in the promise of insight and order offered by modeling past patterns and revealing chains of causality.”

Natalie Porter, [Bird Flu: The Circulation of Life and Death in a Postspecies World](#)

“My ethnographic study of bird flu management in Vietnam examines the intersections of humans and animals in contemporary global health. Between 2009-10, I traced a series of bird flu interventions from their development in policy arenas in the capital, Hanoi, through to their application among chicken farmers in a province in the northern Red River delta, and among duck farmers in a province in the southern Mekong delta. I looked specifically at strategies that took place at the “human-animal interface” —that is, strategies that altered existing relationships and interactions between people and poultry.”

Michele Friedner, [From disability stigma to disability value: Notes from research on disability in urban India](#)

“...I want to outline how I do not think that stigma and pollution are appropriate analytical or even descriptive concepts to use for

discussing disability in India (and perhaps elsewhere in the world as well). To do so, I focus on deaf and disability employment in urban India, a topic of much concern to many of my deaf and disabled friends as they search for meaningful and stable livelihoods. I suggest that thinking of disability in terms of value is perhaps more appropriate. However, in this discussion of disability value, I also want to voice concern about *what* kinds of value we are talking about and *who* benefits from this value.”

Michele Friedner, [\(Dis\)harmonious Socialities: Deaf multi-level marketing participation in India](#)

“In this post, I want to think about what the popularity of multi-level marketing businesses among Indian Sign Language-using deaf Indians means for how anthropologists and other social scientists analyze deaf worlds. In the current political economic moment, many deaf Indians are turning to multi-level marketing businesses for both livelihood and for imagining new deaf futures. There is the sense that such businesses articulate with deaf values such as working together, engaging in team work, and helping and supporting other deaf people....However, through joining such businesses and becoming members of distinct teams and hierarchical lineages within such businesses, deaf sociality becomes fraught and contested. More broadly, I argue that deaf multi-level marketing business participation provides an interesting site for (re)considering how we think about (dis)harmonious socialities. Indeed, it seems to me that while much medical anthropology scholarship has analyzed deaf and disability experiences through the lens of community and biosociality, it is important to consider how these might be categories that are highly ambivalent and tense in practice.”

Robert Lemelson, [Why I Make Ethnographic Films \(Instead of Writing a Monograph...\)](#)

“Orwell was once asked by his editor to address the question “why I write.” Orwell, in his typically clear and direct manner, listed a range of reasons, from personal ones such as sheer egotism and aesthetic enthusiasm, to much broader ones of historical impulse and political purpose. Recently, I began to ask myself a related

question: “why do I make ethnographic films?” I will follow one of Orwell’s leads as to why he writes (and by extension why I make films)—the sense of enjoyment, aesthetic or otherwise, one derives from creating films.”

Saiba Varma, [Springtime in Kashmir: A Tale of Two Protests](#)

“In this post, I reflect on the multiple temporalities that characterize militarized everyday life in Kashmir, including how these affected my own ethnographic field experience. In the process, I think through two rather different kinds of public “events” to understand how militarization is conceptualized and temporalized. Finally, I introduce another temporality—that of ethnographic writing—which I suggest has the potential to hold these events in tension, while also deviating from them in important ways.”

Des Fitzgerald, [On the Pragmatics and Politics of Collaborative Work between the Social and Life Sciences](#)

“For scholars in the humanities and interpretive social sciences, it sometimes seems like hardly a day goes by without some kind of exhortation towards ‘interdisciplinarity’ – a trend that has only become more pronounced during the ongoing realignment of public higher education in many countries...For those of us who work in/on/through topics in the life sciences, of course, these declarations have a special lure: given how practiced we have become at finding the gaps and interstices in the practices of the life sciences, many of us seem well positioned to collaborate with medical and biological colleagues. This opportunity is manifested in ethnographic accounts of interdisciplinary interventions (Rabinow and Bennett, 2009), in historical and genealogical accounts of the split between the bio-logical and socio-logical disciplines, (Renwick, 2012; Rose, 2013), and, of course, in a still-ongoing theoretical retrenchment between concepts, cultures, bodies and biologies (Wilson, 2004; Haraway, 2007). Somewhat less common, however, are some of the very basic and pragmatic outlines of what a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ moment of interdisciplinary labour between the social and life sciences would actually look like.”

Wenzel Geissler, Ann Kelley, Guillaume Lachenal and John Maton,
[The Archaeology of Past Futures, or Fieldwork by Fragments](#)

“We believe that excavating the built, archived, inhabited and haptic manifestations of the pasts of health institutions will expose alternative stories of colonial and postcolonial biopolitics and privilege new understandings of the changing visions and possibilities of contemporary global health. At the same time, approaching the past in such a tactile and affective manner opens our own renderings of past and present to critical reflection.”

Gillaume Lachenal, [Kin Porn](#)

“I know writing this is problematic. Kinshasa is too photogenic. It is, very much like Detroit, a city saturated with the aesthetic use of its debris by photographers and filmmakers. Very much like Detroit it is also saturated with elaborate reflections on the political and moral problems posed by this fascination – accusations of “ruin porn” responding to meditations on the “ruins of modernity”.”

Nicolas Henckes and Anne Lovell, [Robert Castel \(1933-2013\)](#)

“French sociologist and historian Robert Castel passed away on March 12, 2013, at the age of 79. An important figure in French intellectual life over the past two decades, he was an acute observer of the transformations of the relationship between contemporary societies and their vulnerable populations.”

Interviews and conversations

We’ve had interviews and conversations on the site in the past, but 2013 was a particularly good year for this genre. **Simon Williams** and **Matthew Wolf-Meyer** collaborated on a [three-part conversation](#) assessing the field of social studies of sleep, discussing their commonalities and differences,

and thinking about the future of sleep and its place in the social sciences and humanities in “[Longing for Sleep: Assessing the Place of Sleep in the 21st Century](#),” (See: [Part I](#), [Part II](#), [Part III](#)). Neely Meyers [interviewed ethnographic filmmaker and anthropologist Robert Lemelson](#) about his series *Afflictions: Culture and Mental Health in Indonesia*. A number of interviews focused on recently published books: Karen A. Frenkel [interviewed Karen Nakamura](#) about her book *A Disability of the Soul: An Ethnography of Schizophrenia and Mental Illness in Contemporary Japan*, Talia Gordon [spoke with Paul Brodwin](#) about *Everyday Ethics: Voices from the Front Line of Community Psychiatry*, and [I spoke to Todd Meyers about his recent book](#) *The Clinic and Elsewhere: Addiction, Adolescents and the Afterlife of Therapy*. There were also two interviews with senior scholars who have had a profound impact on the anthropology of medicine and science: [Vincent Duclos spoke to Allan Young](#) about the and [Todd Meyers interviewed Paul Rabinow](#) about his most recent books. We'll have many more interviews and conversations in the coming year.

Teaching resources

Whenever we have the opportunity, we try to post useful [resources for teaching](#) in the anthropology of medicine and science. This year McGill's Advanced Institute in Cultural Psychiatry made available the videos of lectures from two of their excellent courses: “[Cultural Psychiatry: A Critical Introduction](#)” and “[Critical Neuroscience](#).” Jeff Snodgrass shared two [syllabi on culture and mental health](#) and I posted the syllabus for my graduate seminar “[Illness and subjectivity](#).” Finally, Michael Oldani [wrote about the documentary “Off Label”](#) – a film which would make a great addition to any course on medical anthropology or culture and psychiatry. If you have a syllabus you'd like to share or other kinds of resources for teaching, please get in touch.

Conference reports

Our conference reports this year included two accounts of the Joint EASA/SMA medical anthropology conference held in Tarragona, as well as pieces on workshops and conferences which highlighted the relationships between the medical social sciences and humanities and other disciplines and areas of expertise — ranging from women's health advocacy, to criminal law and HIV, to the behavioral sciences and policy.

Margaret E. MacDonald, [The biopolitics of maternal mortality: Anthropological observations from the Women Deliver Conference in Kuala Lumpur](#)

“In this article I will reflect on the biopolitics of global campaigns to reduce maternal mortality in low resource settings since the 1980s and describe a shift I have observed in the “humanitarian reason” (Fassin 2011) of such efforts. For more than a decade I have been conducting anthropological research on international development policy with regard to maternal mortality. In May 2013 I attended a conference called Women Deliver in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. [Women Deliver](#) is one of the most influential women’s health advocacy organisations in the world. The 2013 conference brought together representatives of UN agencies, national Ministries of Health, non-governmental organisations, private philanthropic foundations, professional associations, and corporate sponsors to discuss the latest clinical research, medical technologies, policy proposals and program implementation strategies to reduce maternal mortality in low resource settings around the world. Meetings like Women Deliver are ethnographic sites for me — places to observe and participate in an international network of advocates, policy makers, and practitioners.”

Jennifer Carroll, [A Report on the Joint EASA/SMA Conference “Encounters and Engagements: Creating New Agendas for Medical Anthropology”](#)

“From June 12-14, 2013, the [American Anthropological Association](#)’s [Society for Medical Anthropology](#) (SMA) and the [European Association of Social Anthropologists](#)’ (EASA) [Medical Anthropology Network](#) held a joint conference for their members, hosted by the Department of Anthropology, Philosophy and Social Work at the [Universitat Rovira i Virgili](#) (URV), Tarragona, Spain. The original conference description claimed that “location and format” would “promote the exploration of convergences and divergences between theories, practices, schools and regions across the broader community of medical anthropology scholars and practitioners globally.” In this regard, the conference did not disappoint.”

Livia Garofalo, [Sharing “impediments and catalysts”: notes on the MAYS meeting in Tarragona, June 10-11 2013](#)

“From June 10th to June 14th, the Catalan city of Tarragona, Spain, saw its population rise by about 500, as medical anthropologists from over 51 countries arrived for two associated conferences, the [Medical Anthropology Young Scholars \(MAYS\) Annual Meeting](#) and the [Joint International EASA-SMA Medical Anthropology Conference](#). While the EASA-SMA conference certainly took the central stage, the MAYS Annual Meeting was an important part of my conference experience in Tarragona, as it was for many other students who made the trek to Spain in early June and convened at the Universitat Rovira i Virgili campus. Because the spotlight mostly fell on the “Encounters and Engagements” meeting, I would like to dedicate this post to discuss my impressions as a first-time presenter and attendee at MAYS.”

Celina Callahan-Kapoor, [Medicine and Science, Unpredicted](#)

“It is somewhat predictable that at a weekend-long workshop medical anthropologists and STS scholars would, first, talk a lot about bodies and, second, discuss the politics of their knowledge production. What is not predictable is what happens when the workshop *also* includes a few cultural anthropologists, philosophers, and medical doctors; and allows a much longer-than-usual amount of time for paper presentations. I can tell you what happens. Curious and provocative conversations, challenges to taken-for-granted ways of theorizing the world, and productive conversations that begin a collective process of re-drawing the borders around what might count as “medical anthropology.” This is what happened at the “Medicine on the Edge” workshop held at UC Santa Cruz (UCSC) in the beginning of May, hosted by UCSC medical anthropologists [Matthew Wolf-Meyer](#) and [Nancy Chen](#).”

Celina Callahan-Kapoor, [Invisible Interlocutors and the Savage Slot: Conversations at “Medicine on the Edge”](#)

“Michel-Rolph Trouillot was present as a kind of invisible interlocutor at the “[Medicine on the Edge](#)” workshop held at UC

Santa Cruz in early May of this year....At this workshop, it was a cultural anthropologist who raised the thorniest questions: does our mode of inquiry simply produce another “savage slot”? Is it even possible to extricate oneself from liberalism’s fantasies of progress, and progress narratives’ need of the suffering? Talking through issues of the politics of representation, aesceticization of suffering, book-cover images, and Trouillot’s “imagination of the West” was complicated. Despite the trickiness, a lively discussion ensued that took an important turn: as academics, we are not now nor have we ever been somehow outside of a more “real” world where the phenomena we study happen.”

Bryony Enright, [From Chicken Sheds to Random Control Trials: A Commentary on the “Bio-Social Methods for a Vitalist Social Science” Workshop](#)

“The “Bio-Social Methods for a Vitalist Social Science” Workshop – held at the University of Birmingham on July 16, 2013 - aimed to reaffirm the role of the social sciences in a time when insights from behavioural science such as social psychology, behavioural economics, environmental psychology, neuroeconomics, and neuroscience are increasing being used to justify new policy mechanisms in the realm of ‘behaviour change’, new target audiences, new training schemes for civil servants, and new research funding priorities.”

Doerte Bemme, [Socialism and the Psy-ences: The Past, the Post-, and the Beyond](#)

“The conference “[From the New Socialist Person to Global Mental Health: The Psy-ences and Mental Health in East Central Europe and Eurasia](#)” (April 29th-30th 2013, University of Chicago)* set out to examine the shifting objects of knowledge and programs of intervention associated with the psy-ences in the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe and Eurasia... In Eastern Europe and Eurasia, these formations of expertise were strongly affected by socio-political changes spanning the state-socialist and post-socialist periods, throughout which these disciplines’ relationship to the state, their modes of knowledge production and the epistemic order and subjectivities they contributed to

underwent dramatic ruptures.”

Alex McClelland, [Research at the medico-legal borderland: perspectives on HIV and criminal law](#)

“In recent years, the criminalization of HIV transmission, exposure and non-disclosure has become a hot topic among those working within the global AIDS milieu. Social scientists have become increasingly attentive to the complex and varied consequences and impacts of HIV criminalization. Not surprisingly, at this year’s Association of the Social Science and Humanities on HIV (ASSHH) Conference there was a wide variety of innovative work on the issue. A majority of the research presented from social scientists working in the two countries with some of the greatest number of per-capita criminal charges and prosecutions related to HIV non-disclosure and exposure: the United States and Canada.”

Web Roundup

“[Web Roundup](#)” is a section that we’ve had for a number of years, for which contributors put together a set of links to recent online texts or other pieces, sometimes framed around a particular topic. The web roundups this year were a particularly vibrant and interesting bunch, thanks to Melanie Boeckmann, who edits the section, and the contributors: Matthew Dalstrom, Emily Goldsher-Diamond, Cassandra Hartblay, Branwyn Poleykett, and Lily Shapiro.

Branwyn Poleykett, [Global health futures and hidden toxic histories](#)

“The Guardian began the year with a [series](#) of articles on innovation in global health. Devices such as “[nanopatches](#)” for pain free vaccinations that can be self administered are striking examples of technologies whose development and course to market can shed light on the role of design in possible futures of global health. As Peter Redfield has argued, these technologies materialize powerful desires for healthy futures – the nanopatch is

evocatively described as “[vaccine utopia](#).”

Cassandra Hartblay, [Reading Literature as Medical Anthropologists](#)

“This month’s Web Round-up gathers reviews of recent works of fiction that engage medical anthropological themes. You’ll also find some links to writings about anthropology and fiction from around the blogosphere.”

Lily Shapiro, [Technology and storytelling](#)

“Inspired by last month’s post, I decided to format this post loosely around the theme of *storytelling*. Storytelling is fundamental to many of our lives, both academic and otherwise, and numerous new formats for telling, collecting, and archiving stories are cropping up. This post focuses on the ways in which technology is shaping and changing the kinds of stories we tell, and the kinds of stories we have access to.”

Matthew Dalstrom, [Abortion Rights and Patent Laws](#)

“This month’s Web Roundup is dedicated to the role that legislation and the courts have in promoting or restricting access to medical care. In particular, I will focus briefly on the passage of anti-abortion legislation in the US and a few recent court cases that are testing the limits pharmaceutical patents. While not overtly theoretical in nature, I have found these events to be particularly useful for discussing critical medical anthropology in undergraduate courses.”

Melanie Boeckmann, [Public and Private](#)

“The divide between public and private, and questions such as: *Is what’s private really always political?* inspire this month’s short

web roundup.”

Emily Goldsher-Diamond, [Prosthetics in Public](#)

“[W]hat ideas (and imaginaries) about future bodies circulate publicly? Specifically, several new pieces on cutting edge assistive technology offer the image of a future body that is at once aesthetically familiar and technically advanced.”

Emily Goldsher-Diamond, [Faster Than a Speeding Bullet](#)

“In searching for superman, perhaps we are best served by looking not at capacity, ability or even biomedical superiority, but at exceptions, deviations and the unforeseen.”

Matthew Dalstrom, [Access is the Problem](#)

“With the roll out of the Affordable Care Act and the persistent discussion/debate surrounding cost, access, and quality of care, it seems only natural to focus this Web Roundup around the topic of healthcare. In particular, I want to briefly discuss three ways that increasing access to medical care has been discussed in the news this month.”

Lily Shapiro, [Our automated lives](#)

“The question raised by automation has fundamentally to do with what it means to be human in a world where, for instance, 3-D printers can print [prosthetic limbs](#) and [faces](#). As well as, for that matter, [food](#). Where the topics on Twitter are controlled by bots, rather than individual humans. Somewhere between 5-10% of Twitter accounts are fake, that is, run by programmed bots. Many bots can be owned by one person and, for a fee, made to follow stars, politicians, news stories, etc. And although that might not

seem like a very high percentage, it's enough to influence trending topics.”

In the journals

And finally, a section which many colleagues have told me they find particularly useful for navigating recent publications in medical anthropology, STS and related fields: “[In the Journals](#).” A huge thanks to section editor Aaron Seaman and the “In the Journals” contributors: Jason Alley, Sultana Banulescu, Melanie Boeckmann, Lara Braff, Basak Can, Jessica Cooper, Elizabeth Lewis, Francis Mckay, Thurka Sangaramoorthy, and Anna Zogas.

[End of Year Round Up \(Dec-Jan\)](#), Jason Alley

[New Year's edition](#) (Dec-Jan), Melanie Boeckmann

[February \(Part 1\)](#), Jason Alley

[February \(Part 2\)](#), Sultana Banulescu

[March \(Part 1\)](#), Thurka Sangaramoorthy

[March \(Part 2\)](#), Jessica Cooper

[April \(Part 1\)](#), Melanie Boeckmann

[April \(Part 2\)](#), Anna Zogas

[May \(Part 1\)](#), Francis Mckay

[May \(Part 2\)](#), Basak Can

[June \(Part 1\)](#), Lara Braff

[June \(Part 2\)](#), Elizabeth Lewis

[July](#), Jason Alley

[August](#), Aaron Seaman

[September \(Part 1\)](#), Anna Zogas

[September \(Part 2\)](#), Melanie Boeckmann

[October \(Part 1\)](#), Basak Can

[October \(Part 2\)](#), Francis Mckay

[November \(Part 1\)](#), Thurka Sangaramoorthy

[November \(Part 2\)](#), Jessica Cooper

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