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EDITORIAL NOTE

## Material deceptions and the qualities of time

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As we pen this editors' introduction for the final issue of our first year as a collective and in the journal's transition, we are delighted to announce that Raminder Kaur, of the University of Sussex, and Andrew Kipnis of the Chinese University of Hong Kong have agreed to join us on the journal collective. Unfortunately, this also is the final issue on which Deborah Durham will be a member of the editorial collective. Deborah had been trying to step down for some time, and it was only her abiding loyalty to—and belief in—*HAU's* mission that kept her on as we struggled to transition to a more manageable and equitable governance model. We are all profoundly grateful to Debbie for her vital role in managing this process: she has been a tireless worker on manuscripts, a creative and generous intellectual interlocutor for our contributors, and a priceless repository of institutional memory about the journal's recent past. She will be sorely missed, and we wish her well in her endeavors and hope that someday in the future she may return to our ranks.

Scott MacLochlainn, in "Brand displaced: Trademarking, unmarking, and making the generic," examines the paradoxes embedded in the production of "prop brands," non-trademarked goods for use in movies and television. Fake brands encompass cartons simply labelled "milk," as well as highly specific "Duff Beer"—which comes with an (imaginary) factory, and its own advertising, to enhance the verisimilitude of "The Simpsons" animated show in which it is displayed. Sometimes these objects mimic the appearance of branded consumer goods in actual circulation beyond the media world, but in other cases they become "originals" of sorts, taking on a life of their own. In a case discussed by MacLochlainn, which vastly expands the discussion of simulacra inaugurated by the work of Baudrillard, a prop brand beer becomes the object of a "brandjacking" lawsuit heard

in the Australian courts. The case pitted the 20th Century Fox media company against an Australian brewery for trademark infringement in the production of a "Duff Beer" brand, in a bizarre case of life imitating art. MacLochlainn's study of these on-screen products asks us to consider the place of fake-marked and generic objects in the constitution of meaning, not only of the items themselves, but of the social worlds in which they circulate, as they help render imaginary characters more "human." These props remind us of the letter circulating in the "onlife" world discussed by Raminder Kaur (2019; the term is Luciano Floridi's), and outline what Ilana Gershon (2019) calls "porous social orders," as the boundaries between a world made of fantasies and props and the lived one are recreated and crossed, and the human imagination articulates with humanized materiality.

Other research articles in this issue also flirt with ideas of generic and branded, or specific. "Deception in practice: Hunting and bullfighting entanglements in southern Spain" by Santiago Montero Cruzada, Esteban Ruiz-Ballesteros and Alberto del Campo Tejedor, for example, examines practices of using decoys in human entanglements with animals in Spain. Hunters use a "tamed" partridge to attract a wild pair: the tamed bird sings sexual provocations, thereby challenging the pair's nesting territory. The tamed partridge is named, attributed a sophisticated understanding of its role, and is thought to have a distinctive personality as well. In a sense, the decoy is a fake: it mimics the behavior of wild animals in order to facilitate their entrapment by their human trainers. It also is a kind of camouflage, in the sense that it makes invisible its identity as a trained decoy among its wild brethren. Montero Cruzada et al. ask what forms of "deception"—among which they also include the *muleta*, or flag used to distract a charging bull in the *corrida*—mean for understanding human–animal interactions, given that



deception is integral to ethological and well as ethnological life. The bird (and also the *muleta*, in its cross-wise way) must retain its identity as a “wild animal,” its nature as a decoy to be used, and its identification as a named individual, in ways that both trouble and reaffirm the distinctions between them. For Dominique Raby, in “Calling through the water jar,” generic items, as everyday and unremarkable as the milk carton in MacLochlainn’s article—a water jar from the house, articles of clothing—become intermediaries in relationships. Raby draws on the Deleuzian notion of assemblages to describe how humans, animals, and objects are bound, in practices, through affective force: these assemblages are not so much “agentive” as intersubjective, transferring the force of feeling in relationships among people and nonhuman persons and things. The common water jar is called upon, at need, to become the focus of desire, labor, and relationships: not generic, but enmeshed in a complex social world. In this aspect, her work continues longstanding anthropological engagements with materiality, personhood, and meaning, poetically evoked in Janet Hoskins’s *Biographical objects* (1998), but also in the semiotic exploration of objects and their bundled meanings and qualities in Nancy Munn’s *Fame of Gawa* (1992), and in Webb Keane’s work (e.g., 2003: 414).

In Jeremy Jones’s article, “Headless queues: Disorder and disorientation in a Zimbabwean market,” the queue becomes a spatiotemporal site for responding to, discussing, poking fun at, and commenting on the state of society in a historical moment in which Zimbabwe has become the epitome of a state in “crisis” in Africa, experiencing massive inflation, scarcity, and other harbingers of precarious livelihoods. In general, queues are emblems of order—an organized mode of waiting for one’s turn, with a beginning and an end. In Zimbabwe, however, they have become evidence of profound disorder in society—a society without a “head,” direction, or purpose. The queues become a tragicomic site for contemplating the discordant relationship of past and present: the future, the queue’s head, seems to have no place in them. Jones shows people joining queues without a clear notion of what awaits them once they reach the front, simply out of habit in practicing a technique of living that involves waiting for anything, something, desirable and of value. Sometimes there is nothing at the end of the queue worth waiting for, and in the wry jokes people tell, this can be something altogether unpredictable (such as “queue sex”), or even death. In this, Jones joins a distinguished literary genealogy from Samuel

Beckett’s play, *Waiting for Godot*, to Franz Kafka’s essay, “Before the law,” in which the waiting itself is the subject of reflection, as well as the point of the exercise. In *Waiting*, his book on tense popular expectations of socioeconomic and political changes in the waning years of Apartheid in South Africa, Vincent Crapanzano (1985) explored the qualities of time in a state of anticipation of the unknown. People whose lives and prospects surely would be dramatically reshaped by the end of Apartheid were waiting for a future whose contours they could not delineate (see, too, Janeja and Bandak 2018). Jones’s article suggests a different situation, one linked to the historical conjunctures of extreme economic precariousness, as outlined, for example, in the work of Jane Guyer (of which more below). In Jones’s account, this is managed with humor and self-reflection.

Time, temporality, and practices of waiting are the subject of two other research articles published in this issue. Erica Weiss and Nissim Mizrahi, in “A time of peace: Divergent temporalities in Israeli-Palestinian peace initiatives,” contrast the chronotopes (in Bakhtin’s usage of this concept as “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships,” Bakhtin 1981: 84) at work in two peace initiatives in Israel. In the dominant one, liberal activist Israelis look toward an event that transitions Israel (and Palestine) from a state of war to a state of peace. For others, it is a matter of faith to believe that such a major move from one world to another can occur only with the coming of the Messiah. For the latter group, peace is unstable and impermanent, requiring constant work—and not the dramatic establishment of two states in a state of peace. Benedict Anderson (1983) associated the notion of a developmental, cause-and-effect, linear model of temporality with the end of dynastic monarchies and the rise of nation-states. This might seem to be the moment that liberal activists in the peace movement want to bring about, with the establishment of two states. For the others, however, two nations in two states will lead only to ongoing conflict, which can be better managed in a single state while waiting for the world to change.

Michael Ulfstjerne’s subjects, in “Iron bubbles,” are fully immersed in the state—civil servants working in Ordos, China—one of those cities that the media often suggested was an investment bubble ready to collapse at any time (which it did). Ulfstjerne examines how the sense of persistent growth—not a bubble ready to collapse but an “iron bubble”—was sustained by civil servants, and others in the city who were invested in its continued



success. Civil servants in Ordos could (or would) not imagine a failed future because for them, the future was already present: they drove on roads that were nearly empty, but already too narrow for the planned traffic in the new administrative center; they scheduled fishing expeditions in the lake next to the (unbuilt, but well-planned) new apartments; and they toasted each other at banquets that consolidated relationships built around ever-increasing and intersecting configurations of loans and debts, as if their investments had already come to fruition. They lived the future in the present. In a contrasting imbrication of economic futures in the present, Jane Guyer reflected on the ways in which the mirror inversion of this Chinese miracle—the structural adjustment regimes of hardship imposed by international donors on highly indebted African economies—produced a “combination of fantasy futurism and enforced presentism” in which the optimistic rhetoric of long-term economic growth on display in the media belied a “desperately disturbed” present (Guyer 2007: 410). In a way, Guyer anticipates what the afterlife of the situation analyzed by Ulfstjerne might entail—what happens after the bubble bursts, and the debts come due? This article contributes to a productive strain of anthropological conversations on the articulation of contemporary economic phenomena with different temporalities, and on the roles sentiment, happiness, and pleasure play in economic lives (see also *HAU* 5 (3) on happiness, time, and materiality).

With the colloquium on “Mafiacraft: How to do things with silence,” we return to the theme of deception (and of the decoy) in some of this issue’s research articles. Mafiacraft, Puccio-Den argues, “is a material history of moral ideas” that bind together members of the “mafia,” but also are mobilized by the Italian judges who, especially from the 1980s onwards, managed to turn mafiosi into collaborators and informants. Silence is the glue that shapes collusion in this parallel world, but it inevitably ends up being corrosive, as Michael Herzfeld points out in his response to this article. Mafia is an inverted paradigm of witchcraft, Puccio-Den argues: While in the latter deadly outcomes can be produced by words (as Jeanne Favret-Saada brilliantly showed in her 1981 book), with the former deadly outcomes are shrouded in silence and brought about through allusive and encoded performative utterances. In parallel with efforts to allocate responsibility for acts of witchcraft, judges and the NGOs that increasingly gave voice to the mafia’s victims in public protests against its criminal activities tried to

penetrate this shroud of silence, only to become themselves its next victims, as happened with judges Falcone and Borsellino. However, Puccio-Den also discusses the work of photographers who painstakingly documented mafia crimes, and of relatives of victims and their supporters, who through practices of memorialization (such as setting up shrines at murder sites) have also engaged in other sorts of performative utterances to combat the silence.

In his response, Herzfeld underscores the importance of these gestures, and the danger that scholarship on the mafia—similarly to that on witchcraft—may become embroiled in the very same erasures it seeks to analyze. He also contextualizes Puccio-Den’s contribution within a broader anthropological literature on witchcraft, and on mafia accusations (particularly in the sociolinguistic work on Camorra trials by Jaquemet [2009]), and on the strategic and powerful uses of silence. Jane Schneider’s response enriches our understanding of Puccio-Den’s article by providing a wealth of ethnographic and historical details, ranging from the modalities of oaths to silence and legal categorizations of mafia-related crimes, to the importance of a global perspective on mafia activities beyond Sicily. As Schneider, Santoro, and Ferme (in her introduction to the Colloquium) point out, scholarly analyses of the mafia date back to the late nineteenth century, but the former argues that the struggles for land reform in southern Italy following WWII are especially important to understanding the historical transformation of the modern mafia. She also points to the mafia’s involvement in global drug-trafficking circuits (and, earlier, in the smuggling of alcohol and prescription medications during and after Prohibition in the United States) as key to understanding its expanding practices of opacity, and the increasing violence of mafia wars focused on gaining and controlling larger shares of lucrative markets. As Peter Geschiere argued for the proliferation of new forms of witchcraft in Africa (1997), there is something quintessentially “modern” about these opaque deployments of power and wealth, which makes them especially well-suited for operating within the opacity of modern states and financial circuits.

The mutually constitutive relationship between the Italian state and mafia-type associations is addressed in Marco Santoro’s response, which ranges from an examination of the ways in which the state’s power to name (for instance, a phenomenon called “mafia”) produces the very thing it seeks to identify, to its ability to provide spaces—interstices—within which the mafia can



proliferate, including in its legal and juridical institutions. Indeed, leaving to others the troubling of parallels between mafiacraft and witchcraft, Santoro argues for an understanding of the tensions between the former and statecraft, as well as with craft in general, understood as a particular skill or technique that attains a practiced familiarity without practitioners elaborating it in a conscious, reflexive manner (hence the mafioso cited in the opening of Puccio-Den's article, who denies any knowledge of what mafia is). Mafiacraft for Santoro, then, becomes an "an elementary form of politics," one of an array of "state effects," which in Timothy Mitchell's use of this expression largely centered around the ways in which the economic sphere was productive of the "thingness" and solidity of "the state," despite the heterogeneity of institutions and practices collected under this label (Mitchell 1999). Early on in his response, Harry Walker diverges with Santoro on the articulation of mafiacraft with statecraft, and focuses instead on whether it might be productive to think of a "mafia effect"—again echoing Mitchell—which shapes behaviors and attitudes, and is stable enough to enable the allocation of responsibility (for instance, for mafia crimes), even in the absence of a clear answer to the question of what the mafia is, or who a mafioso is. Framing his discussion within the context of larger legal debates about the allocation of criminal responsibility within hierarchies of obedience that distribute culpability along chains of command, Walker underscores the tendency to associate these discussions with individual agency and intentionality, while anthropologists have long observed that such responsibilities are often more distributed (on this, see, too, Clarke 2009: 3–4). Walker concludes that the competing processes of responsabilization at work in the tension between judicial institutions that seek responsibility for crimes in military-like chains of command, and individual culpability that some mafiosi do not recognize in their obedience to orders, oaths, and codes of honor, shape a kind of "moral community," a topic at the heart of Puccio-Den's argument. Collectively, contributions to this colloquium advance our thinking about the performative work of silence and secrecy in shaping fields of power within modern states and beyond.

The book symposium on Michael Cepek's *Life in oil: Cofán survival in the petroleum fields of Amazonia*, takes us away from deathly silence toward a cacophony of chaos, as we are made witness to the devastating effects of oil on an Indigenous community in Ecuadorian Amazonia. Here we are in a world saturated with the very vis-

ible and material extraction of a coveted natural resource. Extraction is nothing new to Amazonia, the history of which is one of boom-and-bust cycles of rubber, timber, gold, and now oil. If, as Michael Watts reminds us, there is a certain despondent inevitability to how the agents of oil companies find their way into "communities with little knowledge, experience or understanding of why these people are there and for how long," so that oilfields the world over all sort of look or feel the same, this synchronic likeness of oilfields here intersects with the colonial diachrony of neotropical extraction.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, readers familiar with the ethnography of the region will recognize the ambivalence Cepek reveals as he describes how the Cofán succeed (always partially and imperfectly) in putting "oil and its cascade of consequences" (Amelia Fiske) at the service of their ethical projects (but see Angus Lyall on "ambivalence"). Transforming tragedy into joy may not be unique to Amazonia, but few regions of the world have been the object of a project of colonization that construes it as nothing but the source of raw materials. Yet Cepek's book reminds us, and this Symposium makes explicit, that it would be a mistake to simply subsume oilfields as one more extractive endeavor (perhaps reminding us that different materials will always resist our sweeping socio-historical gaze). With the possible exception of certain periods of gold rush, the infrastructure of oil and its attending "gringo paternalism" (Santiago Giraldo) knows few parallels in the region. Its environmental impact is very different from that of rubber and even timber extraction, and its social impact on the lives of an Indigenous people is much more enduring and, arguably, ineluctable, which may make the Cofán's story of engagement with oil appear to be, as Juan Javier Rivera Andía observes, "a chronicle of an abdication."

All commentators to the Symposium recognize, however, that the great merit of Cepek's book is to provide a dense, ethnographically unrelenting "phenomenology of oil" (Michael Watts)—and, of course, of the people who live it. Cepek has carried out fieldwork among the Cofán for over two decades, returning almost yearly to Ecuador. His research covers the gamut of Cofán experiences, paying as much attention to the geopolitical forces that shape their lives as to the particularities that are "the actual phenomenal forms in which people come to know, to be harmed by, and to react against such forces as

1. References here refer to this issue's Book Symposium.





extractive industries.” The personal nature and empirical rigor of his ethnography of oil among the Cofán is a powerful reminder of what long-term ethnography and political commitment to a people and a place can bring to anthropological analysis, as much as to the biography of the ethnographer. In a time when anthropologists often carry out research in many different places throughout their careers—often, of course, for perfectly good reasons—it is refreshing to be reminded that we have so much to learn from an ethnography with the time-depth and ethnographic acumen of *Life in oil*.

As much of Cepek’s book is about making visible the ravages of oil and the creativity of those who experience it, it benefits greatly from the wonderful photographs of Bear Guerra, which accompany Cepek’s prose. We are happy to publish one of his photographs as the cover to this issue of *HAU*.

Finally, this issue includes another Amazonian study, ‘The construction of the person in indigenous Brazilian societies,’ originally published in 1979 and translated from the Portuguese for the first time by Catherine V. Howard. This article by Anthony Seeger, Roberto DaMatta, and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro is a classic of Amazonian anthropology, one of the pioneering attempts at finding a specific idiom for describing the peoples of the region. There has long been a demand among Amazonianists for an English translation of this article, but we feel it will be of interest to non-Amazonianists as well: by drawing attention to the body and its substances not as a foil to Structuralism, but as a development of it, the authors’ approach to the body was conceived in isolation from (and almost at a tangent to) the spate of anthropology of embodiment and agentive bodies that appeared more or less at the same time.

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