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THE LIFE AND DEATH OF THE SECRET

GUEST EDITORS: LENORE MANDERSON, MARK DAVIS, AND CHIP COLWELL

On Secrecy, Disclosure, the Public, and the Private in Anthropology
Hidden in Plain Sight: Children Born of Wartime Sexual Violence
Partial Secrets
Lying the Truth: Practices of Confession and Recognition
War Stories and Troubled Peace: Revisiting Some Secrets of Northern Uganda
Veterans’ Homecomings: Secrecy and Postdeployment Social Becoming
When Privacy and Secrecy Collapse into One Another, Bad Things Can Happen
The Rebirth of Secrets and the New Care of the Self in Depressed Japan
Repatriation, Knowledge Flows, and Museum Power Structures
The Disclosure of Soviet Repression in Museums as an Excess
Digital 3-D, Museums, and the Reconciling of Culturally Diverse Knowledges
Publicity, Transparency, and the Circulation Engine: The Media Sting in India
Secrets from Whom? Following the Money in Global Health Finance
Secrecy’s Softwares

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The Life and Death of the Secret

Leslie C. Aiello
The Life and Death of the Secret: Wenner-Gren Symposium Supplement 12

Introduction
Lenore Manderson, Mark Davis, Chip Colwell, and Tanja Ahlin
On Secrecy, Disclosure, the Public, and the Private in Anthropology: An Introduction to Supplement 12

Private Lives: Strategies of Revelation and Shades of Truth
Kimberly Theidon
Hidden in Plain Sight: Children Born of Wartime Sexual Violence

Corinne Squire
Partial Secrets

Cristiana Giordano
Lying the Truth: Practices of Confession and Recognition

Sverker Finnström
War Stories and Troubled Peace: Revisiting Some Secrets of Northern Uganda

Opening Up the Private: The State and the Unsettling of the Secret

Birgitte Refslund Sørensen
Veterans’ Homecomings: Secrecy and Postdeployment Social Becoming

Don Kulick
When Privacy and Secrecy Collapse into One Another, Bad Things Can Happen

http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/CA
Junko Kitanaka
The Rebirth of Secrets and the New Care of the Self in Depressed Japan S251

State Revelations and the Framing of Knowledge

Chip Colwell
Curating Secrets: Repatriation, Knowledge Flows, and Museum Power Structures S263

Eglė Rindzevičiūtė
The Overflow of Secrets: The Disclosure of Soviet Repression in Museums as an Excess S276

Gwyneira Isaac
Perclusive Alliances: Digital 3-D, Museums, and the Reconciling of Culturally Diverse Knowledges S286

Ravi Sundaram
Publicity, Transparency, and the Circulation Engine: The Media Sting in India S297

In the Power of Secrets

Susan L. Erikson
Secrets from Whom? Following the Money in Global Health Finance S306

Sarah Nuttall and Achille Mbembe
Secrecy’s Softwares S317
The Life and Death of the Secret
Wenner-Gren Symposium Supplement 12

Leslie C. Aiello

The Life and Death of the Secret is the 149th symposium in the Wenner-Gren symposium series and the twelfth symposium to be published as an open-access supplementary issue of the Foundation’s journal, Current Anthropology. The symposium, titled “The Death of the Secret: The Public and Private in Anthropology,” was organized by Lenore Manderson (University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, and Monash University, Australia), Mark Davis (Monash University, Australia), and Chip Colwell (Denver Museum of Nature and Science, U.S.A.). It was held March 14–20, 2014, at the Tivoli Palacio de Seteais, Sintra, Portugal (fig. 1).

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The main aim of this symposium was to examine the complex interrelationships between public and private life and specifically to examine what constitutes a secret in the modern world. The question of secrecy was catapulted into public prominence in 2010 when WikiLeaks, under the editorship of Julian Assange, published US military and diplomatic documents leaked by Chelsea Manning (then Bradley Edward Manning). Wenner-Gren symposia are organized more than a year in advance of the meeting date, and the organization for “The Death of the Secret” was well under way in June 2013 when Manning’s trial began and another major intelligence breach occurred. Edward Snowden passed a large number of classified National Security Association (NSA) documents to journalists who disclosed some of the material to media outlets. Since this time, the question of privacy versus transparency has been continuously in the public spotlight. “The Death of the Secret” symposium offered a timely opportunity for anthropologists to think critically about what constitutes a secret not only when megadata impact average citizens but also across what might be described as more traditional spheres of anthropological interest and concern.

“The Death of the Secret” symposium brought together 16 anthropologists and social scientists working in the fields of health, museology, media, and cultural studies. The issues explored included what constitutes a secret in varied social settings and public institutions. What are the key ethical issues surrounding secrecy and transparency, and how do secrets come into being and cease to exist? And very importantly, what are the politics surrounding transparency and exposure in society in general and in the contexts with which anthropologists work in their professional lives? Topics addressed ranged widely from issues of repatriation or replication of objects of high cultural importance to indigenous communities (Colwell 2015; Isaac 2015), to questions of secrecy and secrets emanating from warfare (Finnström 2015; Sørensen 2015; Theidon 2015), to the manner in which new technology can strip people of privacy (Sundaram 2015), to systems of financial transparency (or not) in global health (Erickson 2015).

In the long history of the Wenner-Gren symposium program, prior meetings have touched on similar issues related to secrecy and the politics surrounding the public and the private. For example, one of the first meetings held at Burg Wartenstein castle, Austria, in 1961 was “Anthropology and the Conditions of Individual and Social Freedom” (Bidney 1963). In organizing this meeting, Bidney built on Bronislaw Malinowski’s work *Freedom and Civilization* (1944) and focused on the problem of freedom in society from the perspective of anthropological theory. More recently, in 2002 a symposium on ethics (“Beyond Ethics: Anthropological Moralities on the Boundaries of the Public and the Professional”; Meskell and Pels 2005) came closest to the current topic. Its main purpose was to explore the ethical dimensions of everyday anthropological practice and the tensions that arise between the interests of stakeholders and the production of anthropological knowledge for the academy. A decade later, the papers in this issue are an ideal companion to this earlier work and illustrate the development of anthropological thinking in the context of the public and the private in the academy and beyond.

We are always looking for new ideas from all areas of anthropology for future Foundation-sponsored and Foundation-organized symposia and eventual CA publication. Please contact us with your ideas and a proposal. Information about the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the symposium program, application procedures and deadlines, and what constitutes a good symposium topic can be found on the Foundation’s website (http://wennergren.org/programs/international-symposia).

References Cited


On Secrecy, Disclosure, the Public, and the Private in Anthropology
An Introduction to Supplement 12

by Lenore Manderson, Mark Davis, Chip Colwell, and Tanja Ahlin

Anthropology and cognate disciplines have long addressed the complex and troubled relations of public and private life, supplying insight into such matters as identity, politics, and civic life. In the multiple, interconnected settings of an intricately globalized and mediated twenty-first century, how secrets are made, maintained, and broken remains vitally important to social science and its publics. The special issue we introduce here brings together anthropologists and social scientists working in health, museology, media, and cultural studies to interrogate secrets and secrecy, the private and the public, in diverse yet interrelated domains and national contexts. Our introduction explores ways to think critically of secrets and secrecy and related ramifications for private and public life by highlighting some key ethical, intellectual, and epistemological complexities. We consider the contemporary forms of life of the secret in social settings and public institutions and then consider how secrets die, in the small metaphorical sense that they cease to exist in their telling, but also in the more literal sense in which secrets and privacy are displaced by social systems built on “big data” and the politics of transparency and exposure. We chart also the politics of secrecy, illuminating how secrets may be revealed through disclosure and exposure across multiple forms of media and myriad public spheres today.

In anthropology, secrecy and secrets are long-standing themes. The knowledge we produce is founded on our ability to elicit information: to extract specialist knowledge systems; to reveal the secret codes of language and communication within everyday and supernatural worlds; to make visible the tacit, inherent, and elusive; to unpick the secrets of the long past. We traffic in secrets of the psyche, society, religion, economic and political systems, and cultural and material artifacts. In doing so, we continuously face dilemmas of what to tell and what to keep secret (Simmel 1906), of the degree to which our methods should involve secrecy, and of the ethical predicaments of these issues (Ellis 2007; Fluehr-Lobban 2013).

How secrets are made, maintained, or betrayed in public and private life and why secrets are kept and shared is as important today—in multiple interconnected settings in an intricately globalized twenty-first century—as it was for earlier anthropologists and for other social researchers. Similarly, the politics and ethics of owning and showing things that are secret, honored, or sacred have become intense, asking material anthropologists, ethnographic curators, and museologists to interrogate the provenance and display of their collections (Karp, Kreamer, and Lavine 1992; Karp et al. 2006). In this century, social media and communication technologies enable the transmission of personal and administrative data in ways that build social lives and communities and sustain civil society, while again raising anxieties around secrecy and privacy, surveillance and rights. Ideas of public accountability have precipitated informal and formal civil and criminal action in which secret telling—disclosure and exposure—has become a normative technology of rights claims and justice (Coleman 2014). Anxiety prevails around confidentiality in the face of fears of terrorism and in light of sophisticated political and commercial espionage techniques that expose the inequalities in the global social order (Gehl 2014; Juris 2012). At a personal level, fast advancing regimes of modern medicine have accentuated and reformulated matters of secrecy and disclosure of diagnosis and health conditions. The interpersonal and cultural politics of disclosure, for example, are significant for the changing field of HIV, including in relation...
to the public health imperative for people to disclose in intimacy, in adhering to medication, and in protecting an unborn child (Davis and Manderson 2014).

Conventional concerns of anthropological methods and representation make a theoretical exploration of the notion of the secret particularly relevant in an era when technologies of all kinds are continuously forcing us to reevaluate the private and the public (and secrecy as something that complicates this dichotomy) in terms of theory and in the everyday practices of people around the world. Hence, we have in this supplemental issue of Current Anthropology brought together cultural and museum anthropologists with colleagues working in sociology, history, media, and cultural studies to interrogate ideas around secrets and secrecy, the private and the public, in diverse yet interrelated domains. The contributors were participants in the 149th Wenner-Gren Symposium, held in March 2014. The meeting arose out of our conversations about disclosure, the public, and the private in our varied work, which led us to the secret and secrecy as an axiomatic critical framework. We invited participants from universities and museums in Sweden, Denmark, The Netherlands, France, the United Kingdom, India, Japan, Canada, the United States, South Africa, and Australia to join us to explore the secret and its utility across our different fields and topics.

In this introductory article, we explore critical ways to think about secrets while highlighting their ethical, intellectual, and epistemological complexities. We make connections between existing scholarship on the secret and the themes and arguments of the articles in this issue, alerting readers, therefore, to the contemporary currents of thought on the secret in a rapidly changing world. We start by discussing the life of the secret in society and in its various institutions. We then look into aspects of the secret’s death, when it dies, and for what reasons. We finally examine the modes of this death and the politics of secrecy, illuminating how secrets may be revealed through disclosure and exposures in museums, media, classification, and public accounts.

The Secret and Its Social and Institutional Life

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Georg Simmel (1906) suggested that while governmentality could be construed as the power to determine which secrets can be kept by whom, who is required to remain visible and who is not, conversely, secrecy was a means by which people might resist social control. In this issue, we revisit these themes while we interrogate the secret in its contemporary forms as a lens on current modes of knowledge, identity, belonging, resistance, and power. We explore power in modes of analysis that go beyond Foucauldian framings of panopticism and self-surveillance, although Foucault’s (1980) insistence on the nexus of knowledge and power is a standpoint: secrets confer power to their guardians and allow its exercise over others, and the protection and revelations of secrets characterize and produce intersubjective and institutional life. Various cultural institutions and structures—kinship systems, initiates, age and gender, secret societies, and guilds—sustain the idea of private information and secret knowledge even when such secrets are public knowledge (Mookherjee 2006; Simmel 1906). The conventions of secrecy and secret keeping and the ethics that maintain these shift with time and place, but the basis of a tacit understanding of propriety and boundaries is relatively constant: a shared common ethics of what can be asked and told, revealed and inspected. Exclusion from knowledge—secrets of all kinds—tracks the topography of power.

Secrets, discursive and material, are not straightforward; they are confused by contradictions and discordance. We face an ontological difficulty in theory and in social life in apprehending the secret, for by definition, a secret is something that goes beyond that which is shown and told. Here, we depart somewhat from the definition of the secret as a ritual of access to valued knowledge; instead, we see secrets as things that might be seen, performatively, to live and die in their telling. The value of secret knowledge becomes apparent and gains social force in the moment of its revelation, when it is no longer secret for the interlocutor of the bearer of the secret. It is also the case, as Corinne Squire (2015) explores with reference to Derrida and HIV disclosures, that secrets can be known but not knowable, hidden in plain sight, performed but not spoken.

As Lowry (1980) and Tefft (1980) suggested over three decades ago, secrets are communicative practices of telling and silence that regulate access to knowledge invested with value for individuals and collectives, often in ways that define identity, group belonging, and exclusion (see Colwell 2015). Secret telling and secrecy are a means by which people form social relationships and construct collective identities, as we have already suggested. They create and maintain identities, negotiate intersubjective life, regulate social interaction, and frame institutional practices. While the boundaries of secret knowledge vary, the custodianship of knowledge operates wherever there is social life (Taussig 1999). Intimate partners, families, lodges, closed communities, corporations, and governments work around secrets and their keeping (Davis and Manderson 2014), including, in some cases, by executive decision, legislation, and the judiciary. Subjectivity, convention and control, and knowledge production are therefore implicated in the practices and the politics of disclosure, exposure, and display, shaped, too, by the historical, technological, and social circumstances. The secret’s mise-en-scène—its setting, players, and audience—is of particular interest for what it reveals of the secret’s place (location and role). In this issue, for example, the visitors’ perception of an exhibition (Rindzevičiūtė 2015), the denuncia as a prerequisite of obtaining legal papers (Giordano 2015), or the vital conjunctures of fieldwork (Finnström 2015) all point to the material and embodied life of the secret. The interplay of space and politics mobilizes questions of the emplacement of social action on the architectures of secrecy and related practices of visibility.
Intimacy and the Imperative to Tell

Secrets are situated in social relations, institutions and technologies, language, image, film and social media, and structures. They are—or can be—truths that are the object of meaningful relational intentions and ramifications. Objects are imbued with and reveal secrets, too, as also described here, and while the secret (e.g., knowledge or magical power) may be inherent, the object itself shares its precious status (see Isaac 2015). Yet not everything is known or knowable and therefore kept secret in the same way that we are never wholly transparent to each other (Butler 2005); the secret conveys more than knowledge.

Secrets are often told to build or sustain social relationships. We establish intimacy through secret sharing, trusting that such secrets will be kept, while inviting the other a revelation in turn (Mauss 1990 [1954]). But sharing secrets and breaking silence, however these categories are framed, also rebounds. As a number of authors in this issue show, secrecy and its undoing, silence breaking, telling and showing, are shaped and interpreted in different communicative contexts: in everyday speech, in formal and rhetorical exchanges, in texts of different kinds, and through performance and display. The imperative or expectations of telling challenge people to reflect on how they will be presented in public or extended semiprivate space over which they have no control, influencing how people manage private/public boundaries and maintain personal identity. Biography, narrative, and life history, in which contexts private stories are contained, are forms of knowledge that make some forms of identity and relationality possible while they foreclose others. In public domains, in a confession, in a courtroom, or at a public testimony, breaking silence can serve a restorative function, providing a way of redressing gross power imbalances. Public spaces are not simply the sites of accounts of particular events and truths, however; they shape the nature of the accounts, and secret knowledge is transformed as it is taken out of its context into public space (Colwell 2015; Isaac 2015). Here is a contradiction that people routinely negotiate: secrecy is a vital way of demarcating the private/public divide while it also constitutes the public sphere. Hence, revealing secrets creates crises that pervade the efforts of individuals and communities to make claims on their powers of self-definition in public spaces and representations (Taussig 1999; Theidon 2015). Acts of telling and showing create changes in interpersonal and community relationships; telling cannot be undone or easily erased.

Secrecy is tied to dishonesty and repression; holding secrets is bad for the individual, the social body, and the state. This understanding is at the heart of confession and the power of absolution. Breaking a silence is typically predicated on the presence of another (a priest, an intimate other, a doctor, a policeman, a judge) and his or her power of intercession (Cannell 2006; Foucault 1980). The confessional logic operates, too, in regimes of repression and in traditional healing practices, as described by Christopher Taylor (1992), of a Rwandan healer who diagnosed “guilt from excessive repression, and concomitant social isolation through failure to observe reciprocity” (141). And with the understanding of the power of telling is the idea of liberation—to tell is to free oneself of the repressive holding the secret over oneself and others—hence the role—across time, country, social and cultural context—of witnessing and testimony, truth and reconciliation commissions, committees of inquiry, public apologies, and so on (Chapman and Ball 2001; Phelps 2004; Rotberg and Thompson 2000). Through their volitional participation and provision of personal testimony in public space to various publics, the participants in a truth and reconciliation commission, for instance, disclose secrets pertaining to their own lives with the consequence of finding resolution while also exposing wrongdoing within institutions and/or by other individuals (Taylor 1992). The intent is one of closure; truth telling is assumed to resolve individual pain as well as meeting a collective need for repair. Further, while the church and medical and healing practices conventionally honor the confidentiality and privacy of the confession, transparency has been increasingly upheld as a valued practice in public bodies, and the point of public confessions is, indeed, that they are public. Thus, private knowledge is inscribed and disseminated in public arenas to produce new understandings of the subject and to effect political change.

In public health and in healing practices of the self (e.g., psychiatry and psychology), the confession is represented not as absolving but as transforming. Behavioral change, in public health under neoliberalism and in earlier intervention programs such as various “twelve step” programs, has often been predicated on telling, with semipublic disclosures and confessions a prerequisite to participation in support groups and as evidence to others of the willingness to comply with the goals of the program. Telling one’s secret can be the basis for social acceptance (Sørensen 2015). These technologies of confession (of identity and particular behaviors, including those that would be regarded as retrograde) are different in scale from the public confessions of repressive regimes and the confessions of transitional and restorative justice. Revealing individuals’ secrets may force health institutions to address certain vital dimensions of life they would prefer to keep invisible, concealed, and thereby secret. Don Kulick (2015) thus recounts how in Denmark and Sweden the parents of physically and/or intellectually disabled children challenged the institutions working with them to address their (adult) children’s sexual desires. Secrets, writes Kulick, are socially distributed, and by making this explicit, the parents of disabled children challenged a particular distribution of secrecy and so contributed to institutional change.

Telling and showing others has often displaced discourse around the right to (and the value of) privacy and the right for individuals and corporate bodies to keep things close and contained (Erikson 2015). Secrets, and different types of information that we might consider private, are held or disclosed as ways of negotiating intimacy and frame domestic
life. We claim that to tell can be cathartic: in personal revelations or in interviews, when our research participants perform the telling with a statement of prior secrecy, or in the public domain, as instantiated in the power of “public coming out” (Plummer 2003). When a person speaks out, the spoken “truth” affects those who hear the story. In speaking, people calculate risk, for as the difficulties of disclosing diagnoses of HIV and other medical conditions, states of being, and identities indicate (Davis and Manderson 2014), secrets told do not lose their valency with revelation. Thus, in this issue, Kitanaka (2015), Squire (2015), and Finnstrøm (2015) explore the dynamics of secrecy and truth telling in community, work, and personal settings, the contexts that shape ideas of privacy and confidentiality, and the responsibilities that figure in these institutional and interpersonal contexts. In these examples, disclosure is fundamental to establishing, maintaining, and reflecting intimacy of any kind and to the common identity of kin and other defined social groups. But as Kitanaka (2015) explains, disclosure (e.g., a note on a personnel file) may lead to exposure, and exposure to social exclusion.

How people talk about secrets, and so share them narratively, also matters. As Corinne Squire (2015) illustrates, people may conceal rather than share not to manipulate, but because meaning cannot be articulated with words, and to prevent the consequences to self and others of explicit revelation. Kimberly Theidon (2015) illustrates this in relation to the names of children of uncertain paternity conceived of rape, incest, or illicit love. Officially registered names and nicknames may both gesture to the unspeakable; the allusion—“child of misfortune”—forecloses inquiry, allowing the woman to hold close certain facts, often painful, given the context, but also potentially cherished. While the name can reveal or hint at a secret of the past, the secret (and its attendant doubt or shame) is carried into the future through the names by which the children are known.

For others, certain visible signs on the body—a scar, a tattoo, or a piercing, for instance—are private mnemonics of unspoken/unspeakable acts or events, again embodied and carrying the past into the future. The trauma of some pain, too, may be beyond speech (Oliver 2001). In her article on Danish soldiers returning from Afghanistan, Refslund Sørensen (2015) draws on Harari’s (2008) notion of “flesh witnessing” to refer to the lived experience of war that goes beyond narrativity, referencing the unspeakability of experiences of terror in field settings as described by Finnstrøm (2015) and Theidon (2015). Terror and fear, like grief and pain (Scarry 1985), inhibit the possibility of ever speaking the secret without reducing its dimensions.

**Strategic Telling**

The revelation of a secret is performative. Comprising or informing a personal narrative, conveying a secret does not simply reveal what was hidden; it reveals the politics behind it. As we have already observed, telling a secret has a goal, such as to create intimacy, to seek forgiveness, to witness and pursue justice. There are psychological and emotional benefits for many in telling, but sharing secrets may also be calculated. People are rewarded for telling secrets as well as for holding them, and secrets are a way of controlling the repercussions of revelation, for instance, of sexual identity or health status, violence, or a transgressive act or association. Although not directly addressed in the articles in this issue, lives can be jeopardized in telling: the costs and risks of lying about ethnic identity, changing religion, circumcising children, or providing shelter during the Holocaust are obvious examples. People accordingly learn particular scripts and roles, performing victimhood for strategic purposes (Giordano 2015).

The disclosure or exposure of a secret (or a series of secrets) does not, therefore, necessarily facilitate social justice, and it is not always evident who gains through its recounting. Where the telling is orchestrated by the state, and telling is instrumental and tactical, then a particular version of one’s life, or critical events, becomes inscribed. But also, despite variations in narrative and personal accounting, people hold to certain versions of their life as a way of framing identity. Telling or not, and remembering or not, take place in this context. Private and public lives are necessarily blurred as secrets are brought into the public domain (Kulick 2015), as occurs in truth and reconciliation, but also, inevitably, when we publish our own work.

The political qualities of strategic telling take this volume and anthropological inquiry in general well beyond the conventional settings for research to consider how secrets are kept by individuals and retained in all local, national, and global systems of government, commerce, and security. Institutions, like people, may have “necessary” secrets, and so they assume the right to secure certain information. Here we include private institutions of different scales (families, kin groups), institutions where membership is elective (churches), and public institutions (museums, archives). These institutions define how certain information might be collated, edited, curated, broadcast, and displayed for public consumption. Governments and other organizations establish mechanisms—laws, rules and regulations, norms and attitudes—that limit the power of individuals, reinforce the valence of the secret, serve to enlarge or restrict the autonomy of individuals to access, maintain and expose secrets, and define the cascading rights to information that reinforce existing power relationships. Institutions of the state, independent organizations, and corporations keep secrets that can protect economies, prevent speculation, control power plays, mask their role in state-sponsored violence, or protect intellectual property in the interests of marketplace advantage.

**Revealing Objects**

The contributing authors in this issue inform a more general clarification of anthropological engagement with institutions that have control over private life and the relations of power...
that pertain therein, including in cultural practices of display and rights to ownership of material and symbolic culture. As will be apparent from the previous discussion, one of our aims is to raise constructive questions for the practice of anthropology and its relation to knowledge production in contemporary societies and, in particular, relations of anthropology and the secret and its politicization. Hence, public institutions have a central role in curating knowledge and secrets, public and private. We also consider how disclosure, exposure, and display—including the practices of museums—imply further questions around the custodianship, care, and display of human artifacts, texts, images, and remains, and we examine public discourses around care, rights, and responsibility.

In this line of argument, we contend with the death of the secret or the right of power over secrets. Previously we commented that telling a secret calls it into existence in the moment of its death. A more literal death of the possibility of the secret is at stake in the growing capacity and interest in “big data” and its technologies, and the implied idea that privacy and the ability to construct a secret about it are now erased by the collection, retention, and scrutiny of data on individuals right down to the keyboard strikes made in an e-mail. As already noted, public institutions govern private life through the administration of personal information, imposing order on individual lives in the interests of good government. Examples include biopolitical domains, welfare, and citizenship. The articles in this issue that touch on these questions examine the growing capacity and imperative to collect information and the important questions of trust and power these developments imply. The contributing authors examine the tacit assumptions of truth that underpin knowledge-based social administration and the implications for publics. Among other matters, public institutions are placed under pressure to collect personal information to indemnify their practices of knowledge management and are subject to counter-pressure to surrender or restore such knowledge back to those who claim ownership.

We are increasingly aware of the power and responsibility of holding and revealing knowledge to larger publics, the ethical implications of decisions to keep or reveal secrets, and the extent to which secrecy facilitates the evasion of moral questions (personally and institutionally). Institutional control of knowledge occurs in all kinds of organizations, but here, museum practice comes under scrutiny in the articles by Colwell (2015) and Isaac (2015). This is not because of the sacred secrecy of certain items but because of the questionable provenance of collections, the challenges associated with revisiting this, and the problematic questions related to the institutional guardianship of material of global historical importance. Colwell (2015), for instance, illuminates how museum administrators successfully maintain secrets to reinforce power asymmetries between their institutions and tribal communities. Allied to these concerns are difficult questions of stakeholders in relation to the shaping of (particular) truths that require of individuals and groups further revelations to prove their own entitlements and ownership of particular knowledge and its artifacts (Isaac 2007; Morphy 2010; Van Broekhoven, Buijs, and Hovens 2010).

The role of the curator, like that of the ethnographer, editor, or life history narrator, is to tell a story to effect. The role is one of a guardian of “facts” generated to produce the account. Historical moment determines what can and cannot be shown or told, exposed or displayed. But this also means that prior exhibitions, produced in different times and ethics, become a prehistory. This creates its own problems, because any exhibition becomes, itself, an artifact of the time. The construction of knowledge as revealed to the museum visitor is orchestrated—the curator has power over the thematic or chronological organization of materials and texts, the guiding of visitors through a collection, the strategic use of space, the display itself, and the ways in which sound and movement are employed. Visitors are guided in their engagement and so in their understanding of truth and its interpretations (Boast 2011).

As an example, the Topography of Terror Documentation Center, Berlin, offers a contemporary account of Nazism in Europe shaped by postmodern sensibilities of multiple culpabilities and complicity. Perspectives, the center illustrates, can change dramatically. In this case, the shift is from earlier accounts of exceptional evil to the responsibility of “everyman” (and everyone). To make Nazism familiar, the everyman is captured in the photographs of a couple—”A Vacationing German Couple, August 1939,” their embrace a counterpoint to streamers of swastika flags. Despite the posing of the photograph, characteristic of photography of the time, it captures an ordinariness that contrasts with the example that Eglé Rindzevičiūtė (2015) provides in this issue of a wall of passheids, among others, like these two instances, highlight how viewers are interpellated, illuminating the fluidity of the “truth” of history as represented by institutions and the purposes of the displays (Logan and Reeves 2009).

Media and Revelation

Like a museum visitor, contemporary media users and consumers are subject to the politics of knowledge and power, secrets and secrecy. Critical and media theory suggests that publics, much like the performative secret itself, are convened in the act of addressing them (Warner 2002). Public life is shaped through various practices of telling: scandal and gossip, whistle blowing, exposure, and leaks (Coleman 2013; Madison 2014). Facebook, too, can be taken to be an invitation into a more or less public archive of the self, a self-museum even, carefully curated for social and at times commercial effects (Davis 2009). Museums, commissions of inquiry, and online archives, both official and self-made, all figure in this aspect of the public/private nexus. While these knowledge
practices are retrospective, they also look to the future, to what can be learned by inviting collective and self-reflection and therefore on imagining and building futures. A museum exhibition constitutes its publics by imagining them, curating a collection, communicating about it, and drawing in a viewing public. Media also operate in this way, constituting themselves in their address to publics. Media, however, are implicated in the blurring of public and private; through media, public life intrudes so much into private space that what has been considered private is now public fare. Cinema verité, for example, borrows from early documentary that what has been considered private is now public fare. However, are implicated in the blurring of public and private; constituting themselves in their address to publics. Media, therefore on imagining and building futures.

The television program film of life hitherto hidden from view. Reality TV trades on this, first in its exploitation of private lives and then the “big reveal” (Biressi and Nunn 2005). The makeover of the person or the home environment, for instance, is revealed to the audience. The television program The Voice reinforces the idea of the moment of revelation, when mentors turn their chairs to see who has been singing on stage behind their back. Chat shows require guests to share personal information for mass consumption. Current affair and investigative journalism, too, work with the idea of revelation, uncovering the secret to reveal duplicity, complicity, and dishonesty. Much of this can be thought of as a trade in secrets; finding them, uncovering them, and circulating them. This thirst for the private made public has arguably reached new heights in televised reality shows. “We are often told that privacy is disappearing, that the most intimate secrets are open to public probing,” von Schlegell (2011) writes, “but the reality is the opposite: what is effectively disappearing is public space, with its attendant dignity” (8). The dilemma, for us all, is that if everything is knowable, if the private is inexorably transferred and transferable into public spaces, what is public life? This tyranny of exposure as the replacement of the public—of the trumping of public discourse by publicity—raises questions for contemporary politics that, without a tenable public life, are carried out in secret, as it where, behind a screen provided by the invasion of private life into the public domain.

We live in confessional media culture (Denzin 1995), but this valorization and materialization of the secret highlights the fetish for bringing into view what is hidden. The revelation of the secret through various media is coupled with its politicization. In postindustrial worlds, there is enormous technological capacity to know but also to tell: through computer systems, telephones, blogs, tweets, selfies, and Facebook. People use these self-disclosing technologies particularly in ways that allow them to represent who they want to be with the protection of privacy through the technological intermediary. Such systems allow for a combination of impression management (Denzin 1995) and fantasy, creating only an illusion that there is no space for silence and undisclosed secrets. Other media intrude in ways that strip people of privacy. Sundaram’s (2015) example in this issue of “sting entrapment,” of the vernacular witnessing with the smart phone to capture, as a photograph or video, evidence of a perceived wrong, suggests the democratic inversion of the panopticon. The video from the phone becomes an authorizing device, revealing a forensic bias—the image is proof of the veracity of the report. The seductiveness of this technology includes the speed of circulation of images in the same way that SMS (short message service) has proven so attractive for political as well as social purposes but also the quantity of the data that can be captured. Its attraction reflects the commitment of people to exposure as a means of the disturbance and redistribution of power and the emergence of political life formed at the intersection of new media and the death of the secret.

Classification and Trace

Archives and big data are implicated in the tasks of “capturing” the information about individuals that allows their governability. Instrumentation, scales and instruments, checklists, diagnostic procedures, drop-down forms and their skip functions, diagrams, financial flows, archives, rules, and regulations of access to files all shape what is known and in what form. Few organizations have tick boxes with more than two genders, for instance. Mental health protocol and instrumentation, such as the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Health), shape particular ways of knowing and, through this, control. Bodies, bodily fragments, and identities are registered, enumerated, interrogated, named, deposited, animated, and fixed. Bodies move into the public domain through technologies of the state.

At the same time, there is an understanding that the state has a right to hold and access secrets and audit cultures, and systems of financial transparency contain rather than spill secrets. Erikson (2015) suggests that the activity of governments and big business are carried out in secret, mobilizing appeals for transparency. Systems and processes of transparency, however, articulate power and, specifically in the case of big business, the commercial value of the ability to preserve a secret from competitors or to camouflage ownership and investment to mitigate the risk of speculation. As Sarah Nuttall and Achille Mbembe (2015) note in their contribution, transparency has become a commodity in its own right, produced and foreclosed in the interests of the state, its citizens, private capital, and the urban rich. As they note, transparency has also become an aesthetic principle of architecture and art, sometimes ironically so, because the glassed buildings so favored by big business reveal little of the inner workings of high finance and because even the most confronting representations of the body in painting are not immediately, wholly available to view.

Transparency is also implicated in the revelation or unveiling of the secrets of the self through the technologies of diagnosis (Kitanaka 2015; Squire 2015). DNA tests are one means of revealing the secret; MRI and CAT scans another. Who owns these images and the right to control them is a flash point for the politics of secrecy. Identifying secrets in the body,
captured in CAT scan images e-mailed and picked up on an iPhone by a clinician, is one example. Despite such concerns around the ownership and use of information, there is considerable moral elasticity in how, why, and when these instruments are used. There is a complicity in the production and use of technologies to produce particular truths, and people’s rights and access to goods, services, and participation in social life are shaped by their willingness to comply with these technologies.

Conclusion

Secrets may be revealed through storytelling and translation in brick-and-mortar police offices, as in the case of migrant prostitutes’ denuncia in Italy (Giordano 2015). Secrets can be revealed through processes of exposure, for example, of the repatriation or replication of objects of high cultural importance (Colwell 2015; Isaac 2015), in a museum exhibition (Rindzevičiūtė 2015), or tracking financial markets (Erikson 2015), although the greater the power of the secret holder, the more powerful the mechanisms to prevent exposure (Nuttall and Mbembe 2015). Secrets can be revealed through names (Theidon 2015), body language (Sørensen 2015), and strategic silence (Finnström 2015). The architecture of revealing secrets may take the form of new technologies such as mobile phones (Sundaram 2015) and mental health checkups (Kitanaka 2015) or required but resisted disclosures of health status (Squire 2015).

In their articles, the authors explore how new norms of disclosure and related practices of exposure and display in some circumstances challenge the basis by which individuals and collectives can lay claim to the secret and exercise control over telling and withholding information. The dynamics of who tells what, when, and for what purposes are brought to the fore, in personal life and in the administration and everyday conduct of state institutions. Such knowledge also attracts value, sold on to commercial interests or creating markets for new forms of information protection and by implication reassertion of the secret. These concerns intersect, too, with the possibilities for the institutions that repair, sustain, and celebrate public life—state apologies, modern museums, archives, and depositories—all subject to these tensions pertaining to the politicization of the secret.

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During the last decade alone, it is estimated that tens of thousands of children have been born worldwide as a result of wartime rape and sexual exploitation, yet we know very little about these living legacies of sexual violence. I complement research in Peru with comparative data to explore four themes. Influenced by the incitement to "break the silence," the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission actively sought out first-person accounts of rape, understood to be the emblematic womanly wound of war. I analyze what a focus on rape and sexual violence brings into our field of vision and what it may obscure. I turn next to local biologies and theories of transmission. Children conceived of rape face stigma and infanticide in many societies, which in part reflects the theories of transmission that operate in any given social context. Theories of transmission lead to "strategic pregnancies" as women seek to exert some control over their reproductive labor and to identify the father of their child. The effort to determine paternity involves names and naming practices and the patriarchal law of the father. I conclude with questions to assist in making these issues part of the anthropological research agenda.

It was late in the day at Lehman College in the Bronx, New York, when Rwandan genocide survivor and activist Jacqueline Murekatete walked to the podium to recall those lethal 100 days in 1994. She was only 9 years old when her entire immediate family and most of her extended family were taken to the river and slaughtered by their Hutu neighbors. There was much to haunt in the memories she shared. I focus on just one. Ms. Murekatete referred to the thousands of children born as a result of rape, noting that for many women who had lost their entire families to the genocidal violence, the baby they birthed might be their only living relative. She paused before adding, "These are complicated children for their mothers." Complicated indeed.

Over the past two decades, there has been increased international attention to conflict-related rape and sexual violence. In March 1994, the United Nations established a Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women mandated to examine the causes and consequences of gender-based violence, especially rape and sexual violence targeting women and girls. Additionally, the UN’s ad hoc International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda—countries where conflict-related sexual violence in the early 1990s captured unprecedented international attention—greatly advanced efforts to codify sexual and reproductive violence. The jurisprudence resulting from these two tribunals classified systematic rape and other sex crimes as war crimes, crimes against humanity, and forms of genocide. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, adopted in 1998, built on and extended those advances, providing a broader basis for prosecuting sexual crimes as violations of international laws on war, genocide, and crimes against humanity.

On a complementary front, a series of UN Security Council resolutions focused on the role women play in conflict prevention, resolution, and peace-building efforts while simultaneously denouncing the use of rape and sexual violence against women and girls in situations of armed conflict. Collectively known as the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, these resolutions (1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, and 2122) demand the complete cessation of all acts of sexual violence by all parties to armed conflicts, with each successive resolution lamenting the slow progress made to date on this issue. In addition to insisting on the need to protect children from rape and sexual violence in armed conflict and postconflict situations, Resolution 2122 specifically notes "the need for access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health services, including regarding pregnancies resulting from rape, without discrimination" (UN Security Council resolution 2122, 2013 [S/RES/2122]). There is nothing said about the outcome of those pregnancies nor about their meaning for the mothers and their children.

The Women, Peace and Security Agenda has overwhelmingly focused on women and girls as victims of sexual vio-

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2. An estimated 5,000 children were born from genocide rape in Rwanda (see Nowrojee et al. 1996).
lence during armed conflict. Strikingly absent in this agenda are two groups: men and boys as victims of sexual violence and children born as a result of wartime rape. In this article, I focus on the latter. During the last decade alone, it is estimated that tens of thousands of children have been born worldwide as a result of mass rape campaigns or wartime sexual exploitation (Carpenter 2007). What do we know about these children?

In what follows, I complement research that I have conducted in Peru and reports of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (PTRC) with the scant comparative research I found to explore four themes. I begin by discussing the PTRC and how it implemented a “gender focus” in its investigations and final report. Influenced by the feminist incitement to “break the silence” around rape as an intrinsically emancipatory project, the PTRC actively sought out first-person accounts of rape, with rape understood to be the emblematic womanly wound of war. I analyze what a focus on rape and sexual violence brings into our field of vision and what it may obscure. Between the trope of “un-speakable atrocities” and the call to “break the silence,” a great deal was being said. A rereading of the PTRC’s final report reveals that women spoke frequently about rape-related pregnancies in the voice of the witness rather than victim.

I turn next to local biologies and theories of transmission, focusing on both children in utero when their mothers were raped and children conceived of rape. Anecdotal evidence suggests that children conceived of rape face stigma, discrimination, and infanticide, which may in part reflect the theories of transmission operative in any given social context. Although DNA and genetic codes animate scientific discussions of inherited traits, local biologies are more apt to involve bodily fluids, toxic memories, and wounds of the soul. Looking comparatively, I explore some of the characteristics passed from parent to child via blood, semen, breast milk, or in utero. Understanding theories of transmission leads me to consider “strategic pregnancies” and women’s efforts to exert some control over their bodies and reproductive labor—and to identify the father of their child. The effort to determine paternity involves names, naming practices, and patriarchal law. I conclude with some thoughts on methods and ethics when researching “public secrets” in which a great deal is at stake in concealment and revelation. Taussig (1999) suggests that the “drama of revelation [often] amounts to the transgressive uncovering of a ‘secretly familiar’” (2). Although children born of wartime rape have remained largely invisible on the international agenda, empirical data indicate they are not so invisible in the families and communities in which they live. At the local level, these children are likely to be hidden in plain sight.

The PTRC: Commissioning Gender

On August 28, 2003, the commissioners of the PTRC submitted their final report (PTRC 2003) to President Alejandro Toledo and the nation. After 2 years and some 17,000 testimonies, the commissioners had completed their task of examining the causes and consequences of the internal armed conflict that convulsed the country during the 1980s and 1990s. The PTRC determined that almost 70,000 people had been killed or disappeared and that three out of four casualties were rural peasants who spoke some language other than Spanish as their native tongue. The distribution of deaths and disappearances reflected long-standing class and ethnic divides in Peru.

Although the PTRC was given a gender-neutral mandate, feminists were successful in insisting the commission think about the importance of gender in their work. They argued for proactive efforts to include women’s voices in the truth-seeking process. This reflected the desire to write a more “inclusive truth” as well as developments in international jurisprudence with regard to sexual violence. Given that “perhaps the most commonly underreported abuses are those suffered by women, especially sexual abuse and rape” (Hayner 2010:77), “gender-sensitive” strategies were employed with the goal of soliciting women’s testimonies about rape and other forms of sexual violence. The results? Of the 16,885 people who gave testimonies to the PTRC, 54% were women and 46% were men (PTRC 2003, vol. 8, p. 64). Thus, women spoke a great deal, but not necessarily about sexual violence—at least not in the first person. The total number of reported cases of rape was 538, of which 527 were committed against women and 11 were crimes against men (PTRC 2003, vol. 8, p. 89). The commission’s effort to provide a “fuller truth” about the use of sexual violence by various armed groups was met with a resounding silence (Theidon 2007, 2012).

But recall that women provided over half of the testimonies compiled by the PTRC. What did they talk about? Women offered insights into the gendered dimensions of war and the ways in which the violence permeated all spheres of life. They spoke about the challenges of keeping children fed, homes intact, livestock safe, the search for missing loved ones, the lacerating sting of ethnic insults in the cities in which they sought refuge: women spoke about familial and communal suffering and about the quotidian aspects of armed conflict. When people go to war, caregiving can become a dangerous occupation. The international focus on conflict-related rape and sexual violence has been a hard-won achievement, but it comes at a cost. Even a broad definition of sexual violence results in a narrow understanding of the gendered dimensions of war and the full range of harms that women (and men) experience and prioritize.

Although women overwhelmingly refused to narrate first-person accounts of rape, they spoke a great deal about the collective legacies of sexual violence. While working on this article, I turned to volume 6 of the final report and to the chapter titled “Sexual Violence against Women.” I found

3. The title of the chapter is reflective of certain omissions in the Women, Peace, and Security agenda. Men and boys as victims (not just perpetrators) of sexual violence is barely acknowledged, leading to essentialized notions of which sorts of bodies suffer which sorts of injuries. See Theidon (2016).
37 references to girls and women impregnated as a result of wartime rape or exploitative sexual relationships. Mostly these are third-party reports, and the women speaking refer to the phenomenon of unwanted pregnancies in the plural: “they ended up pregnant,” “they came out pregnant.” The army, the police, and the guerrillas of the Shining Path and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement are all named in the women’s testimonies about rape-related pregnancies. The PTRC acknowledges that these children may suffer as a result:

There are numerous cases of women who, being pregnant, were subjected to sexual violence and saw their pregnancies interrupted as a result of that violence. On the other hand, there are abundant cases of women who became pregnant as a result of the sexual violence they suffered at the hands of agents of the conflict; they found themselves obligated to assume a forced pregnancy, and their children still continue to suffer the consequences of the violence. (PTRC 2003, vol. 6, p. 372, my translation)

The reader is left with no further information about those consequences. The women indicate that the guerrillas frequently forced the girls and women to have abortions, and when pregnancies were somehow carried to term, the babies were “forcefully taken away” (PTRC 2003, vol. 6, p. 310). There are fleeting references to babies who died shortly after birth. The singular focus on compiling first-person accounts of rape and sexual violence in order to “break the silence” about these crimes somehow reduced children to a mere coda. What happened to all of those babies? Who else was talking about them?

What’s in a Name

Amid the trope of “unspeakable atrocities,” a great deal was being said. In addition to women’s testimonies about rape-related pregnancies, audible speech acts of another sort were playing out all around those of us working in the highlands. I am referring to the names given to children born of conflict-related sexual violence. In any community—this is in no way limited to Peru—there is the audible effect of names, both individual and collective, that is frequently of an injurious nature. Here are some examples of these names.

*Rwanda*:

*Kosovo*:
“Children of shame” (Smith 2000).

*East Timor*:
“Children of the enemy” (Powell 2001).

*Vietnam*:
“Dust of life” (Mckelvey 1999) and “American infected babies” (G. Nguyen, personal communication, May 9, 2013).

*Nicaragua*:
“Monster babies” (Weitsman 2008:11).

*Guatemala*:
“Soldadito” (little soldier; V. Sanford, personal communication).

*Uganda*:
“Only God knows why this happened to me,” “I am unfortunate,” “Things have gone bad” (Apio 2007:101).

*Colombia*:
“Paraquitos” (little paramilitaries; my fieldwork in Colombia).

In Peru, among other names, children are referred to as “los regalos de los soldados” (the soldier’s gifts), “hijo de nadie” (nobody’s child), “fulano” (what’s his name), and “chatarra” (stray cat). Linguistic or cultural variation alone does not explain this widespread phenomenon in postconflict settings. Comparative ethnographic data are important because these allow us to see patterns in what at first glance might seem to be isolated cases. Time and again, across regions, names reveal the conjunctures of painful kinship and “poisonous knowledge” (Das 2000).

These naming practices seem strikingly at odds with the secrecy and silence assumed to surround rape and other forms of sexual violence. For instance, in their work with rape survivors in Rwanda, Van Ee and Kleber (2012) found that “out of shame, many women who have been raped want to hide their trauma and the way their child was conceived” (643). Concealment is a leitmotif in the literature and is generally understood as a way to avoid stigma for both the mother and her child.

In Peru, some women tried to abort with herbs, attempting to rid their bodies of fetuses they could not bear.4 Others sought out *curanderos* (healers) who used various abortifacients to perform *limpiezas* (cleansings). In this instance, the word *limpieza* is a form of veiled speech that allowed women to maintain a useful ambiguity. *Limpiezas* of various sorts are common for a range of illnesses; indeed, it was only with time that my colleagues and I realized the women had visited *curanderos* to cleanse themselves literally—they complained of feeling “filthy” as a result of being raped—as well as to cleanse their uteruses of unwanted pregnancies.

Still others resorted to infanticide. There is a long-standing practice of “letting die” those babies who are unwanted, perhaps because they are born with congenital defects or are the product of rape. The idea is that *criaturas* (little babies) do not suffer when they die; one can leave them sleeping “mouth down,” gently drifting off to death. Additionally, given women’s concerns about the transmission of *llakis* (toxic memories) and *susto* (soul loss due to fright) from mother to baby, either in utero or via their mother’s “milk of pain and sorrow,” concerns about damage to their infants were omnipresent. How...
could a baby born of such suffering and fear be normal? Many women were certain they could not. Letting these babies die reflected a desire to spare them the violence of memory—and to spare their mothers these memories of violence.

And yet amid this complicated array of hidden practices, names mark certain children and reveal their violent origins. As Vom Bruck and Bodenhorn (2006) note, “Because others usually name us, the act of naming has the potential to implicate infants in relations through which they become inserted into and, ultimately will act upon, a social matrix. Individual lives thus become entangled—through the name—in the life histories of others” (3). Naming is verbal, audible, and interpersonal; naming practices are one way of expressing, perhaps projecting, the private into public space and laying claims on others. These “entanglements” are worth contemplating.

Every woman who spoke with me or with my research assistants about rape insisted, “I’ve never told anyone before.” However, those of us who work amid secrets and silences know that “I never told anyone” is not synonymous with “nobody knows.” Indeed, in his study of public secrecy, Taussig (1999) asks, “[What] if the truth is not so much a secret as a public secret, as is the case with the most important social knowledge, knowing what not to know?” (2). Public secrets may be privately known but collectively denied such that the drama of revelation amounts to “the transgressive uncovering of a secretly familiar” (Taussig 1999:51). But for the moment, let us assume that some women did successfully conceal their pregnancies and this violence and its legacies. Even so, at some point women give birth to the secret. In that process of emergence, who and what is being made public? Who and what is being named?

Within Quechua-speaking communities, names are not simply labels for people; they are inscribed in social pragmatics, especially as a way of expressing and asserting social hierarchy. People tend to address one another not by given names but by terms denoting relationships. Thus, one’s placement within kinship networks is continuously reiterated in daily interactions. However, nicknames are common and generally reflect some attribute believed inherent to the individual. With nicknames, it is the qualities of the person that are being named.

Over the years, I have known several children who were the result of rape. Here I mention just one boy whose mother had been passed around by the soldiers in the base that had overlooked their community for almost 15 years. I first noticed him because he was standoffish, never joining the growing group of children who made my room a lively place. I tried to speak with him a few times, but he had no interest in conversation. After months of living in the community, I finally asked someone about him. It was late afternoon, and I saw him heading down the steep hill toward home, his three goats and one llama kept together with an occasional slap of a slender stick. The woman sitting at my side knew him by name: Chiki. My face must have expressed my surprise, because she whispered that his mother was “one of those women.”

Chiki is a painful name for a young boy, who in turn was a painful child for his mother. Chiki means “danger” in Quechua, and in daily usage it refers to a warning that something bad is about to happen and should be averted. People recall the ways they learned to look for a sign that the enemy might attack. One such chiki was a strong wind that blew through the village, rattling the roofs and letting people know something evil was about to occur. This boy could not be a warning; it was too late to avert this particular danger. Rather, he was the product of an evil event his mother had been unable to escape. His mere being extends his mother’s memory both to the past and into the future. Her son is a living memory of the danger she survived and a reminder that nothing good could possibly come from this Chiki she had failed to avoid.

The concept of stigma is frequently applied to these children, yet is that really all we can say about these names? Stigma seems a thin explanation for a thick phenomenon, and it forecloses a broader repertoire of potential meanings and motivations. While the evidence does not allow one to make totalizing claims, these names surely have something to do with memory and memorialization and with theories regarding what is passed from parent to child. Hence my insistence on who and what is being named and made public and why.

In a fascinating piece on children born to young women who had been abducted and made “wives” by the Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda, Apio (2007) briefly discusses naming practices. In a sample of 69 children, she found that 49 of them had injurious names (the other 20 had been named either by the father or by medical staff who delivered the babies following their mother’s reintegration). It can be assumed that the mothers named the other 49 children, and their names depicted the plight of their mothers. “These names compile all the bad experiences of a mother into a name and give it a life in the nature of her baby,” Apio (2007) wrote. “In this way the baby is turned into a living reminder of her suffering” (101). Social workers made efforts to give these children new names, such as “I am fortunate” or “Things have turned good,” but as Apio found in her interviews with World Vision staff, the women were reluctant: “They prefer the old names” (Apio 2007:101). We are not told why. This example, however, is at odds with the idea that women inevitably seek to conceal the violent conception of these children. When it is the mother who does the naming and in doing so names the violence she survived, poisonous knowledge is moved outward into the public domain. This appears to be less about shame than it is about pressing some sort of claim on others. Is it about moving from poisonous knowledge to a demand for acknowledgment? Why are the mothers breaking this particular silence?

6. I am grateful to Bruce Mannheim for his insights on naming practices in Quechua (personal communication, April 3, 2014).

7. See Vergara Figueroa’s (1997) study of nicknames in Peru.
In the literature on rape, women frequently appear as metonyms for the nation, the community—for some collective that is allegedly attacked via the rape of its female members. The “rape as a weapon of war” approach turns on this idea and on the deployment of rape as a strategic means of achieving an end (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2013). Eriksson Baaz and Stern rightly challenge this framework, noting that the uses and meanings of rape are far more variable than the “weapon of war” approach allows. If rape is, however, at times used to undermine the morale of the enemy and to destroy communities, then marking these children may be a way of bearing witness to the harm done to the collective. Naming is both a "saying" and a "doing," and speaking these names implicates others in an act of memorialization. Might this be, at times, a woman’s refusal to accept shame and stigma, albeit at a cost to the well-being of her child? As we saw above, in their testimonies to the PTRC, women narrated the familial and communal consequences of the internal armed conflict: women were bearers of collective history. Women were also disruptive of communal histories that had frequently been elaborated by community leaders, virtually all men (Theidon 2012). Women were “counter-memory specialists” whose versions of events often diverged from the seamless accounts of the war offered up to those who came around asking about the past. These children’s names can be a form of narrating the past, of attesting to the legacies of violence in the present, and of denouncing the harm done, for which no redress has yet been found.

I return to public secrets and their revelation in language. Ní Aoláin (2000) has noted that many acts of sexual violence during war are not private acts: “Unlike the experience of gendered violence during peacetime, which is predominantly located in the domain of the private, the home, sexual violence during war is strikingly public” (78). In Peru, women were raped in front of their families and communities; at times they were hauled off to nearby military bases and returned with their hair shorn as a mark of the gang rapes that they had endured. These violations frequently occurred with the complicity of local authorities—all male—and the neighbors who turned a deaf ear to the screaming next door. I have found that officials in the military bases demanded a “communal counterpart” in exchange for the “security” they provided to rural communities during the internal armed conflict. That counterpart consisted of food, wood, and warmis (women). At times this demand was fueled by the term ay-nicha, a diminutive of ayni. Ayni refers to reciprocal labor exchanges by which people work on one another’s agricultural plots. It implies reciprocity but with an element of hierarchy and obligation. Communal authorities would indicate to the military officials which houses were occupied by single mothers and widows; these homes would be the first targeted when the soldiers descended from the bases at night for “la carnada”—literally, “bait,” but in this context it refers to gorging on meat (carnes), that is, the women they were raping. Again, who and what is being named and made public?

If names can implicate others in acts of memorialization, they may also implicate others in acts of betrayal and treachery. Communal contracts involved sexual contracts, and the burden of providing the communal counterpart fell heavily on certain women and girls who were obliged to “service” the troops. These names disrupt the rules of the game—in this instance, that of knowing what not to know and what not to say. Rather than the “labor of the negative” that is vital to public secrets, with their reproductive labor, women gave birth to and insisted on naming a body of evidence. Taussig (1999) has argued that “truth is not a matter of exposure which destroys the secret, but a revelation that does justice to it” (2). The names—this revelation—may not do justice but constitute a demand for it.

Local Biologies

The soldiers, the Sinchis [specialized counterinsurgency troops], came into the room [where she was detained]. All night they beat me, mistreated me. Then they began to abuse me, to rape me. Seven of them raped me. One came in, the other left, another came in. All night long. After that I wanted to kill myself, I wanted to die. I became pregnant. I thought that inside me, the product of all that, so many of them—it will be a monster. Oh, so many of them abused me! I thought I had a monster inside. What kind of thing could it be? What was growing inside of me? (Georgina Gamboa García, testimony, PTRC’s public hearing, Huamanga, April 8, 2002, my translation)

I turn now to “local biologies” and theories of transmission. Lock’s (1995) concept of local biologies provides a way of analyzing the coproduction of biology and culture (as opposed to one universal biology on which cultures elaborate) and of capturing how this coproduction contributes to embodied experiences and discourses about the body. This allows us to explore biology as a system of signification, as a way of producing meaning. Of interest here are two trajectories: children conceived via sexual violence, and children who were in their mother’s womb when their mother was raped. How do people understand the effect of these violations on the offspring? Georgina Gamboa’s fears about monstrosity—about what rather than who was growing in her womb—is one graphic example of a broader range of concerns women expressed in Peru. I was told that children conceived via rape were “naturally aggressive,” a trait traced back to the violence perpetrated by their biological fathers. Other mothers insisted these children were prone to seeking revenge when they grew up, reflecting the idea they were the “enemy within” and that the desire for vengeance was passed from father to son. From the scant literature available, it appears that the male children born of rape are more likely to provoke fear than are the girls, indicating the primacy of the father’s semen and blood in the transmission of traits associated with violent
masculinities (Carpenter 2007, 2010). In this case, nature trumps nurture, and biology veers into destiny.

In her comparative work on children born of rape in Bosnia and Rwanda, Weitsman considers these children as a prism for identity politics. She situates the different uses of rape within the politics of identity, especially with regard to whether ethnicity is or is not determined by the father’s bloodline (Weitsman 2008:563). During the Serbian rape campaigns, “the paramount assumption underpinning these policies is that identity is biologically and paternally given” (Weitsman 2008:65). Within this framework, women were mere vessels for transmitting paternal identity, and these were occupied wombs (Fisher 1996). Different constructs of identity will culminate in different logics behind the use (or not) of sexual violence, yet Weitsman is surely correct when she states that, “Once born, the identity of war babies is inextricably linked to their rapist fathers” (2008:566). Given the centrality of the father’s identity in determining the fate of these children—whether through behavioral predispositions, ethnic identity, physical appearance, or some other characteristic—it is logical that women will make efforts to exert some control over their reproductive labor and to break that inextricable link. Strategic pregnancies aimed to do just that.

Strategic Pregnancies

The soldiers dragged my husband out of the house, dragged him to the plaza. Then they disappeared him. I followed them to Canaria to look for him. I demanded they give him back to me. Those soldiers beat me—my chest still aches from how they beat me. They wanted to abuse me, but they couldn’t. After everything they did to me, I don’t forgive them. It’s their fault my children never went to school. Let them come here and at least fix my house! I have three children. After my husband disappeared—well, the soldiers wanted to abuse me. They tried to and I knew I didn’t want to have a child from those devils. I decided it would be better to have the child of one of my paisanos (fellow villagers). I had the child of a widower so I could make sure those miserable pigs didn’t have that pleasure [of impregnating her]. They raped in groups—they raped in line. How could a woman tolerate so many men? Not even a dog could put up with it. (Señora Tomayro, Hualla, 2003)

Señora Tomayro’s words condense a great deal. Access to reproductive health care and family planning was minimal before the war and further reduced by the destruction of hundreds of rural health posts during the internal armed conflict. Rape frequently resulted in unwanted pregnancies, which could bring further pain and stigma to the mother as well as to her child. Within a context of minimal choices, women sought to exercise some control over their bodies even if the range of control was reduced to strategically getting pregnant by a member of their community (a comunero) rather than by soldiers lined up for gang rape.

But there is more. Women were somehow trying to preserve “community,” which confers both rights and obligations. Single mothers complain about the challenges of forcing the fathers of their children to recognize the child and provide the mother with some sort of financial assistance. However, by giving birth to a comunero’s baby, women bring that child into a familial and communal network of reciprocity and obligation. Becoming pregnant by a comunero affords the woman some means of assuring she has someone against whom she can press her claims and those of her child.

Yet this is not just about material resources; it is also about the emotional toll. The faces of children conceived through rape serve as reminders to their mothers of a painful past. These strategic pregnancies are protective and preventive. They are women’s efforts to exert some control over the present as well as the future, over their bodies and the production of “future memories.” Women like Señora Tomayro were trying to make their fetuses bearable. I now realize they were also trying to ensure the name of the father.

The Law of the Father

The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents. (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, Article 7.1)

One moment in which names are conferred is at birth or shortly thereafter. In contrast to nicknames, one’s surname is “a first and crucial step towards making individual citizens officially legible, and along with the photograph it is still the first fact on documents of identity” (Scott 1998:71). This first step in becoming legally legible to the state (and in designating the baby’s nationality) is a moment in which identities are fixed and moral careers are set in motion.8 I turn now to “proper names” and the law of the father.

In Spanish-speaking countries, such as Peru, children have two last names listed on their birth certificate and subsequent National Identity Document (DNI [Documento Nacional de Identidad]). The first surname is their father’s, and the second is their mother’s. For example, if one’s father is Jaime Salinas Morales and one’s mother is Jacinta Quispe Rimachi, the child’s last name would be Salinas Quispe and recorded as such by personnel at the health post and subsequently by the municipal civil registrar—along with the parents’ occupations, among other data. Where this becomes complicated is when the father refuses to officially recognize

8. I refer here, of course, to Goffman’s work on stigma (1968).
9. “The idea that there is a ‘proper’ name (in the sense of being correct as well as being one’s own) imbues the act of naming and the name itself with considerable moral force that reflects back on the name-giver as much as it influences the personhood of the name-receiver” (Vom Bruck and Bodenhorn 2006:11).
his child and assume his parental obligations or when the mother does not know who the father is.

In their testimonies to the PTRC, women indicated that Shining Path commanders attempted to limit births by forcing girls and women to have contraceptive injections or abortions, and when women did become pregnant and give birth, the children were usually taken away. The military, in contrast, left many children behind. One communal authority bitterly complained about “los regalos de los soldados” (the soldiers’ gifts) who were born in his pueblo. That community alone had more than 50 young people born as the result of rape and whose fathers’ identities were never determined. If no father’s name is given—or the father’s name is unknown—the child may carry his or her mother’s last two names (which is still a mark of murky conception). Importantly, these documents register two surnames as a legal requirement of the state. While this is a form of reproductive governance, for women it is a crucial point at which to secure the father’s identity and responsibility to the child.10

During the internal armed conflict, members of the Peruvian armed forces engaged in widespread rape, resulting in an unknown number of pregnancies. The PTRC registered more than 70 military bases and barracks in which acts of sexual violence were committed, which allowed the commission to state that in certain times and places the use of sexual violence was systematic and generalizable (Macher 2005:62). In my research, this assertion holds true for each community in which the military established a base during the internal armed conflict.

One component of the PTRC’s work included detailed case studies of certain regions or themes that allowed the commission to establish patterns to the violence in an effort to reveal chains of command and accountability. When it completed its work, the PTRC handed certain casos judicializables over to the Public Ministry for further investigation and potential prosecution. One case involved Manta and Vilca, communities in the province of Huancavelica in the central sierra. The names of these communities have become synonymous with the armed forces’ use of sexual violence during the internal armed conflict and the impunity with which they did so.

In 1983 a state of emergency was declared in Huancavelica, and military countermobility bases were established in Manta and Vilca, where they remained in operation until 1998. In addition to theft, arbitrary detentions, assassinations, and torture, there was the systematic use of sexual violence against women. The PTRC determined the use of rape and other forms of sexual violence was tolerated and, in some cases, encouraged by the commanding officers stationed on site.

Just as there was a pattern to the raping, there was a pattern to the names on birth certificates. Numerous women became pregnant in Manta and Vilca, and their testimonies describe the futility of attempting to persuade commanding officers to order their subordinates to recognize and assume responsibility for the children born of rape. As one woman related, when she went to the coronel to ask for information about the soldier who had raped her, the coronel told her, “He is serving La Patria and you cannot denounce him” (Wiesse 2005:61). When they could, women tried to pass these children off as their husband’s child. Many, however, were widows or single mothers, and that option was not available to them.

In the district of Manta alone, the PTRC discovered 32 cases of children whose fathers were military men who had refused to recognize them. The man in charge of the civil registry in Manta confirmed to the PTRC that these fathers were soldiers who had been stationed in the district. In these cases—which frequently involved gang rape by soldiers operating under the cloak of their nom de guerre—women may not have known who the father was, but did know what he was. In an effort to have these children recognized by their biological fathers, the mothers registered their children with either the nom de guerre or military rank of the biological father: “Soldado,” “Capitán,” “Militar.” Thus, names such as Edwyn Militar Chancasanampa began to appear.11

The civil registrar also recorded the father’s occupation: “Servicio militar” (Wiesse 2005:59). The Fuerzas del Estado (Forces of the State) left a generation born of violence in their wake, and, as one NGO worker noted, “it was considered something bad to have had a soldier’s child, and people discriminate against these children now” (Wiesse 2005:60). Armed agents of the state forcefully produced these children, and representatives of the state in turn exercised the right to impose a name should the mother fail to provide one. In the health posts and the office of the civil registrar, the law of the father was enforced during the baby’s first interaction with the state.

However, although these names did and do confer stigma, women insisted on registering their children and on somehow naming the father. These were efforts to secure their children’s legitimacy on multiple levels. Women were calling on the state—in the form of personnel in the health post and the civil registrars—to assist them in holding these soldiers responsible for what they had done and accountable to the child that resulted. There is irony at work here. Women who had been raped by soldiers serving La Patria found themselves turning to state functionaries in an effort to force the state to acknowledge the paternity of their children and to assume some form of responsibility for them. Women explicitly stated to my colleague Edith Del Pino that these are “children of the state,” invoking parens patriae in an attempt to secure some measure of justice for themselves and their

10. For a rich ethnographic analysis of Quechua speakers’ encounters with personnel in the health post and the discriminatory treatment they experience, see Huayhua (2010).

children. Women found a way of putting a name to the crimes attributable to the state as it waged a counterinsurgency war on its own citizenry. These names are both an accusation and a demand, registered on the baby’s first official step toward becoming Peruvian.

A Witness in the Womb?

Woven throughout these naming practices is concealment and revelation, silence and witnessing. I now consider that other trajectory: children who were in utero when their mothers were raped. Just as people have local biologies regarding children conceived by rape, I imagine most cultural groups have theories regarding the effect of rape on pregnant women. Although it is unclear whether these children are stigmatized, certainly mothers worry about the damage done to their babies during these violent sexual assaults.

In Peru, in addition to possible congenital defects, there were concerns that these children would be prone to epileptiform illnesses and mental disabilities. One woman in the village of Cayara explained it this way:

There are lots of sick children here—some are already adolescents. My neighbor’s son is already a young man. When his mother was pregnant, the soldiers abused her. The boy was mistreated even before he was born! He was born different. Halfway sonso [senseless]. He can’t speak. It’s like he’s crazy. It’s as though he lost his use of reason. He doesn’t talk, he’s different—sonso. He’s not like a normal child.

The insistence that these children are mistreated before being born strikes me as irrefutable. Given the brutality of the sexual violence reported in women’s testimonies, one can assume these babies were beaten, indeed bludgeoned, during their mother’s torture. Perhaps we can extrapolate from a study conducted in Chile, where a team of researchers analyzed the effect of political violence on pregnant women. The researchers began by determining which barrios of Santiago had suffered the most political violence and disappearances during the military dictatorship, and then they selected a sample of barrios, ranging from low to high levels of political violence. They followed the pregnancies and deliveries of a group of women from each barrio and, after controlling for confounding variables, found that women who had lived in the most violent barrios suffered a fivefold increase in pregnancy and delivery complications (Zapata et al. 1992). Both the epidemiological study in Chile and the theories that villagers have with respect to the damaging effects of sexual violence and terror on both a mother and her baby are suggestive and warrant further study.

One would also want to explore what fetuses are thought to know, to remember, and to experience. Here I draw on a powerful Peruvian film, _La Teta Asustada_ (The milk of sorrow), written and directed by Claudia Llosa. In the opening scene, an elderly woman can be heard singing in the high-pitched tone characteristic of _qarawi_. _Qarawi_ are sung by women, especially elderly ones, in Quechua-speaking communities and are a form of lyrically historicizing about events. While the tone is always recognizable, the words vary according to the event as the women improvise their commentary on the spot.

The audience quickly realizes the elderly woman is on her deathbed, singing to her daughter who sits nearby. I present an abbreviated version of the lyrics.

> Perhaps some day you will understand,
> How much I cried, how much I begged on my knees.
> Those sons of the devil—that night I screamed and the hills echoed my cries.
> A she-dog with rabies must have given birth to you.
> The woman who sings was grabbed, was raped that night.
> They didn’t care for my unborn daughter.
> They raped me with their penises and their hands.
> No pity for her, watching them from within my womb.

While the film involves magical realism, these words smack less of magic than they do of reality. The mother wants her daughter to understand why she was born so fearful, having been a witness to the abuse of her mother. For women who have survived these brutal assaults and who were assured in those detention centers and military barracks that no one would believe them if they spoke—or if they did, that the shame and stigma would affix to them rather than their perpetrators—the one sympathetic witness to these events may have been watching from within. In their testimonies to the PTRC, several women mentioned how worried they had been that the sexual assault would cause them to lose their babies. Offsetting the fear of miscarrying their babies or giving birth to damaged infants was the tenacious hope that perhaps these children would survive unscathed. To have come through such brutal times and to give birth meant that both they and their babies were survivors.

Similarly, in one study of motherhood and resilience among Rwandan rape survivors, researchers found that carrying a baby to term after both mother and fetus had survived gang rape—or becoming pregnant following the genocide—figured prominently in women’s narratives of strength and endurance. The capacity to bring a new life into the world, on their own terms, was a leitmotif in women’s stories of survival: “motherhood situated Rwandan genocide-rape survivors, along with their children, hopes, prayers, and desires, at an intersection of different potential futures that were not overdetermined by their personal biographies involving brutal violence, excruciating pain, myriad illnesses, and disease” (Zraly, Rubin, and Mukamana 2013:430). Here is an important reminder that these children may be a source of comfort to their mothers.

12. In _Lexicon of Terror: Argentina and the Legacies of Torture_, Feitlowitz (2011 [1998]:213) interviews a young man who had been born in captivity following the extrajudicial detention of his pregnant mother. He assured the author that he retains consciousness of having been tortured in the womb.
and their existence a testimony to mothering as a form of resilience and healing.

Concluding Thoughts

This article grew out of reflections on my own research and on the “absent presence” of children born of wartime rape and sexual exploitation in the literature produced about every postconflict region in the world. These issues are global in scope, the questions seemingly endless, and yet what we know remains woefully limited. There are always policies—implicit or explicit—put in place to address the issue of children born of wartime sexual violence, the women who may abort or give birth to them, and the biological fathers. From state militaries to irregular forces, from combat troops to international peacekeeping missions, the question of what will be done with the children who (inevitably?) result from these encounters is a topic of discussion and policy making (Grieg 2001). I began writing in the hope of making these questions part of the anthropological research agenda, convinced that ethnographic methods are the most appropriate and ethical way to approach these issues. Beyond institutional review boards and compliance with their “technical ethics,” research on children and sexual violence raises deep moral concerns and ambiguities. Long-term anthropological research—which relies less on asking questions than it does on listening to both speech and silences—is the only way I can imagine of finding answers to the questions raised in this article and of doing so in a way that respects how much is at stake in peoples’ lives when public secrets are involved.

We might begin by considering rape-related pregnancies as a form of “reproductive disruption.” Inhorn (2008) has asked, “What do reproductive falterings and failures, miscommunications, and outright battles—or the politically and emotionally charged contestations taking place in the everyday reproductive experiences of women and men around the globe—tell us about the subtleties of culture and power in everyday life?” (iv). Framed this way, one could study children born of wartime rape—as well as the related issues of abortion, unwanted births, kinship, gender regimes, adoption policies, and infanticide—as central to exploring postconflict reconstruction and social repair. The topics have not received the sort of anthropological focus they warrant. For example, Aengst (2014) has noted that infanticide has rarely been the direct focus of anthropological works, prompting her to ask what an ethnography of infanticide would look like and what “this kind of desperation would reveal about mothering, motherhood, and reproduction” (423).

We might also use “jurisdiction” as an analytical tool. All women live within multiple reproductive jurisdictions in the sense of multiple and perhaps contradictory regimes of law, language, and practice (Richland 2013). For example, in her research on the legacies of the Partition, Das (1995) analyzes the Indian state’s policies to “re recuperate” and “recover” women who had been abducted and sexually violated during the violence, tracing the national response to women impregnated by “other” men and giving birth to the “wrong” children. She found that in the sphere of the nation, identity categories were rigidified in the service of national honor while at the familiar and communal levels kinship norms were bent in a myriad of ways to absorb these women and their children into the structures of family and marriage. The multiplicity of customary norms that existed with regard to the children of victimized women were standardized into one single law by which illegitimacy was defined, frequently to the detriment of both the mothers and their children. This is a useful reminder that law can be a blunt instrument, working at odds with “practical kinship” and its useful ambiguities (Das 1995:65). Thus, we might ask when and why a state is compelled to take action on these issues and with what consequences. Why do “protectionist” legal regimes frequently do women a disservice, further instantiating paternalism and patriarchy rather than advancing gender equality?

Finally, we might attend to various life spans. Longitudinal research could tell us a great deal about these children, their experiences, and their life chances. Do the injurious names follow them throughout their lives, or are there ways of escaping the labels and changing one’s fate? How do inheritance practices work in their families? Are they considered full members of the family or treated as second-class children and siblings? In those cases in which stigma is a factor, do children born of rape pass the mark across generations? There is so much we do not know.

I envision this article as a conversation with colleagues and an invitation to think further about these questions. Exploring the ways in which children born of wartime sexual violence are named, represented, marked, and perhaps loved could generate new insights into the intersection of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, violence, and identity. Perhaps these insights could help to achieve a greater measure of justice for these women and their children.

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Partial Secrets

by Corinne Squire

The ability and right to have secrets may be a condition of social ethics (Derrida, *A Taste for the Secret*), but at the same time the nature of secrets is that they undermine themselves. Once told, secrets are no longer secret but are known. Even to name them as possibilities is to bring them into view as objects of knowledge. Secrets are thus always in some ways partial secrets, but their “openness” also connotes the lack of certainty of any knowledge about them, their evasiveness, their lack of fixity, and hence, their partial character and openness to change. In this article, I explore partial secrets in relation to a 2011 interview study of HIV support in the United Kingdom, where HIV’s relatively low prevalence and high treatment access tends toward its invisibilization. I suggest that in this context, HIV is positioned ambiguously, as a “partial secret,” in an ongoing and precarious tension between public knowledge and acceptance of HIV, HIV’s constitution as a condition of citizenship attended by full human rights, and HIV’s being resecreted through ongoing illness, constrained resources, citizenly exclusion, and the psychological and social isolation of those affected.

The ability and right to have secrets may be a condition of ethical social life, as the philosopher Jacques Derrida (2001) argued. This capability is important even though the nature of secrets is to undermine themselves (Derrida 1989). For once told, even to a single person, or merely to oneself, secrets are no longer completely secret but partly known, and they are thus not really secrets at all. Even to name secrets as possibilities is to bring them into view as potential objects of knowledge. Secrets thus always exist after themselves, already betrayed, as what we could call postsecrets or partial secrets. They come into existence, extracted into narratives (Derrida 1995), in a way that performs them while at the same time making them no longer secrets. This “deferred action,” as Freud and Lacan have described it in relation to subjectivity’s development and formation within language (Freud and Breuer 1975 [1895]; Lacan 1977 [1953]), also means that there is no simple present for secrets. The secret that is known, or known about now, belongs to the past. Even as past secrets are declared and made known in the present, other secrets are concealing themselves within that present as pasts of the future.

Parts of secrets are always left out of language, history, and subjectivities while still making themselves felt as untranslatable aspects of language, neglected elements within the present, or inescapable patterns of affect. Secrets are thus manifested partially, through their traces, as signifiers of something inaccessible, unknowable, or incomprehensible (Butler 2005; Derrida 1989). They thus secrete themselves in two senses of the word: they are both endlessly concealed and perpetually exuded, showing themselves. It might seem that there are no good secrets, particularly in relation to a serious illness such as HIV, which is my concern here. In one sense, however, there are no good secrets at all. The secret engagements and marriages and children that are staples of British nineteenth-century novel plots and the reservoirs of loves and contentment, for instance, are also matters of disapproval and shame; the happiness of secret fortunes is obtained and maintained at the expense of others. Any secret thought, such as “I am HIV positive,” betrays, at the least, the sociality of human lives. At the same time, there is no possibility for ethical sociality, for any “good,” without the existence of secrets, which depend at their very simplest on an other that recognizes you—a precondition for ethics itself, within some philosophy (e.g., Derrida 1980 [1967]; Levinas 1969 [1961]). “I am HIV positive,” for instance, said to the self, is a secret expressed to a posited internal other that hears it even if that other does not accept it.

These performances, deferrals, recognitions, and misrecognitions that make up the partialities of secrets do not just operate in relation to language, subjectivities, and time. Many other aspects of the contexts of secrets also make and unmake them. Anthropologists have long recognized how social and cultural formations are structured by secrets, how those secrets undo themselves, and how certain kinds of language have secrecy built into them (Piot 1993; Rosaldo 1984). As Manderson, Davis, Colwell, and Ahlin point out in the introduction to this supplemental issue of *Current Anthropology* (Manderson et al. 2015), anthropologists have also examined the power relations of secrets in relation to their construction, withholding, and disclosure as well as the pat-

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terns of surveillance and governance associated with these processes (Brenneis and Myers 1984). They have even considered secrets that are not secrets, “public” secrets, which we know not to know as the basis of established social institutions such that breaks in these patterns release possibilities of understanding and change (Taussig 1999).

It is possible to bring together these anthropological perspectives with the philosophical, linguistic, and psychological understandings referred to above by thinking broadly of the temporal, symbolic, and subjective as well as the social, cultural, and political contexts of secrets, all of which make up secrets’ multidimensional contexts. “Context” is a useful word here because it gestures to the spaces within texts that help make sense of those texts as well as to the sense making that occurs in spaces apparently “outside” texts (Derrida 1988 [1972]; Squire 2012) in their social, cultural, and political “con-texts.” Secrets’ “context” also indicates to us that temporalities—that is, the pasts that are kerneled in secrets, the presents that expose and constitute them, and the futures that perform and undo them—are “openings” of the contexts of understanding rather than radically separate temporal spaces (Derrida 2001). Moreover, in such a framework, secrets’ multidimensional spaces are not unproblematically polysemic. Their dimensions may be incomplete and repetitious, agonistic and conflicted. Their “partiality” carries with it a second sense of the word: secrets are structured by gradients of resources and power; they have interests. Who owns a secret; who hides, gives, or extracts it; who receives or is burdened with it are all contested matters.

In this article, I endeavor to explore secrets within this framework in relation to material derived from a 2011 interview study of HIV support in the United Kingdom. In this national environment, HIV’s relatively low prevalence and current good treatment access and success alongside a recent history of targeted rather than general prevention interventions mean that the epidemic exists in an often invisibilized state, viewed as a rare and manageable long-term illness, despite the continuing difficulties that attend it and its higher prevalence in some localities. It is also frequently seen as a condition whose major difficulties and significance exist elsewhere, predominantly in sub-Saharan Africa (Health Protection Agency 2011; Squire 2013). HIV in the United Kingdom is supposed to be, in the era of treatment optimism and hope for a “post-AIDS” generation, a “postsecret” phenomenon: medically understood, well treated, and therefore no longer stigmatized or concealed. Yet while there is extensive public knowledge about HIV, this knowledge appears to be declining in some groups (National AIDS Trust 2010), and there is strongly constrained personal openness about HIV status outside of clinics, HIV services, and sometimes family members and close friends. Despite effective treatment, HIV continues to be stigmatized, indeed criminalized. Many of its persistently difficult aspects—such as ongoing ill health, HIV-related poverty, entwined citizenship issues for migrants and refugees who are living with HIV (National AIDS Trust 2011), and the inner dialogues that it continues to generate (Irving 2011)—tend to be either ignored or hidden away. In this context, I argue that the “postsecret” is positioned ambiguously in an ongoing and precarious tension between public knowledge and acceptance of HIV and HIV’s status as a condition of citizenship attended by full human rights and its becoming resecreted through ongoing illness, constrained resources, citizenly exclusion, and the psychological and social isolation of those affected.

The HIV Support Study

The study on which I draw was the most recent of five interview rounds in my research on HIV support in the United Kingdom. It involved 47 semistructured interviews with people living with HIV. Half of the interviewees were gay or bisexual men, one-quarter were heterosexual, bisexual, and lesbian women, and one-quarter were heterosexual men. Eighteen participants were from African or African Caribbean backgrounds, and the others were from British, other European, Asian, and North and South American backgrounds. All but three participants were taking antiretrovirals (ARVs). Interviews covered medical, social, family, friendship, work, online and other media, and faith support topics as well as self-support, each lasting generally between 1 and 2 hours. These topics were not asked about specifically unless they had not been covered by the end of the interview. Even then, all topics were not always asked about because I stopped interviews after about 2 hours. This was in order to ensure that some interviews did not become life story interviews—which were not asked for, for which consent had not been obtained, and which would work to center the lives of participants on their relations to HIV—and also because, even if participants were enthusiastic, sometimes they got tired. Indeed, some interviewees had considerably shorter interviews for this reason.1

The interviews did not ask participants to tell stories. Indeed, they were designed not to entice people into personal specificity of any kind. Requirements to tell stories, particularly personal stories, and to speak subjectively or emotionally are forms of linguistic and social policing that are intrinsic to language and social relations, albeit also varying with linguistic and social specificities. Such narrative requirements overlap to some extent with the elicitation and control of secrets (Derrida 2001). They are frequently the cause of contention when research, particularly of a life story or of the ethnographic kind, is argued by its participants to have been a form of identity theft or cultural tourism; criticisms of Alice Goffman’s work are a good recent example (Betts 2014; Sharpe 2014). Such narrative demands should be treated especially carefully in situations where, as here, research participants be-

1. For further details, see Squire (2013), chap. 8.
long to a group, that of people living with HIV, whose thoughts, feelings, and actions are already often under strong social, cultural, and political monitoring and control (Craib 2004; Derrida 1995; Nguyen 2010; Rose 2007). In this case, participants were asked by the researcher simply to position themselves in one specific way: as contemporary sources of knowledge about living with HIV and ARVs.

In interviews, participants were asked for their accounts of support in various domains. However, many of those accounts moved beyond short description and took a narrative form (Squire 2013). This tendency may be due partly to the strong research and mainstream cultural currencies of performative personal narrative, public representation of the overlooked personal stories. At the same time, though, participants seemed to use the research situation as a means of extending, through personal narrative, public representation of the overlooked personal suffering, social exclusion, and political neglect around HIV. Intimate disclosure stories of the kinds they told have a long history of gathering people together, broadening their audience, and potentiating action (Plummer 2001). Moreover, stories of HIV have the specific value of “speaking out” about a condition of living that has often been explicitly silenced (Squire 2007).

All papers and other publications were made available to research participants who wanted to see and comment on them. Advocacy and activist groups involved with the research also gave feedback on early analyses. The participants and those more peripherally involved had, of course, many interests more pressing than the research. There were numerous personal, socioeconomic, cultural, and political factors that may have constrained their engagement. Nevertheless, the participants, research assistants, and those otherwise involved strongly inflected the work. At the same time, as the researcher, I shaped it to the greatest extent. In this case, the limits on my understanding, as an HIV negative white British woman, healthy, employed, middle aged, not a refugee, and socioeconomically middle class, clearly have strong effects on the adequacy of the research.

Because the interviews were semistructured, participant focused, and lengthy, people talked openly and largely on self-determined topics, and so the material provides a broad picture of how the epidemic is lived within the United Kingdom as well as answers questions about “support.” Part of the material’s breadth lies in its narrative elements. For this article, I take as “narratives” sets of symbols, in this case, spoken words and paralinguistic elements, that build meaning by their movement (Squire et al. 2014) and that may occur in parallel, intertwined, or with multiple story meanings developing from the same symbols. This minimal definition takes in a great deal of meaning-making activity within the interviews and allows attention to the ambiguous, contradictory, and partial aspects of narratives. Attending to narratives’ extended and mobile representations thus allows for some understanding of the complexities of secrets within verbal accounts of them. Below, in my analysis, I focus on stories told about HIV as a secret in the United Kingdom context. Each story excerpted exemplifies a story trajectory in relation to secrets found also in others within the set of 47 interviews.

Secrets Hidden by History, Habit, and the Medicalized Present

If secrets are always partial secrets and secrets “after the fact,” it follows that secrecy about HIV is always at least partly over once it has been articulated. However, the ways in which this HIV secrecy is performed and dispersed are, as with other secrets, multiple.

I want to start with an example of how HIV is articulated as a partial secret in relation to three contexts: family and family history, everyday life, and medicine—three realms in which living with HIV very often has to be articulated. For John, a white gay man of British origin in his 50s who had been living with HIV for over 20 years, the field of the HIV secret had become dispersed across these different arenas and had acquired a kind of postsecret character, while still being concealed, in each.

Medical things were never discussed, you know, and everyone hates going to the doctor, so, yeah, but I know (friend’s name) said to me and you know, a lot of my friends have said, “Are you sure they don’t know? Are you sure they don’t suspect something?” And I said “I’m pretty sure” because my mother certainly would confront me, like she did with the gay thing all those years ago, you know, I didn’t have to come out to her or want to come out to her, she just confronted me with it, and she’d have no qualms with—that’ll go through to the answering machine—um, she’d have me, she would, she’d just say “Is there something serious going on here or what?” She would. (Telephone interruption)

So I don’t know really, but of course they all, I mean I’ve only got the one sister/Right/My mum’s on her own now, she’s been on her own for three years but they all have very full lives of their own. I mean although we’ve always been close, we’ve always seen lots of each other/Mhm/Mhm/And we all know we’ve got, you know, lives of our own and I think that, that helps, even my mum today, you know, she’s far busier than I am a lot of the time. She’s out bopping around all over the place and doing things like that and everybody’s involved with their own lives. I don’t know if, I don’t think my sister’s ever suspected but again, she calls a spade a spade and she’d probably confront me.

... I think also (interviewer name), having kept it a secret for so long, what feels like a massive chunk, which is a

2. I am grateful to Harriet Anyangoko, Royce Clark, and Rachel Stovold for their help with this work.
massive chunk of my life/Yeah/that you’d think about it, twenty-three years is a big chunk, um, I’ve got so used to it/Yeah/that I don’t have to, I don’t think about it any more/Yeah/you know I just sort of switch automatically/right/um, to not mentioning it, or taking my pills secretly, if my mother sees me swallowing pills, well there aren’t many people in their fifties that don’t take pills, you know, so, they know I’ve got (chronic non-HIV-related condition) for which I have to take (medication) for because my previous ones don’t work, so they know about the (chronic non-HIV-related condition), they know about the (age-related chronic non-HIV-related condition) which I have to take medications for ... so they see me swallowing tablets and don’t and wouldn’t suspect anything ...

I mean if it ever comes out, I mean, the fact is the way things are, I’m not going to die of AIDS really/Sure/I’m pretty sure/Yeah/I might die of a complication because of the treatments, I might die of cancer, I might have a heart attack. So even when I die if I were to die if you like before my mum, my sister and all that sort of thing, they probably wouldn’t even need to know, you know, if I got cancer or died of a heart attack they’d accept that; you wouldn’t you, someone in their fifties.

The kinds of HIV secrets appearing in the above story were common in interviews with people—the large majority of interviewees—who had not told at least some close family members or friends about their status. In John’s account, the secret of his HIV status was partly constituted by retrospective stories about what has already been done in families such as his about secrets generally. Family members may “confront” you and “call a spade a spade,” but some families, like John’s, are not open about illness. Here, the potentially revealed “postsecret” of HIV suggested by John’s friends—“Are you sure they don’t know?”—was at the same time partly resecreted by John’s specific, disease-silent family history.

Second, in the domain of the everyday present, the HIV secret had become a habit of John’s day-to-day life with his family, “a secret for so long” that it had more or less disappeared as a secret for him, with secrecy eroded into habituality. HIV was a secret hidden in plain view (Derrida 1975), an almost-open secret. Indeed, this partial secret constituted an “everyday secret” with which his family, too, might possibly live. Whether or not they do, the conditions for such knowledge—John’s illness history, his open taking of medications, his talk about HIV in relation to others (mentioned in other parts of the interview)—exist in the everyday familial public domain. Does HIV still in this case have any meaning as a secret? Does status secrecy, disclosure or non-disclosure, in such conditions really matter? John’s continuing talk about what has not been said was indeed mostly about the social impact of HIV as a secret, which, while continuing, was for him declining as HIV becomes medically normalized.

This decline in the social impact of HIV’s disclosure or secreting leads us to the third way in which the HIV secret dissipated within John’s story. In his account, the HIV secret was both declared and hidden away within discourses and practices of medicalized living, particularly medicalized aging. Taking pills in one’s 50s conceals but also normalizes HIV treatment, especially at a time when HIV itself has become highly remedicalized (Kippax 2012; Nguyen et al. 2011). The HIV secret, like HIV itself in much contemporary discourse, seemed to have been treated away in this case, turned into something else—a “long-term condition” like many others.

As we have seen here, secrets always escape being kept. However, when a secret is dissipated, some residues remain, at the very least in what cannot be said. John’s talk about the dimensions of secrecy around HIV preserves something of the HIV secret’s partial “unsayability” in its very extensiveness, the longue durée of 23 years’ silence, “a massive chunk...a massive chunk of my life...a big chunk”—at the same time that he describes that secret’s partial sociohistorical dissipation. Secrets’ partial natures can, though, be much more explicitly conflictual, as the stories of denied and re-hidden secrets below demonstrate.

The Nonsecret as a Secret

In the story below and in many other accounts, interviewees described HIV as suspected yet secreted by being hidden by a trusted other, usually a relationship partner. Revealed by physical illnesses, by medication and side effects, by the allegations of others, or by the deaths of partners or children, this nonsecret is resecreted by being denied. This does not quite make a secret of it. Once more, HIV manifests as a partial secret. Olive, a heterosexual black African woman in her 50s who has permanent leave to remain in the United Kingdom and who was diagnosed in the United Kingdom about a decade ago, described the later effects of a secret that had been denied and displaced.

Olive: My, my my my husband didn’t tell me. He didn’t say he didn’t anything, even when he was dying, he didn’t say, he just kept on saying, “I am sorry, I am sorry, you will find out.” “What is it?” “You will find out. I’m really sorry but I hope you look after the children,” so I didn’t know. But when I was diagnosed when I was here, I think er, I think “this is what he meant,” (laughs) yeah.

Interviewer: So when he died, did you think it was TB or some other thing or ()

Olive: Erm, I thought, he was, with him, he kept on saying it was a low blood pressure but the way he was, was he was a big man, he was a big
man, but when he died he was so skinny, so I kept on asking, “can you tell me what are the doctors saying yeah?,” no he just say “no, blood pressure is low.” “But how come you’re losing weight, losing weight like this?” He was a very, er, he was a big man, very tall six foot, yeah. But the way he was, he was so skinny, so I so I kept on asking questions because I was suspecting that he might be HIV positive but he said “no,” so (laughs). “Oh,” I said “ok, fine fine” (laughs) yeah.

Interviewer: It’s very hard.

Olive: Yeah, it is really hard, yeah. And, it is difficult, especially to to forgive that time, yeah. It was very difficult, although I tried not, to but it was very difficult. It was like a (germ). That is when the religion helped, (laughs) to forgive, yeah, to forgive him.

Again, this was a secret concealed in plain view. But it was one that had been kept—though only just—by being spoken and then denied again and again (Derrida 1989) rather than by being lived out in various domains, as in John’s account. In this story, the ambiguity of secrets was foregrounded because Olive’s husband repeatedly signaled some other unspeakable secret—not HIV, but something else. HIV was not all of the secret; the secret must be partialized out because there were, indeed, different parts of it. An indirect indicator of this partial nature of HIV as a germ, especially to to forgive that time, yeah. It is hard, “especially to forgive that time,” Olive said. This was a difficulty not of self-blame but of reframing interpersonal and social parameters of trust and communication in the wake of a secret held to some degree in common and across time.

It is not surprising that the epistemologically problematic, historically complicated, and spreading secrets of “that time” had intense later effects for Olive. The secret of “that time” was indeed a “germ” whose intractability and deferred action offers some parallels with the viral processes of HIV itself.

A Secret That Is Not a Secret: A Secret That Must Be Told

In 2011, more frequently than in previous interview rounds in the late 1990s and 2000s, participants insisted on the importance of speaking out about HIV. They described it as no longer a secret because knowledge of it has become available, yet it is something that has been rescreted because of stigmatization, even in a time of good and effective treatment, and that has to be countered actively, because allowing it fuels destructive exclusions of many kinds. This was particularly characteristic of the stories of some more recently diagnosed interviewees, who often reported having few psychosocial HIV services available to them, something that earlier-diagnosed interviewees remarked on as a change from the strong advocacy and activist HIV environment of the 1980s and 1990s (Squire 2013). Here, for instance, are excerpts from an interview with Zack, a white gay man in his 30s of non–United Kingdom European origin diagnosed in 2010.

Zack: It’s only something which is in my blood and it’s contained and it’s monitored, well monitored. And, they don’t need to make me feel sick when I am not sick, I’m not ill. Some things need to change, as with the perception of HIV positive needs to change. And, I said before, erm, before we recorded (laughs) that scientifically, we are miles ahead of the people’s perceptions of HIV, I think there must be a lot of work to be done there. So, and especially in the gay community, because they fear me and I don’t scare anybody.3 So, I can be careful, you know, I mean everybody should be careful. So, I don’t know, that’s the thing and, but I think we also need, because most of us are, and I know that from, erm, forums, online forums where HIV-positive people

3. This phrase may mean “I don’t do anything to scare anybody” or “I shouldn’t scare anybody” (more likely), or both.
(meet) each other. And, I see people living with HIV, most of them are filled with fear, ah with, also with remorse, because, perhaps they have made a mistake, and they think “I’m a pig, deserved it, I,” you know, people that don’t (dare), I had conversations, online conversations with someone telling me, “don’t tell it to even your best friend. That must be the most kept secret, because, erm, having it, it will change your perception of everybody; telling it, telling it will change the perception of everybody.” And, that’s what people told me, so, but I say, “well, if it does so then you are not my friend,” so. So, I just try to keep as cool as possible . . .

**Interviewer:** What would help people not () what would you change?

**Zack:** Ah, what would (I) change? Erm, well, that HIV positive people should come out of the closet, basically. I was thinking of the, erm, I mean I commented online and quite a few people found that really stupid, but, I mean, there was Annie Lennox, she has a campaign, so she wears a t-shirt and it says “I’m HIV positive” and then on the back it says “fight the stigma, fight AIDS, fight the stigma.” So, you have to fight the stigma, and I thought, perhaps we could create a flash mob or, you know, or like, or a jogging group, and we go running with that t-shirt; that is when people would think, “oh my God he’s HIV positive, and is he jogging?” Because, I know a lot of people, especially gays that go and look at you and say “hmm, you’ve got an AIDS face,” because if you have a fat here or your eyes are this way or that way then you have HIV. People go by the looks, I mean how can they be so stupid? There is such misconception, misinformation, and the only way is that, I think, people have to know us; see what we do, see what we can do, and we are doing fine. There is no difference between me and a(nother) person, or you, I mean, there is no, nothing. People have really stupid ideas in their brains.

This and many other stories of speaking out, or planning to speak out, were interesting to hear at a time of HIV’s often-noted invisibilization in the United Kingdom and in the context of the narrated unreliability of visual signs of HIV and ARVs. These features were both commonly discussed by people who had lived in high-prevalence African epidemics when little was being said publicly about HIV and when testifying about the condition openly was often (as to some extent it still remains) a priority for HIV organizations (Squire 2007). In pursuing prevention and work-
In Zack’s story, the different modalities of the secret—silent or spoken, written, visual—indicated its complex epistemology. The sophistic simplicity of a secret that is not one if it is not kept becomes more problematic as Zack’s narrative continued. It transpired that it was active speaking against HIV as a secret that dispersed the imperative to hide it. Some secrets, like that of HIV status, do indeed, in this account, need to be worked against quite directly.

A Secret That Is Not a Secret

We have already seen, in John’s and Olive’s accounts, that HIV as a “secret” may be partialed out or may extend into different fields and may attenuate into the habits of everyday lives and memories of the past. It is not just that secrets cannot be entirely told; it is also that telling a secret does not only involve revelation or the opening up of what is hidden. Telling secrets is also a remembering or reframing of things that are not thought or talked about, that are concealed in less various, often unthought ways. These are social secrets, which may not even be framed as secrets, as appeared at the end of Yann’s interview, when the interviewer asks him whether there is anything that they had not talked about.

Do you know, I’m surprised about the things we have, things I had forgotten about, things that were brought up, but also for the future I’ve found it quite helpful in a way because in thinking there may be some scope in the future going back to (HIV support organization 1) where I’ve not been involved with for a while/mhm/and um yeah so I’m grateful for that . . . the final thing that I do have to mention that has just come into my head is the immense amount of stigma that still exists amongst health professionals about HIV. There still is a huge amount of work to be done in this area. Because again, just because it’s not talked about so much, you know, I’ve heard um colleagues, er (in health) let’s say even doctors say “oh be careful he’s HIV positive”. As if, OK . . . I didn’t really need to know that you know (that person is) HIV positive or they’re Hepatitis B positive. It didn’t affect what I was doing and kind of felt, I’ve heard these recently from (health professionals). So that kind of again, I have an insider’s view of, and this point of view of how people look on this. I don’t know what it’s like on the general side but I know on the (profession 1) side there is still a quite a lot of probably misinformation and possibly some degree fear/mhm/of doctors and other health professionals dealing with clients who are HIV positive. And that’s it, that’s definitely all.

Here, Yann, a white gay man in his 40s of non–United Kingdom European origin, diagnosed in the mid-2000s, and himself a health professional, used the length, personal orientation, and space for complexity within the interview to explore, when the interview was coming to an end, some possibilities for support groups that he knew about from past experience and had secreted by forgetting and to name the discriminations that happened within health practices that were secrets hidden in plain sight within his everyday work experiences.

There were many other examples in the interviews of aspects of HIV secreted by being overlooked: doctors’ carelessness or lack of resources, instances of stigma that had been hardly thought about, difficulties of living with ongoing side effects, and difficulties with living with increasingly constrained resources, particularly for HIV-positive asylum seekers and undocumented migrants who, given time, started to detail the life calculations and compromises that they had to engage in around food, transport, social support, and sending money home. These elements of living with HIV were, one could say, socially constituted secrets, publicly unspoken and psychically shut away, and partial in their character, both because they are relatively accessible but also because they are easy to predict, made up as they are by gradients of power. This conjunction of structural and affective determination is perhaps constitutive of “public secrets” (Taussig 1999). It seemed as if such social secretings away were being intensified by the resource shortages and discourses of market and austerity with which HIV-positive people are now living, within which the social value accorded to gratitude, belt tightening, lack of entitlement, and marketized thinking increasingly rendered difficult aspects of HIV unsayable.

Parts of a Secret Cannot Be Told: When a Secret Is Not a Secret

We have already seen traces of secrets, remains of them that cannot be articulated or spoken out simply, manifested in the complexities and elisions of interviewees’ accounts: John’s story of his outspoken family, silent about HIV; Olive’s signaling of the impossible past with her laughter; Zack’s declarations of how things should be but are not always. Some aspects of living with HIV remain recalcitrant to speech, shut away by the excesses of the experience. Even though they can be indicated, they cannot be fully opened up, as Olive and many others described, when they followed unambiguously positive accounts of living with HIV and treatment with briefer, allusive accounts of what does not work, what hurts, and what has been lost. Olive described herself as empowered, accepting her status, helping others, and doing well, medically, on ARVs. Later in the interview, though, she describes considerable difficulties.

Olive: Yeah, for me, it was, it (ARV) was, it was OK for me. But with him (doctor) the, he said he found the, he say, I don’t how he explained it, in my blood, when they take blood, that the dosage was very high, yeah, yeah. In the blood, it was, it was showing that the dosage was very high for me. Because I was feeling more, the side effects were dizzy, tired (and stuff like that), that
One Secret Leads to Another

Not only are secrets never really secrets, because they are always brought into knowledge by being formulated as such, they are always secrets after the fact. Secrets are also often never really told, because, as we have just seen, aspects of them may remain resistant to formulation, so that a part or a kernel of the secret always remains and may get transmitted, still unknown (Abraham and Torok 1994). Another element of this deferral is that secrets are mobile. Talk of one leads to another, as in Olive’s story of her husband’s chain of concealed deceptions. In longer interviews, participants often moved from HIV stories to stories of other kinds of intimate suffering (Plummer 2001). Penelope, for example, a black African woman in her 40s diagnosed in the early 2000s whose asylum status was pending, described, like Susan, difficult and often unknown aspects of the lives of her children, separated from her for over a decade and themselves hiding difficult parts of their lives from her.

(My daughter is) still in (country of origin), yes um, I tried to bring her but it didn’t work out and then I thought I thought she was in primary school there going to secondary school so I had not looked for a place for her be-

Olive does not and cannot tell fully, even when she speaks about it, as here, the daily hidden abjection of the side effects. These aspects of her life are noted and then put aside for the rest of the interview. They are secreted, although they are not surrounded by the signifiers of secrecy—alternative terms, silences, taboos, weighty emotionality.

Sometimes, such untellable things are not marked so clearly. Susan, for instance, a heterosexual black African woman in her 40s diagnosed in the mid-2000s and with an asylum claim pending, almost immediately left behind the present, hardly spoken condition of her absent, missed children to talk about a planned future of disclosure and a long-gone habitual past. Susan’s children are with her sister in her country of origin. She has been in the United Kingdom for 11 years. I asked a question about how she managed to live so well; this was a bad question. Looking away at something I could not see, Susan was suddenly filled with emotion about things she could not really talk about. She mentioned some conditional future plans and some aspects of the past, but this was clearly not an account of the whole history of the preceding 11 years or the full present condition of missing her children.

Susan: You just, it’s not easy./mhm/It’s not easy. I just try to be positive/mhm/it’s not easy, at all, at all. It’s not easy. (looks away, pause/I’m sorry. It’s OK . . . Because, I have been away this long, even if now I decide to go and I fell ill, I’m ill. I haven’t even had the courage to tell my children. Now you, () when they see you poorly, what do you tell them, when they see you poorly? How do you start, and how, they are children, I have not been with them for the, like (my last one), I left him when he was only eight years old. So you go, and you start saying, “oh, I need your help to look after me.” It’s not right. You haven’t been there for them and now you (need) them to be there for you./mhm/It doesn’t make sense. So that is why I am still stuck around here, hoping one day things will go better.

Interviewer: Were you working when you came here?

Susan: Yeah, mhm, though I wasn’t supposed to work. (laughs) But I was working, and I think it is the work that made me get even more sick because I used to work 14 hours, in about three different jobs, because I had children back home to look after them.

This is a story that, less explicitly than Olive’s, indicates an area that cannot be told about—what happened and is happening with Susan’s children, to whom she cannot return without forfeiting her asylum claim and consequently her current assurance of HIV treatment, health, and being a help to her children rather than a burden on them. Nevertheless, this story also marks out that area, taking it out of secrecy while still leaving much within it bracketed as secret. This is also, though, a story that starts to move onto other secrets—about citizenship status, for instance. This was something that commonly happened and that was particularly the case when participants were describing difficult aspects of their lives around migration.

Olive: Neuropathy, yeah neuropathy, yeah. Diarrhea is er—yeah—the side-effects are, yeah. I’m always dealing with side-effects every day (laughs). Every day is er oh! you say (to) others “I’m OK, I’m fine.” If anyone asks, “Oh I’m fine.” Everyday there is something which is inside, but you have to deal with it/inaudible/yeah, exactly, living with it.

Interviewer: Is that neuropathy?

cause I thought it was going to be possible (to bring her) but it didn’t. I had to go back to my cousin again and beg her to take her so she took her, and then at one time she beat her up, um you know a ruler?, she beat her, my daughter never told me, she beat her and she put salt, my daughter never told me, I didn’t know about it until she went to visit at my sister. That’s when they saw the scars and asked her and then she told them that my cousin had beaten her and she had stolen some money from her, she didn’t want me to send her money, but I said when I was going to school my parents use to give me a 50 cents at least you know so. And a, every time it was holiday she (cousin) would call me and say “where is she going where is she going to go for holiday?” so I said, “where would she go?” you know, so last year she went to visit her aunt you know. Then, so I asked her (aunt) if she can if she could stay with her, so that’s where she is now, um my sister yeah . . . but I feel I haven’t been there for my children you know and my son died in his sleep and I understand he was fasting, I don’t know what for and a, I dunno they told me at one time he wanted to commit suicide, he was also ill, he had diabetes, and I regret having I told him to look after his sister you know and I regret having told him that because I don’t know why he wanted to commit suicide you know seeing the people in Africa who are HIV.

For Olive, a chain of HIV-related secrets accreted sadness when it moved from her husband’s HIV status to her relationships and family life. For Susan, too, the secret’s expansion from HIV to her relations with her children aggregated pain. This narration of HIV meanings moving from status to positions from HIV to her relations with her children aggregated by the weight of the secret. It happened in Penelope’s account very explicitly and intensely because of the narrator’s children’s partly known suffering. Here, the secret of HIV spread from status toward the unspeakability of children’s abuse and loss as well as their absence. Even though Penelope spoke about these things, she knew only imperfectly how the son thought—particularly about HIV, which had perhaps been signaled to him by the injunction to “look after” his sister, rather like Olive’s husband’s hope that she “look after the children,” and which may have influenced his mental health, his suicidal ideation, and perhaps his fasting.

Her story also tells something of her daughter’s long-held secret about her lack of money, her theft, and her subsequent ill treatment, revealed only by the visible scars on her body, and held within the secret of Penelope’s sadness, which is really unspeakable, something to which Penelope returned again and again, about which she was never able to say enough.

As in John’s story, Penelope’s account disperses the secret of HIV over the fields of family life and history. However, for John, such dispersion lightened the secret because the fields of dispersal were positive in nature—an accepted family silence, the continuing ordinariness of everyday HIV life, and the medical assimilation of HIV to other chronic illnesses. For Penelope, though, the secret’s dispersal intensified pain, because for her, the fields of dispersal took in the hostility of family members and the suffering and loss of children. HIV here was a secret that—as perhaps for Susan, although more intensely—became more dangerous to the narrator as it stretched out its meanings. It is important to note that both these interviewees were talking in the context of unresolved citizenship status and family separation. For interviewees talking after citizenship and family reunion, like Olive, the space of HIV-associated secrets, however painfully extended, had reduced and become contained after these events.

Conclusion

If talk about secrets leads to more talk about secrets, as here and in many of the interviews, we can read such talk as helpfully exploring the parameters of public silence that constitute and maintain sociohistorical secrets. This process seems particularly important for the contemporary United Kingdom HIV epidemic, which many study participants reported as invisibilized and isolating, a kind of punishing social sequestering of the ill, especially the poor and ill (Squire 2013; Wacquant 2009). However, even if such processes start to constitute a new and more open, mobile framework of secrets, this does not mean that everything can be said and all secrets gotten out into the open. These explorations are always happening retroactively, at a time when other secrets, elsewhere, are being constituted. We have seen, too, that secrets give rise to other secrets; they change history and change with history; they are contradictory because once mentioned, even if denied, they are to some degree known; they are often played out between conflicted fields; they are, to sum up, partial. Moreover, stories about secrets demonstrate—even in their bringing secrets such as those surrounding HIV into language and even when HIV secrets are being dispersed and normalized—what is being left out. They register a kernel of meaning that cannot be reached into with words, that is wondered about in speculative, conditional past tenses or just glimpsed if you do not look directly at it, off to the side, in a glance or a laugh.

While it is extremely important to recognize and work for the retelling and reconstitution of the fields of HIV secrets, as many of the research participants were indeed doing, it is also valuable to recognize the residues of meaning that continue to be secreted, in both senses of the word, that is, hidden and also extruded, within these HIV stories, from John’s ongoing talk about a status secrecy that at the same time he said did not matter to Penelope’s repeated, inevitably failed efforts to articulate the sadness of HIV’s familial ramifications. It is this resecuring—rather than only the “defacement” of secrets—that
“makes the energy in the system both visible and active,” as Taussig (1999:3) put it. For these remainders of secrecy indicate the irreducibility of events that by their singularities generate, again and again, the new contexts of the future (Derrida 2001). They are a helpful marker of elements of the HIV field that do not fit with its contemporary de-secretizing normalization, such as ongoing illness and pain; stigmatization and isolation; the history of the epidemic itself, and its ramifications, such as ongoing illness and pain; stigmatization andertation, again and again, the new contexts of the future (Derrida cate the irreducibility of events that by their singularities gen-

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Lying the Truth
Practices of Confession and Recognition
by Cristiana Giordano

Italy’s 1998 Immigration Law 40 includes Article 18, which allows foreign “victims of human trafficking” the right to temporary residence permits on the condition that they participate in a rehabilitation program. The first step of this program, the act of denuncia, is to file criminal charges against exploiters at the police station. However, the resulting testimony cannot be understood through the victim/agent trope of the bureaucratic state, which uses these categories to make the other understandable through a process of what I call “confessional recognition.” In this article, I show how, despite the proliferation of biometric technologies to identify foreigners and so control migration flows at borders, confessional practices continue to play a central role in deciding who is admitted legally. Moreover, I illustrate how the question of redemption and expiation is not only a crucial issue for Catholic groups involved in aid programs for foreigners but is also central to Italian state integration policies, thus revealing how juridical norms are deeply influenced by the vocabulary of religious morality and vice versa.

Early on a summer morning in 2004, I went to the police station of a northern Italian city in the Piedmont region. The questura (police station) was still closed, and two long lines of people had formed in front of the main gate. It was a familiar scene, one I had seen many times before: one line for foreigners waiting to apply for or collect a new or renewed residency permit or documents for family members, and one for Italian citizens. I was not sure where to stand. I was there not sure of which line to stand in, Charity and I cut them both and proceeded to talk to the police officer at the gate. We had an appointment with Inspector Caccia, we told him, asking, “Could we please be let in so we would not be late?”

We walked up the wide stairs of the fascist-style building to reach the second floor, where Inspector Caccia’s office was located. On the way, we crossed paths with officers of various ranks, secretaries, and some handcuffed men and women. Inspector Caccia was sitting in front of his computer sipping a cup of coffee. He carelessly greeted us and invited us to take a seat while he continued working at the computer. A few minutes later, Promise arrived, and Inspector Caccia seemed relieved to see her. She was his best cultural mediator, he later explained to me; when she translated for the women, documents were well crafted and got approved by the higher police authority right away. Promise accompanied Charity to the office next door so that she could have her photos and fingerprints taken.

In 1998, Italy passed a law allowing foreign “victims of human trafficking” the right to temporary and renewable residence permits in order to escape from situations of violence...
and abuse on the condition that they participate in a rehabilitation program. These programs are fully funded by the state, but they are mostly implemented by Catholic groups engaged in fighting criminality and foreign prostitution. For a foreign woman seeking a residency permit in Italy under Article 18, the first step of rehabilitation requires filing criminal charges against her traffickers. Other steps involve living in a shelter (usually run by Catholic nuns); professional training in Italian language, cooking, and housekeeping; elderly care (to enhance employability); and receiving medical examinations. Since the 2002 passing of the Bossi-Fini law, which made regulations on foreign immigration stricter and more exclusionary, the numbers of foreigners appealing for legal documentation as victims of human trafficking and as political refugees have increased strikingly. This is associated with conditions of growing poverty and violence in countries of origin but also with the fact that the Italian state makes only a limited number of categories of recognition available for foreigners to obtain documents. To be recognized as an economic migrant, one must have secured regular contracts with Italian employers before entering the country, a requirement only very few can meet. As a consequence, from the perspective of immigration laws, victimhood and political discrimination travel more effectively than poverty, and people appeal to these causes to access services and rights.

In this article, I focus on the practice of denuncia (filing criminal charges), the first step to accessing a rehabilitation program aimed at emancipating so-called victims of human trafficking from exploitation and transforming them into autonomous subjects. In the denuncia, the invisible illegal self is translated into the recognized legal self by rendering women’s stories in juridical language. I argue that the testimony produced in the denuncia cannot be understood through the victim/agent trope of the bureaucratic state, which uses these categories to make the other digestible through a process of what I call “confessional recognition.” The state grants legal documents on the condition that women go through a reeducation program that mirrors the religious logic of confession, penance, and redemption. The question of redemption and expiation is not only a crucial issue for Catholic groups involved in aid programs for foreigners, however; it is also central to integration policies promoted by the state.

A second but related point follows, that although Western nation-states increasingly use biometric technologies to identify foreign others and control borders, in Italy confessional technologies and the testimonies they elicit are still effective tools to cross borders and gain legal status. The personal narratives conveyed in denuncia—although standardized and made to fit the requirements of bureaucratic and legal categories, such as the “victim of human trafficking”—still function as tools of identification that the state uses to grant recognition. While biometric measures turn the body into codes and images that can be decoded—thus equating identity with fingerprints, photos, and iris scans—biographical testimonies turn memories and the narratives they produce into proof of the authenticity of the self and its intentions. Both technologies—biometrics and testimonies—carry their illusionary truths in terms of who the other is. Nonetheless, they are powerful practices that affect who we think the human is and how it can reveal itself.

Denuncia: Performing Translation and Betrayal

While the inspector dealt with some computer problems, Promise started the interrogation. Promise came from an area of Nigeria that bordered with Cameroons; she did not speak Yoruba, Charity’s mother tongue, nor could Charity speak her language. She thus proceeded in English.

The cultural mediator was completely in charge. She asked a series of questions in English almost without interruption: very precise details about people, journeys, addresses, dates, encounters, places, relationships between people, and money (borrowed, earned, returned, lost, and lent). In the space of a few seconds, she translated Charity’s hesitant answers into a polished and ordered Italian text: the denuncia. Meanwhile, the inspector had become an anonymous clerk following the orders of a superior who dictated Charity’s testimony to him.

The interrogation went as follows:

Promise. How were you brought to Italy? Did your madam come to get you in Nigeria?
Charity. . . . No.
Promise. How did it work?
Charity. . . . My godmother, Momy, and her friend Mike.
Promise. Did you know why you were coming to Italy?
Charity. They said I could study in Europe . . . I went to medical school in Nigeria for 1 year.
Promise. Did you know about girls being forced into prostitution in Italy?
Charity. Didn’t know.
Promise. When and how did you meet Mike? What did he tell you?
Charity. Don’t remember. Momy introduced me.
He said he could pay for my travels . . . I could pay him back later . . . when I found a job.
Promise. How much did you have to pay him?
Charity. Don’t remember.

The document that Promise dictated to Inspector Caccia, based on this first part of the interrogation, read as follows:

It was my godmother Momy who, after my mother’s death and unknown to the rest of my family, invited me to her house to tell me that a friend of hers could help me go to Europe to continue my studies. It was the month of February 2002. She added that I should keep her offer a secret. In Nigeria, I completed high school and the first year of medical school in Benin City; I wanted to become a doctor. I affirm that in Nigeria I never heard anything about girls being brought to Europe for work or school who were then
forced into prostitution. In March 2002, Momv introduced me to her friend Mike, who put me at ease and assured me he could help me go to Holland to continue my studies. On that occasion, I told him that my family could not afford the cost of the trip. He replied that it was not a problem because he would take care of it. He added that I would pay him back later. Once in Holland, I could study and look for a part-time job to cover the cost of my journey. He didn’t specify what kind of job I could do in my spare time, nor did he say how much the cost amounted to. I didn’t ask. He made me believe that the amount was not too high.  

It became clear from the very first moments of the denunciation that Charity’s hesitation did not come through in the document. Her broken sentences and confusion were completely erased in the orderly, written text. Yet she was performing the very act that granted her access to services and rights and that would eventually allow her to become a legal subject in Italy.  

This ethnographic moment showed me the intricacies of translation at play in this context and how in the process of drafting the denuncia, Charity’s story was simultaneously revealed and disguised. The law’s goal is to save foreign prostitutes from “victimization,” to give them back their agency, and to restore their sense of dignity. But while the language of the state aims to recognize the other, it also dispossesses the subject of his/her stammering voice and fragmented memory. By ordering all the details and anecdotes in a chronological account, the denuncia inscribes the women’s experiences in a linguistic form that is not theirs, and it deprives them of the possibility of telling their stories according to the different trajectories of memory that correspond to various experiences. On the one hand, the law—and Catholic groups involved in aid programs for victims—portray the moment when women file charges as one of freedom and redemption from slavery and as a way for the women to regain agency in their lives. In this frame, prostitution is the negation of free will and independence. On the other hand, for the women, filing criminal charges is not necessarily freeing; at times, they see it as yet another form of subjugation that suppresses their own projects of emancipation. While most of these women do not identify with the state’s categories of inclusion, they do use them in pragmatic ways to access rights and services.

There are interesting parallels between the process of rendering women’s stories of victimhood into the juridical language of denuncia and testimonies of human rights abuses. In the context of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), Richard Wilson (2003) notes a strong similarity between a religious ethics of reconciliation and a political understanding of human rights; thus, what stood as rehabilitation and reconciliation overlapped with Christian ideas of forgiveness and redemption. In various national contexts, victims’ narratives are presented in genres of suffering and redemption that serve both the nation-state’s goal of asserting its own power through rehabilitation and the Church’s aim to fight forms of contemporary slavery. The TRC relied on the assumption that giving voice to experiences of violence and discrimination equaled being heard and freed from subjugation. By assuming transparency between communication, clarity of reception, and recognition, the nation-state claimed that through oral testimonies, the truth about the self could be recuperated and dignity restored (Wilson 2003). But in reality, in South Africa as in Italy, the testimonies of victims were homogenized, and the complexity of the stories was reduced to bureaucratic languages of suffering. The testifiers thus often felt alienated from their words, experiencing another loss of voice in the midst of the stories produced and circulated about them (Ross 2003).  

My ethnography of denuncia is part of an ongoing conversation in anthropology and political sciences about the relationship, within liberal democracies, between politics of recognition and the categories around which such politics are articulated (Asad 2003; Brown 1995; de la Cadena 2010; Giordano 2014; Merkell 2003; Povinelli 2001, 2002; Taylor 1994). Recognition is often described through the language of tolerance and inclusion. It comprises techniques that aim to make the social world intelligible to the state. Recognizing someone can be a way to disclose or reveal the other’s foreignness, but it can also work to appropriate and reduce difference, or at least make it identifiable to the state. The question of identity is central to recognition, which grounds the nation-state’s sovereignty in the knowledge of who one is and where one belongs in the larger communities. On the one hand, difference ultimately needs to be translated into categories of identity that the state can know, manage, and protect to some extent. On the other hand, because recognition is also driven by the desire for democratic equality, it can propose a relationship to difference aimed at overcoming it and thus reducing it to sameness. What started as an alternative proposal to assimilation turns into the performance of identity as a fixed category that translates the other into what is familiar.

In medical anthropology, some very productive conversations have revolved around projects of citizen-making where the body and illness become the most effective currencies people have to gain access to rights and state recognition (Nguyen 2010; Petryna 2002; Rose and Novas 2005) to the point that

3. This is a composite of three different denuncia texts in order to ensure the confidentiality and sensitivity of the testimonies.  
4. In his work on the scriptural economy, Michel de Certeau reflects on the relationship between the emergence of a scriptural system, modernity, and the destiny of the voice. He argues that there is no “pure” voice, because it is always determined (and codified) by a system (de Certeau 1984:132), yet there is a degree of pleasure in “being recognized (but one does not know by whom), of becoming an identifiable and legible word in a social language . . . of being inscribed in a symbolic order that has neither owner nor author” (140).  
5. Saba Mahmood’s (2005) work on the grassroots women’s piety movement in the mosques of Cairo, Egypt, challenges some of the key feminist assumptions about free will, agency, and subjectivity.
political categories such as "asylum seeker" or "refugee" cease to carry the same credibility vis-à-vis the institutions that grant legal inclusion (Fassin 2001; Fassin and d’Halluin 2005; Ong 2003; Ticktin 2011). The category of the “victim”—grounded on a universalistic idea of the subject and of suffering—emerged and proliferated from the mid-1980s onward as central in reflections on trauma (Beneduce 2010; Fassin and Rechnan 2009; McKinney 2007; Young 1995) and humanitarian interventions (Kirmayer, Lemelson, and Barad 2007; Pandolfi 2008; Redfield 2006; Summerfield, 1999). As a tool to access recognition, benefits, services, and rights, this category acquires political valence in the ways in which people use it and make it work in their relations to the state. It works as a language that names the foreigner or sufferer and thus positions her within the sphere of those who can speak and be heard (Rancière 1999).

At stake in the practice of filing criminal charges are the various ways in which cultural mediators and the women who file a denuncia work with the bureaucratic language of the state to access services and rights. While the state provides a monolithic idea of the victim, the processes that I describe in this article show how multiple voices, subject positions, and untranslatable experiences influence the production of the final account filed at the police station.

Back in Inspector Caccia’s office, the interrogation continued to the same rhythm of detailed questions and fragmented answers followed by the precise rendition of both into the text of the denuncia.

Promise. And then what happened? You have to tell me nothing but the truth, step by step. Did they do voodoo before you left Nigeria?
Charity. . . . Maybe.
Promise. Did they do it or did they not?!
Charity. Yes.
Promise. How did it work?
Charity. Mike brought me to an old man.
Promise. What did he do to you?
Charity. He said I had to pay my debts.

Promise proceeded to translate into Italian and to dictate the text to Inspector Caccia, who typed it on the computer.

On another occasion, before leaving Nigeria, Mike told me that he would accompany me to a voodoo ritual. I asked him to explain why. He answered that he wanted to make sure that once in Europe I would be safe and also keep my promise to pay him back. Thus, he took me to the house of an older man who performed the rituals. When we entered the room I saw several voodoo statues that scared me. The man made me give him some pubic hairs, my underwear, and some pieces of my nails, and he wrapped them in a piece of fabric on which he wrote my name. He then made me swear that I would pay my debt to Mike. Had I not paid my debt, my family and I would have been endangered.

The interview continued.

Promise. When did you leave Benin City? What day, month, and year? Where did you go after Benin City?
Charity. I don’t remember, maybe March . . . we went to Lagos.
Promise. How many people were traveling with you?
Charity. Mike.
Promise. How many days did you stay in Lagos?
Charity. Two or three nights . . . maybe; stayed in hotel.
Promise. How did it work with passports?
Charity. Fake name.
Promise. Where did you go after Lagos?
Charity. Not sure.
Promise. Try to remember. Maybe Abidjan?
Charity. Um . . . yes.
Promise. How long did you stay there?
Charity. Maybe 10 days.
Promise. Where did you go after Abidjan?
Charity. I think Casablanca.
Promise. Did you travel by plane or bus?
Charity. Plane.
Promise. Where did you stay in Morocco?
Charity. A village with others waiting to cross.
Promise. Who arranged the trip to Europe?
Charity. A Moroccan man.
Promise. Where did you go after Morocco?
Charity. Spain.
Promise. And then? How did you travel to Italy?
Charity. Paris and Turin by train.
Promise. What is your madam’s name?
Charity. Stella.

The dictated text read:

We left for Lagos by car at the end of March 2002. We spent 2 or 3 days at a hotel, and then we continued by bus toward Abidjan. At checkpoints, I always showed the passport that Mike had prepared for me; it had my photo, but a different name. I never had any problems at borders. We stayed in Abidjan for 10–15 days. Then we went to Casablanca, Morocco, by plane. After a couple of weeks, a Moroccan man joined us, and Mike left me with him. He took me by car to a house still under construction that was located outside the city. We stayed there for about 1 week. In this village, there were many Moroccans and Nigerians waiting to cross into Europe. We left this village to reach Spain by boat. I don’t recall the name of the Spanish city where we arrived. The Moroccan man then took me to Madrid by bus, then to Paris by train, and from there, finally, to Turin, Italy, by train. Around the end of April 2002, I arrived at the Torino
Promise continued her questioning:

Promise. And then what happened?
Charity. Moroccan man sold me.
Promise. Did she force you to work as a prostitute?
Charity. Yes, but I didn’t want to . . .
Promise. Did she ever beat you? How?
Charity. Yes.
Promise. When did you start to work on the street?
Charity. Day after.
Promise. How much money did you give your madam a day, a week, or a month? How much money did you give her in total since you have been in Italy?
Charity. More or less 400 Euros for post; 250 for rent . . . 50 food . . .
Promise. Did your madam threaten you?
Charity. Yes.

Promise dictated this as follows:

On the day we arrived in Italy, the Moroccan man who accompanied me to Turin sold me to Stella. I spent 2 days at Stella’s place. Then, one evening, she gave me a bag where she said she had put everything I needed to work and took me with her to an interstate road. At that point, I understood that I was supposed to work as a prostitute. I refused to do so, and Stella started violently beating me. That night, I refused to meet with any clients, but the following night I had to start. I was too afraid that Stella would beat me because she didn’t believe that I had been robbed. She thought I kept the money all for myself. On those occasions, Stella also sent some people to threaten my family in Nigeria.

In an attempt to reassure Charity and encourage her to say more, Promise then told her, “You don’t have to worry, but you must tell me nothing but the truth. I don’t ask these questions to put you in jail, but to catch your pimps and put them in jail.” But Charity’s account did not become any less stuttered. The moments of silence and emptiness in her account were quickly filled by Promise’s addition of details that she spelled out with the precision of bureaucratic language. Charity was caught in the complex mechanisms of translation that were producing the denuncia. The story further unfolded as Charity provided more details about her shifts on the street, the services that clients requested, the amount of money she was able to send to her family back in Nigeria, and how she eventually escaped from her madam thanks to the NGO’s volunteers.

The Magic of Bureaucracy

During my research I visited several police stations in various northern Italian cities. I examined over one hundred denuncia filed through the Catholic NGO between 2000 and 2004 as they were being drafted, proofread, and later filed at the police station. Of these, around 70 were approved in approximately 10 months to 1 year. The numbers of denuncia and victims that apply for documents through this program and their fate once they enter the bureaucratic pact serve as a barometer of Italy’s shifting moral practices of recognition.6

The document is standardized. It starts with “My name is” and is written in the first person. It unfolds with the descriptions of the denouncer’s background in the home country (family structure, class milieu, level of education, date and place of birth), the various phases of her journey to Italy, the story of “betrayal” through which she became a victim, the violence

6. At the national level, 54,559 people reached out to projects of rehabilitation for victims between 2000 and 2007. Of this number, 13,517 filed criminal charges and entered the rehabilitation program. Only 6,435 found employment after finishing the program. Nigerians make up the majority of those served by these programs, followed by Romanians, Moldavians, Albanians, and Ukrainians. Of the number of denuncia filed each year, between 75% and 85% result in residency permits. The number of permits issued tends to increase 2%–10% each year (Alessandra Barberi, “Dati e riflessioni sui progetti di protezione sociale ex art. 18 D. lgs286/98 ed art. 13 Legge 228/2003,” Segreteria tecnica della Commissione Internministeriale per il sostegno alle vittime di tratta, violenza e grave sfruttamento, 2008).
of being exploited as a prostitute, and finally the declaration of consciously choosing to file criminal charges and to enter the rehabilitation program.7

The text is always drafted—either at the police station or at the Catholic organization—in the presence of a cultural mediator who is fluent in both Italian and one of the languages spoken by the testifier. After cross-checking the information contained in the text, a police officer certifies it with an official stamp and signature. In general, both the mediator and the denouncer share the same mother tongue. For example, in the case of people from Romania, Albania, Moldavia, and Ukraine, the cultural mediator was always a native speaker from their home countries. Nonetheless, as in Charity’s case, the mediator and the denouncer sometimes need to resort to yet another language, usually tied to colonial legacies (English, French, or Spanish).8

In the process of translation, some women experience ambivalence and unease in denouncing people they may perceive as “benefactors” as well as “exploiters,” insofar as they made it possible for the women to migrate, make money, and help their families. Diana, a young woman from Romania, told me that she denounced her exploiters only because the police caught her. “But I felt horrible,” she said. “They were not so terrible with me, and while I worked for them I made enough money to support my family back home for the rest of their lives.” Edith, a cultural mediator from Nigeria who helps women file criminal charges, once told me, “There are many things from the women’s stories that I don’t translate, otherwise they would never get the papers. I can’t translate that their mothers or sisters helped them make the decision to migrate and that they knew about the prostitution.” Cultural mediators often decide to hide this type of family involvement from the state because it could jeopardize the woman’s status as a “victim,” and the state’s entire rehabilitation effort would no longer mean anything. Thus, although the state understands the denunciation process as the moment when the truth is revealed, it is the concealing of certain secrets that allows the denuncia to be drafted. Edith also made it clear that she, as a cultural mediator, had the power to craft the story so that a woman could indeed qualify as a state-recognized victim. She added that women decide to make a denuncia not necessarily to abandon prostitution but often to disentangle themselves from their madams and the monetary obligations they demand. Some women want emancipation from their exploiters but still consider prostitution a quick and easy way to make money and therefore continue to do sex work even after filing charges. This allows them to continue sending some money home and keep the rest for themselves.

In conversations with me, Promise explained that in her extensive experience translating for Nigerian women, she had witnessed many shifts and changes in the kind of stories they would tell her. In the mid-1990s and early 2000s, women were unaware of the kind of work they would be involved in once they arrived in Italy. She thought they were “real victims” back then and that Article 18 was an effective legislative tool that helped women free themselves from prostitution networks. “Nowadays,” she claimed, “women know very well that prostitution is in the picture; I consider them ‘victims’ because I know they have no future in Nigeria. But I know they know, and their parents know as well, that they will work as prostitutes in Italy; but it is fine for their families as long as they send money back home.”

The state cannot account for the fear and sense of guilt provoked by the action of denouncing family members who were involved in the women’s migration. To do so, it would have to admit knowing that women are only partially victims. In this sense, the state keeps certain forms of secrecy at the heart of its power and practices (Taussig 1999). Furthermore, the police office is not a space where the fear of going mad, which paralyzes some women, can be heard. When a woman denounces her exploiters, she often sees it as breaking an oath, which is supposed to result in a curse of madness. In Charity’s case, her godmother organized her travel to Europe. When I met her at the police station, she admitted that she feared the consequences of denouncing her godmother and her madam. She knew that her family in Nigeria would be threatened with death and that she risked going mad, just as she was told when she underwent the voodoo rituals before leaving for Europe. “If I don’t pay my debts in full, bad things can happen to me and my family. I will go crazy!” she stated during the interrogation in a moment that Promise decided not to translate to the inspector. The state cannot recognize this fear of descending into madness; it exceeds its categories and simultaneously reveals the state’s lacuna.

The purpose of the denuncia document is to prove that the women are victims; it names their strangeness and thus recognizes it. The state, for its part, provides a frame within which such stories can be told in what appears to be a culturally sensitive manner. Especially when it comes to Nigerian women, the term “voodoo” typically appears in the document and is often a topic of discussion among police officers, care providers, and psychologists. This attempt to make the law culturally appropriate by introducing a term to describe Nigerian women’s experience of “swearing oaths” at shrines, either before their departure from Nigeria or upon their arrival in Europe, serves a double purpose. On the one hand, it points to the breaches within the bureaucratic language that allow for

7. Asylum seekers applying for refugee status also must depose a testimony at the police station in order to enter the state-funded protection program (Sistema di Protezione Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati). Asylum seekers’ testimonies resemble the text of denuncia in the sense that they have to prove, through their life stories, that they were victims of torture, discrimination, persecution, and violence in their home country. Unlike the denuncia of victims of human trafficking, though, the testimonies of asylum seekers are not directly aimed at fighting international criminality but at protecting against political injustice.

8. For Nigerian women, the linguistic dimension of cultural mediation is more complex. Although the majority of women are from Benin City and their mother tongue is Edo, others speak Yoruba or Igbo, and they are not necessarily fluent in English or pidgin English.
the use of concepts, such as voodoo, that gesture toward cultural sensitivity. On the other hand, in drafting a denuncia, the concept of voodoo is used to other the women and prove their degree of victimhood: they were coerced to obey their exploiters by means of exotic rituals and occult threats.

References to voodoo stand in for a complete loss of the expression of personal desires and choices, something the women know too well when they file criminal charges and decide to adhere to the category of the “victim” regardless of whether it truly applies to their story. They—and the cultural mediators who translate for them—know how to talk about voodoo in the way that police officers use it, and they know how to do things with it. In this context, both denouncers and police officers portray voodoo as a secret that needs to be revealed. The secret being performed for and by the state proves that there is something to be revealed, uprooted, and corrected. Through the telling and inscription of this secret, the state exercises its power. In a sense, the very act of talking about voodoo is effective, almost as if the power of voodoo continues to produce consequences by simply invoking it, whether in the space of a ritual or in that of the police station. In fact, denuncia itself is a form of initiation, a rite of passage that marks the pact women make with the state. Women know that being a “victim of voodoo” makes them more eligible to qualify for the rehabilitation program. The label of the victim, therefore, has a double function: although it erases the ambivalence and complexities of women’s experiences by translating them into a category defined by the state, it also opens up opportunities that are directly tied to gaining legal status.

The nuances of what it means to be a “victim” and how that is woven together with the conscious choices of women, who often see prostitution as a necessary step in their migration experience before they can land on the shores of Europe, do not emerge in the denuncia. This can be read as a contradiction of the therapeutic state that pays attention to emotions and feelings in order to approach foreigners in a culturally appropriate way. In fact, the state only recognizes the range of emotions that can be ascribed to a victim: fear of her exploiters, lack of awareness, and sense of betrayal. The possibility of “choice” and the idea of self-realization through sex work and exploitation remain unthinkable (van Dijk 2001) and untranslatable. Amen, from Benin City, told me, “I kind of knew that I was going to work as a prostitute for a while, and then I would find a normal job, but I never thought it meant working in the streets at night; I needed money to support my siblings in Nigeria after my parents died.”

Promise, like other cultural mediators working in similar institutional contexts, is caught in the conundrum of translating testimony that exceeds the victim/agent dichotomy that the state applies. She explained that today parents and family members in Nigeria also have to take part in voodoo rituals by swearing before a native doctor that their daughters and sisters will pay back their debts. Sometimes, as part of the ritual itself, denuncia is mentioned among the things women (and families) swear they will never do. Along these lines, Promise told me of a young Nigerian woman and her family who had to swear inside a cemetery in Lagos that once in Italy, she would never escape from her madam. If she did, her parents would have to bring her back to Nigeria as a cadaver and bury her. Just as the language of voodoo has made it into official documents produced by the Italian state, denuncia is now becoming an element that could determine whether the voodoo rituals performed upon women’s departure from home will work for or against them. In a way, filing criminal charges itself can be read as a form of voodoo, a ritual that creates a pact between the participants and then initiates a series of consequences in their lives. It creates a tie with the state, and the state, in turn, takes on the power of the sorcerer who, through the act of denuncia, unites the woman from the bondage of voodoo. The state thus simultaneously invokes magic and exercises its power by fully embodying it. The document of denuncia thus creates specific affects and effects that go beyond the content of the testimony. It creates and reveals secrets simultaneously. This is its performative power.

9. Michael Taussig argues that “knowing what not to know” is a very powerful form of social knowledge at the core of various forms of social power and the knowledges intertwined with those powers. It is a form of public secrecy, of things generally known but that cannot be articulated without undoing the very sovereignty of the state. He claims that there is no such thing as a secret, but that it is an invention, a limit case, an untranslatable. Amen, from Benin City, told me, “I kind of knew that I was going to work as a prostitute for a while, and then I would find a normal job, but I never thought it meant working in the streets at night; I needed money to support my siblings in Nigeria after my parents died.”

10. Rijk van Dijk (2001) writes about the trafficking of young Nigerian girls for the Dutch sex industry and the role of “voodoo” in the girls’ submission to Dutch male desires. The discovery of this translational trafficking gave rise to what he calls a “voodoo scare,” resulting in a special police task force, the “voodoo team.” For a reflection on how the category of voodoo is used in institutional settings in Italy, see also Taliani (2012).

11. What Annemise Riles (2006) writes about the political effects of bureaucratic classifications based on race, class, gender, or sexual orientation can be extended to the label of the victim that works, in this context, as a political category. Moreover, Riles refers to the work of Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Leigh Star (1999), who argue that the “practical politics” of categories can be seen by digging up the “conflict and multiplicity” that is “buried beneath layers of obscure representation” (1999:45, 47).

12. For a discussion on the specific features of the therapeutic ethic when it takes on institutionalized forms, see Rieff (1966) and Reddy (2002). Renteln Dundes (2004) has written on the use of “cultural defense” in American criminal courts.

13. Historian Carlo Ginzburg has explained how in medieval and early modern European history, the practice of denunciation was closely connected with the uprooting of heresy and witchcraft. The Inquisition primarily relied on denunciations from ordinary people to hunt witches, heretics, and other deviants (Ginzburg 1982).

14. See Reed (2006) for an interesting analysis of documents as actors that by moving through institutional settings produce specific events. Also, see Riles (2006) for an approach to documents as ethnographic sites.
Promise struggled with these stories, but she knew they could not be verbalized in the official document because they would create a different kind of victim. As mentioned above, the woman who migrates in full awareness that she would work as a prostitute is a figure of untranslatability that neither the state nor the Church can comprehend as such. I call it an “indigestible” presence. In this sense, Promise lamented that while the first denuncia she drafted in the early years of her work as a mediator were true stories—or at least truer—now, “it had become fiction,” and the whole rehabilitation program was, in her words, “a market of lies.” Nevertheless, the program is still in place and works through the belief that women carry secrets that, once revealed, prove their victimhood and thus make them recognizable and digestible to the state.

Promise struggled with her own role vis-à-vis the state and the women. Having gone through the rehabilitation program for victims 8 years before she began working for the state, she knew that filing criminal charges would create a different kind of victim. As mentioned above, the state who played a similar role in courtrooms and police stations, for the denouncer. In a sense, like other cultural mediators that the state could accept. Thus, she used the category of the victim into another in order to make women who encountered in her work, she had to translate one type of victim into another in order to make women fit the category that the state could accept. Thus, she used the category of the victim in a political way that opened up the domain of rights for the denouncer. In a sense, like other cultural mediators who played a similar role in courtrooms and police stations, Promise had become a ventriloquist of the state who voiced a story in the language provided by bureaucracy while making it seem as if it were spoken by someone else, the “I” of the account. As a ventriloquist, however, she did not passively master the state’s language. On the contrary, the bureaucratic language of denuncia compelled her creativity and allowed her to purposefully use it to help women obtain legal status.

The Subject Redeemed

From the point of view of the law, the production of a testimony, in the form of a bureaucratic confession facilitated by someone else’s voice—the cultural mediator’s—allows for a second birth characterized by freedom from subjection and exploitation. The very process of verbalizing a woman’s story in the text of the denuncia represents both the inscription and institution of what the state would like to believe is the truth about the other. 15 After observing and listening to how the texts of denuncia took shape in the course of the interrogations, it occurred to me that the story produced in filing criminal charges uncannily resembled the process of religious confession, when sins are formally, but privately, admitted to the priest in order for the sinner to be redeemed. The bureaucratic and confessional discourses overlap and create a diffuse victim discourse while also producing what I call a form of confessional recognition. Redemption and expiation, therefore, are central issues not only for Catholic groups involved in aid programs but also for the integration policies promoted by the state. Just as spiritual redemption is attained only after passing through different phases of purification—including remorse, confession of one’s own sins, penance, acceptance of the consequences of one’s own sins, transformation of oneself through reform, and, finally, the forgiveness of God that washes one clean of those sins—the program of social protection and rehabilitation functions according to a logic of expiation. Filing criminal charges against one’s own exploiters is a form of social and bureaucratic confession strictly connected to the will to pay one’s debt to society through both penance and self-reform. The consequences women have to pay usually entail feeling guilty, ashamed, and being suspended from life in the world—from work, earning money, and mastering their own everydayness. But, in the end, the state’s grace is bestowed in the form of legal recognition, and the testimony of the past can be erased just as sins are washed away by the power of God’s grace. Through the act of confession, the secrets that keep the subject a victim of her own weakness and impurity are revealed, and the subject is freed.

For Michel Foucault (1980), since the Middle Ages, Western societies have established confession as one of the main techniques for the production of truth. A confessional outpouring since the nineteenth century has shaped various fields of knowledge, including justice, medicine, education, and love. Confessional technologies in modern Europe were based on the assumption that truths are hidden within the individual, and further, that revelation is purifying. The history of penance teaches us that by the very act of verbalizing sins, the individual expels them; by naming the transgression, one is cleared of its consequences.

In a lecture at the Collège de France on Christian rituals of confession, Foucault (2003) sketched the history of the confession of sexuality by surveying the ritual of penance and the role of confession in it. Originally, confession was not part of the ritual of penance; it only became necessary and obligatory in the twelfth century. In early Christianity, the remission of sins was possible only by virtue of the severity of the penalties the individual deliberately and voluntarily inflicted on himself—or were publicly inflicted on him by the bishop—by adopting the status of penitent. The ritual of penance did not require private or public confessions of one’s own transgressions. Starting from the sixth century, a new model of “tariffed” penance emerged. According to this new system of remission of sins—essentially based on a lay, judicial, and penal model—for every type of transgression there was a cat-

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15. In the French context, Didier Fassin (2000) compares the process of requesting state budget allocations in support of the unemployed with the renewal of residency permits for migrants by invoking the genre of the supplique (plea or petition). It refers to the obligation to tell one’s own story to the state to access services, and it resembles a confession laïque (secular confession), through which one’s suffering is exchanged for a residency permit or access to financial aid and services. The applicant has nothing else to trade but his autobiographical account, spelled out in the register of a plea, with the aim to evoke feelings of compassion and piety in those who grant access to rights and documents.
alog of obligatory penalties. In order for the priest to apply the appropriate penance, the transgression needed to be stated, described, and recounted in all its detail so that it could be matched with the corresponding “tariff.” While this system of cataloged sins and penances marks the birth of confession as part of the ritual of penance, it also shows the secular and judicial origins of this practice, one that resembles the act of filing charges against oneself, of denouncing oneself as a sinner.

This history of confession, which illustrates the fundamental tie between legalistic approaches and sin and transgression, allows me to argue, in turn, that the religious and moral dimensions of confession (as a penalty that marks the beginning of the process of expiation) reemerge as tools of recognition in the juridical practices of filing criminal charges and of the admission of crimes in the denuncia. While these two practices are not the same, they still resonate with each other: a juridical logic echoes in confession and a confessional logic echoes in denuncia.

The act of denuncia is partly based on a form of confession during which women admit their position as “victims” of larger networks of exploitation. In the story told at the police station, women must emphasize their lack of awareness in getting involved in prostitution. The dimension of “betrayal”—of having been misled by their traffickers—must emerge from the account as a proof of their innocence and unwillingness to work as prostitutes. What counts in order for a denuncia to be effective in obtaining a residency permit is the intention behind the decision to migrate. If, through the narratives produced during the interrogation, a woman can prove that she did not plan to work in the sex industry, she has a higher chance of qualifying as a victim. In the split between the actions performed (prostitution) and the intention behind them, the law can measure the degree of victimhood. Similarly, confession constitutes itself as an internal jurisdiction that evaluates the intentions behind actions—the inner dispositions of the individual rather than her external actions. As Foucault points out, “In the scholastic tradition it was known that not only actions but also intentions and thoughts had to be judged” (Foucault 2003:189). Confession was aimed at stealing the desire for heresy from the subject before she even committed it.

Denuncia only partly resembles the process of confession. Denuncia is about claiming and proving to be a victim, while confession entails admitting one’s own sins. But the two overlap in the sense that the Church needs a confession in order to make a denunciation. What emerges in both genres is the fact that the narrative itself performs the specific task of showing the substance of the person, her real intentions, so that she can be recognized as a victim. This logic is opposite to the logic of biometrics recognition (Maguire 2009), where evidence provided by the body reveals someone’s identity but not the story she may have to offer. The boundaries between confession and denuncia are blurred.

To be recognized as a victim requires proving to be without sins, or at least showing purity of intent. Nonetheless, filing criminal charges in the context of the rehabilitation program does have a confessional connotation inasmuch as it marks the first step of a process of transformation and self-reform. The whole structure of the rehabilitation program is premised on the idea that women need to be reeducated in order to become “autonomous and independent.” This first step into a new life seems to suggest the redemptive power of the denuncia as a first act of expiation, of the will to expel an impure act from one’s own life: the act of prostituting oneself. Unlike confession in the sixth century, denuncia is not ruled by a set of penalties that meet corresponding criminal actions, primarily because by denouncing, women are not admitting their own crimes but someone else’s criminal actions. In this sense, confession and denuncia are two very different practices. In confession the penitent admits his own sins and takes responsibility for them. The sinner is aware of her wrong doings and confesses them before the priest to receive forgiveness.

In filing criminal charges, women denounce someone else’s wrong doings. As victims, they are exempt from responsibility: they ended up in prostitution because they were forced into it. And yet, in the implementation of the rehabilitation program, there is a tendency to set certain conditions, much like the “penalties” that ruled confession, on the women if they are to gain full access to rights and services. In other words, going through the program is a form of expiation of sins—the price women must pay to be recognized and accepted. Women must demonstrate their full acceptance of the program, show their progress in handling their life away from the street, and show that they will not “relapse” into prostitution. The state, therefore, portrays denuncia as the first step of a process of transformation, redemption, and conversion of one’s lifestyle and comportment. Government officials and Catholic nuns monitor this process and have the power to judge whether it is successful or not.

Denuncia has a performative dimension; it institutes the denouncer as a subject of the law by the very act of crafting the space for a specific “I” to enunciate a story.16 In adhering to the category of the victim, foreign women are subjected to a set of rules and norms that delimit the field of both what can be said and what exceeds its limits. Certain words make things happen. In confession, too, words have a performative power. According to a confessional logic, by verbalizing sins and transgressions, the individual expels them; by revealing the transgression, one becomes pure and cleansed of its consequences. In this way, truth is reestablished by eliminating any trace of untruthfulness, and redemption is possible. From the point of view of the state, the purpose of collecting accounts of women’s experiences of migration and prostitution is mainly to unveil the “truth” of their stories and thus recognize them as “victims” rather than “prostitutes.” By inscribing women onto the register of “the victim,” the state po-

16. This kind of speech has to do with what Austin (1962) called the “performative.” For a critique of Austin’s theory of performativity, see Bourdieu (1991).
sitions them in a socially acceptable and legally commensurable category, thus making them digestible through translation. In this way, the state produces its own legal truth. One of the main differences between denuncia and confession is that the former starts as an oral testimony but is aimed at becoming a written text. Confession, on the other hand, is merely oral.

Just as sins are redeemed by being verbalized before the confessor, being a prostitute can be translated into victimhood—and thus lead to inclusion and recognition—by being verbalized in an official document. Both confession and denuncia represent a moment of redemption of the victim (and the prostitute) or of what is represented as such in different discursive fields. This redemptive logic at the heart of the victim rehabilitation program is one aspect of the politics of recognition through which the state translates difference into its own intelligible categories and thus redeems the other from her own untranslatable difference.

Conclusion

The denuncia tells a story that can be traded for recognition and inclusion. It is the inscription of a truth and a presence, both partial and in tension with other truths and other ways of being present. It provides a narrative crafted through specific connections and chronological demands aimed ultimately at forging a testimony that the state can hear. In denuncia, the case of victims, the subject of the law, can only be produced in translation. Within the police department, the testimony is received in translation and becomes the pact a woman makes with the state. This pact is the same act of denunciation that citizens were required to perform in early modern Europe as a sign of loyalty to the state and its sovereign functions (Fitzpatrick and Gellately 1996). By means of denuncia, women provide a “bureaucratic confession” that, I argue, leads to a project of “confessional recognition.” Inclusion is granted on the basis of an autobiographical account that performs, for the state, the disclosure of a life that needs reformation to be fully recognized.

In the text of the denuncia, testimonies are “packaged” in victim stories that in turn can be traded for a particular space of life. The state consumes these stories in order to recognize the other, her strangeness. There is almost an ingestion of the other's stories to produce the counterfeit of inclusion (Mauss 2000) and of access to rights and services. In the process of the objectification of the woman’s story, the violence of denuncia—and of translation—turns women into the social category of the victim and allows them entrance into the grammar of the state.

In Fanon’s analysis of colonialism (1967 [1952]), the colonized struggles against the colonizer’s objectifying gaze and against a sovereign state apparatus, which defines the terms of the fight for recognition. Fanon argues that the colonized are always determined from without, that their identity is the outcome of alienation, of being recognized in terms of something he is not. In other words, struggling to be recognized actually keeps the colonized marginal and alienated. Similarly, the politics of recognition in host countries risk promising equal recognition to all—nationals and nonnationals—while defining the very terms of this inclusion by which the marginalized may be recognized. As Butler (1997) explains, the subject is bound to look for recognition of its own existence in categories that the dominant discourse has created. Such categories provide the individual with an opportunity for social intelligibility but at the price of a new form of subordination. Yet this subordination figures as the condition for the subject’s existence. While the state portrays women who enter the rehabilitation program as victims who come to occupy the position of a sovereign subject, in practice they reoccupy a position assigned to them by a sovereign state that, in some ways, has already alienated them. Within this kind of approval—fixed and defined by the host society—foreigners (cultural mediators and those who report to the police) learn how to move creatively and make it work to their advantage. Sometimes they must manipulate it in order to survive and be included; they occupy the position of the subject who is constantly produced by and producing testimonies and narratives. She is simultaneously creating her own experiences and getting trapped in how others represent her.

Women’s various and complex positions vis-à-vis the language of the rehabilitation program substantiate the state’s discourse of victimhood and simultaneously question the truth claims at its core. The stories that converge in the denuncia are the result of several regimes of truth intersecting with each other; they produce a testimony that, while not entirely truthful, is nevertheless not a lie either. This is the performative power of the confessional.

Acknowledgments

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Many aspects of war are deliberately kept secret, but some are so mundane that they simply are not reflected upon. In the face of the brutal mass violence of most wars today, these mundane secrets are not spectacular enough to capture media attention or the observers’ imaginations. They are, in a sense, the unmarked secrets of everyday war. In this article, I address such unmarked secrets of war. Focusing on war-torn northern Uganda, I follow two parallel threads. One is the anthropology of life histories, or my journey into anthropology in conjunction with the stories of a few Ugandan key informants. The second thread exposes the conditions that influence a researcher’s tendency to craft and edit data and experience. In acknowledging the entanglements of the two threads, I focus on storytelling and listening in situations that initially may remain unmarked—and thus silent and even secret—to the outside participant observer. In addition, rather than presenting any straightforward story of the war in northern Uganda, I extend a conversation on methodology.

We cannot speak of objectively existing facts: theory creates facts. Consequently there is no such thing as “history” as an independent science. History is observation of facts in keeping with a certain theory; an application of this theory to the facts as time gives birth to them. The life that lies behind me is opalescent, a shimmer of many colors. Some things strike and attract me. Others are dead. (Malinowski 1967:114)

Wars are fought, won, and lost. Wars are told in stories, and as Kimberly Theidon (2013) shows in her book on the war in Peru, the telling of war “is always steeped in relations of power” (6). From this perspective, peace is the continuation of war. The consequences of war can be visible on the bodies of its survivors as scars, disabilities, and lost limbs. Even after war, such marked bodies remain sites of war, as Hollander and Gill (2014) delineate for postwar northern Uganda. Marked bodies reveal the secrets of war.

Many aspects of war remain unmarked—invisible, hidden, even deliberately kept secret—while some are so mundane that they simply are overlooked, deemed unworthy or unnecessary of reflection. They are, in the face of other examples of brutal mass violence and excess, not spectacular enough to capture our imaginations or the attention of media. They are the everyday secrets of war.

This article is about the telling of such everyday secrets of war. As long as a holder of a secret can keep control over it, he or she can better navigate the terrains of war truths. But when secrets are captured by the powerful and travel the world, they are reframed to fit the narrative of the powerful. The original secret may then evolve into a public or, as I will show, geophysically confined secret.

My argument proceeds along two parallel threads. One thread, the anthropology of life histories, combines my own journey into anthropology with the stories of a few of my key informants. Here, I aim to be self-critical while unveiling the conditions for the second thread—a researcher’s tendency to craft and edit data and experience. In combining these two threads, I focus on telling and listening in situations that initially may remain unmarked—and thus silent and even secret—to the participant observer.

My paper is exploratory, an illustration of the intersubjectivity of fieldwork where facts, evidence, and truths are made and realized. My aim is not to give an account of the war in northern Uganda but to extend a conversation on methodology to illustrate how secrets may reveal themselves in the fieldwork process. I explore ways to work with Jennifer Johnson-Hanks’s (2002) theory of “vital conjunctures,” founded in indeterminacy and innovation, and to respond to her call for an anthropology of life histories that transcends the fixity of its own models. I present glimpses into life itself—moments in history illustrating times of both war and peace. The moments I am about to describe should not be read as simple anecdotes or isolated episodes but as events coming out of other events that together unfold a pattern of open, unfinished, and lingering potentialities of war (Jackson 2005; Kapferer 2010). It is a potentiality ingrained in the most mundane aspects of ev-

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November 1997: From Kampala to Gulu, Uganda

Here I was, 27 years old—or rather 27 years young—unmarried, a “man without a woman,” as my newfound Ugandan friends would define me. I had arrived in Uganda for the first time in my life, adjusting to the fact that my Kampala lodge everyday served only liver stew for breakfast. Before leaving peaceful Kampala for Acholiland in war-torn northern Uganda, in search of my “real field,” I apparently imagined it in my notes from that day, I got some extra supplies that I thought were needed. Besides a new toothbrush, I bought razors and a bar of Imperial Leather soap, a brand name that somehow captured my imagination.

When I arrived in Acholiland, war had already ravaged the region for 11 years. Joseph Kony and his Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) controlled the rural areas. Former rebel leader Alice Lakwena’s forces had been defeated by the Ugandan army, but Lakwena was still living in Kenyan exile (Allen 1991; Behrend 1999). Today Kony’s rebels still continue the “trail of death” (Human Rights Watch 2010) in what is characterized best as a regional, even global, dirty war involving not only the rebels and the Ugandan army but also an ever-growing apparatus of international interventions, humanitarian and military (Branch 2011). Over some three decades now, Kony’s rebels have abducted and forced into fighting tens of thousands of minors, and they have committed crimes of extraordinary violence. The International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for Kony and four other rebel leaders, causing debate among human rights activists and academics (see, e.g., Allen 2006; Armstrong 2014; Branch 2007; Clarke 2009; Finnström 2010b; Nouwen 2013). With the arrest of rebel commander Dominic Ongwen in January 2015 and three other indicted commanders deceased, only Kony himself remains at large.

Throughout the war in northern Uganda, which started in the aftermath of Yoweri Museveni’s 1986 military takeover and his harsh implementation of one-party rule (Finnström 2008; Tripp 2010), the Museveni government’s brutal counterinsurgency measures, such as arbitrary killings and rape of civilians; torture; forced labor at gunpoint; the forced displacement, often again at gunpoint, of millions of people to squalid camps; and other potential crimes against humanity have been made possible as a consequence of the UN system and massive international humanitarian interventions (Branch 2011; Dolan 2009; Janmyr 2014). With outside organizations intervening to provide aid to the camps, Ugandan authorities had their hands free, and external aid interventions enabled the brutalization of the Ugandan army’s violent counterinsurgency campaign. This was especially the case from 1986 to 2005, when the war was still fought mainly in northern Uganda, where I undertook my doctoral and postdoctoral research (Finnström 2003, 2008). Since the early 1990s, Kony’s rebels have been operating from bases in South Sudan. In 2005 they shifted base to northeastern Congo, eventually leaving Uganda altogether, and around 2008, they moved farther away from Uganda to the Central African Republic and Darfur (Allen and Vlassenko 2010; Atkinson 2009, 2010, afterword; Cabaj 2010; Schommer 2007). With the rebels pushed out of Uganda, some kind of peace came to northern Uganda. It is, however, a peace that harbors an abundance of ex-fighters and their weapons, massive poverty, and unresolved political grievances (Branch 2011:10). Peace may end up being so painful, as Baines, Harris, and McCleery

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(2010) demonstrate, that many may again choose a life with a gun.

October 2013: Gulu Town, Northern Uganda

After 3 years absence, I am again together with my Ugandan friends and longtime coworkers Tonny Odiya-Labol and Jimmy Otim. We have known each other since my first visit to Uganda in 1997. As I revisit my notebooks, I notice that Tonny and Jimmy are not among the informants whose names I carefully scribbled down, whose family and kin I desperately and rather naively tried to chart. In retrospect, these efforts remind me of Crapanzano’s (1984) classic exposure of some central dilemmas with anthropological life-history studies, notably the problems of obvious truisms and naive empiricism. They remind me too of Johnson-Hank’s (2002) critique of the common anthropological focus on the life-course model from birth to death, which supposes rather rigid life stages (from child to adult) and set statuses (son, mother, married, etc.). In contrast, in my notes, the characters of Tonny and Jimmy reveal themselves slowly, little by little, without any proper introduction or direct presentation. They appear here and there. In October 2013, 16 years after we first met, all three of us are seated around a table in Gulu town, northern Uganda, under the shade of a mango tree, having some tea and listening to the story of Kofi. Independently of each other, some weeks earlier Jimmy and Tonny had both paid Kofi a visit, informing him that I was about to visit Uganda again and that I was eager to link up with him. Kofi used to run a fancy hair salon in Gulu town, and during my fieldwork in 1999–2000, he was my preferred hairdresser.

Kofi used to cut my hair with electric clippers that left only millimeters, and this perhaps explained the widespread rumor in town at that time that I was a US Marine on a secret intelligence mission. What other explanation for my presence in northern Uganda could there possibly be? This experience and other similar developments reveal the work I had to do on my embodied biography in the field. Such work is what anthropological fieldwork is largely about—the entanglement of the fieldworker’s positioning of himself or herself with how he or she is positioned by informants. The “field” is nothing but the unfolding of events that takes place in front of the fieldworking anthropologist. We build our ethnography by way of the relationships that we establish in the process.

My 2013 notebook records that Kofi in 2009 had tried his luck as a contracted security guard in Baghdad. Although the Baghdad experience was exciting and rewarding, he eventually ended up at home completely broke, losing even his barber shop. His fate was all too common among Ugandan contractors, as I was to find out from other informants. At one point during our tea break, Tonny asked whether there were any churches in Baghdad. Leaving Uganda for Iraq, one war zone for another, the first more familiar than the second, Kofi answered by summarizing his Baghdad experience in a few poignant words: "Actually, from there I was praying a lot, more than here."

Several hours later, our conversation, with a life of its own, had turned to the alleged agenda behind international interventions in Iraq as well as in Africa. We talked about academics’ participation in development and humanitarian work but also about the active involvement of some researchers in warfare and intelligence work. Tonny named a few internationally renowned scholars who, because of what I take to be the lack of transparency in their work, he concluded were working as spies in northern Uganda. Indeed, to do anthropological research is difficult because a growing number of anthropologists are, and have been, involved in war-related and secret counterinsurgency research. "As a result," Sluka (1995) noted, writing on his own work in Belfast, "people in many parts of the world have come increasingly to believe that anthropologists, even those engaged in ‘innocent’ (or in Boas’s terms ‘honest’) research, are actually or potentially dangerous to them" (283). The discussion took us from Iraq and Kofi’s experiences there back to Uganda and the site of another US intervention, USAID’s spraying for mosquito control to prevent malaria, which entailed the careful marking and numbering of every hut sprayed in rural northern Uganda. "Any program the Americans are involved [with], that program will not have a tangible result, like 100 percent," Jimmy said as he put his argument on the table. "Like this program, this indoor spraying. To be honest, mosquitoes are not going to go anywhere, but [the spraying] is meant to kill the mosquitoes. We hear that they are running this program for 5 years, 10 years, then we ask, exactly what are you doing? The mosquitoes are not going to die; they will always come back.”

Jimmy had touched a common chord. While Tonny was murmuring in agreement, Kofi added an "Exactly!" Jimmy continued, "So the issue [cannot be] about spraying. The issue is about how people naturally [can] control their environment, much as the mosquitoes are less and less. But spraying, how do we even know that spraying [can help]? And this is why people started to resist the spraying. They know that this spray is just going to kill our crops, or kill us, or even make men impotent.”

Tonny interrupted to describe the day when USAID workers came to spray his rural homestead; his children soon after complained of itchy skin. It was only then, after the spraying, that Tonny understood why two of his neighbors, both health workers at a town hospital, had refused the spraying. The spray was a killer, but even so, the mosquitoes were soon back. Immediately after the spraying, Tonny had to take his family out of the huts. For two nights they slept under the stars, a harsh reminder of the situation at the height of the war when people deserted their homes every night, hiding in the bush during the dark hours in an effort to dodge rebel attacks. "So, they take that chance,” Tonny concluded of the USAID spraying, "of your weakness. They take that chance. . . . Like these people who come to drill boreholes. Some of them are [working as] intelligence. Exactly like that. You never know.”

Still, in 2013 in northern Uganda, with the rebels gone, at least for the time being, the mosquito spray remained a killer...
of sorts. Some people swallowed it to commit suicide and some used it to poison others. But importantly, the stories about indoor spraying are not a lapse into conspiratorial paranoia. Rather, they illustrate how interventions may impose a conflation of the private with the public, with military interventions in one sphere of life fusing with humanitarian interventions in another. The story about spraying represents the everyday ontologies of uncertainty, imagined within the story-tellers’ horizons of experience. And the story says something about the secrets of war and postwar life. Increasingly military and humanitarian interventions are delivered concurrently and are often inseparable.

One example is the Guardian’s allegation that the US intelligence machinery made use of a Pakistani, Dr. Shakil Afridi, in the hunt for Osama Bin Laden. In the weeks before the military operation that killed Bin Laden, Shah writes in the Guardian, “Afridi was instructed to set up a fake vaccination scheme in the town of Abbottabad, in order to gain entry to the house where it was suspected that the al-Qaeda chief was living, and extract DNA samples from his family members” (Shah 2012; see also Price 2014). Many Pakistani people have since concluded that polio vaccine is part of a secret Western conspiracy to sterilize them. What is important here is not to confirm or reject such conspiracies and counterconspiracies or to dissect the politics of secrecy and truth, because such conspiracies have lives of their own. Rather, in Pakistan, as in Uganda, we see the complex and troubled relations between public and private life, between war and peace, with the private lives of the beneficiaries appropriated, even violated, by outside interventions, military and humanitarian. Any speculations among the beneficiaries of the secret agendas of humanitarian and military interventions are meaningful and thus anthropologically interesting.

On a personal level, I found it extraordinary to discuss the secret agendas of outside interventions in Uganda and the Middle East. I was in Uganda to present Jimmy and Tonny with Virtual War and Magical Death, the anthology that I just had published (Whitehead and Finnström 2013). The direction of our conversation paved the way for the handover, and it encouraged me to recount for the group Whitehead’s (2013) central argument in his chapter and his description, by way of Pierre Clastres’s analysis, of anthropology’s colonial and invasive legacy. Clastres (1989, 1998) argued that people would not need to talk to outside researchers, if they were not so obliged as “informants.” If people were healthy and the situation peaceful, they would not need to share their lives with outsiders in ways defined by these very same outsiders. Whitehead (2013) suggests that the persistent colonial role of anthropology is through its unsilencing of others, of disclosing secrets. Whitehead and I refer to this as a torturous legacy (Whitehead and Finnström 2013:12).

Tonny listened to my brief summary, and agreed “Correct. Just like that.” Kofi continued, summarizing the whole argument: “You have to inject poverty to be able to extract information.”

The conversation did not have any consistent structure. Rather, it unfolded, and it was no longer obvious what aspect of our interaction was ethnographically observed “data” and what was intersubjective, negotiated “interpretation.” When ethnography as process—the flow of fieldwork entering the notebooks—is analyzed and presented as a product and then fed back to the ethnographic process by way of a book handed over by the anthropologist to the informants, it embeds me, the supposed outsider, in the narrative practices of the field. There I was with stories that had traveled from the place of the actual storytelling events—via external reviews, revisions, and editing—to the nonplace of the printed text and back again to the place of the original storytellers. Anthropology intervenes (Strathern 2014) no less than USAID’s spraying of huts.

Here lies a key to my argument. If the telling of war and other things, as I suggest, is steeped in relations of power that ultimately will define how data are crafted and edited, an anthropological ambition must be to find ways to account for the agency of the protagonist of the story or the storyteller herself. But also, to follow what Adamu Jenitongo, a Nigerien informant, demanded from Paul Stoller (2014), the American anthropologist, “If you want to tell my story, you have to tell your story as well.” As my tales illustrate, an informant’s story is always the result of a complex, self-constituting negotiation that includes the researcher’s interventions (Crapanzano 1984; Eastmond 2007).

From 1997 to 2013: Northern Uganda

My approach to fieldwork calls for efforts to complicate the dominant narratives (Price 2014). Back in 1997, Africanist historian Gérard Prunier summarized the LRA with a set of all-too-common tropes on Africa that would continue to dominate most stories about the war for the following decade or so. The readers of Prunier’s piece in Le Monde Diplomatique could read that the LRA is an “apocalyptic” and “millenarian force” with “bizarre syncretic beliefs” kept going thanks to “unemployed youngsters in the rural areas,” while rebel leader Joseph Kony’s “only political programme” is said to be “the observance of the Ten Commandments and opening a Bank of Uganda in Gulu” (Prunier 1997). Responding to this, some 10 years later I wrote,

Throughout my years of research, I have neither seen the claim about a bank office in any LRA document nor heard of it in any of their statements, but rather than being something we may ridicule, it can be noted that today even Barclays has opened an office in northern Uganda, connecting previously disconnected Ugandans to the outside world and its wider developments. (Finnström 2010a:76)

Indeed, over the Internet I regularly send money to a few Ugandan friends. And when I visited northern Uganda in October 2013, Jimmy and I counted some 10–15 national and international bank offices in Gulu town. I could withdraw cash with my Visa card all over the place.

As the presence of these banks demonstrates, the problem of postwar northern Uganda is not the lack of money but
rather how money defines how stories are told and also how secrets are made. War, peace, and humanitarian aid have been good business. In this light, perhaps Joseph Kony showed foresight when, if we are to believe Prunier, he demanded a bank office be opened in northern Uganda. What is a bank if not the means of economic and social development?

“There seems to be lot of money around,” I commented to Jimmy as we tried to count the banks. “Honestly, there is quite a lot of money,” he replied. “That’s the truth. Like someone said, Uganda doesn’t have to borrow money anywhere, because we really have that money. Raised through taxes as well, there is quite a lot of money.”

His comment reminded me of something that appears in my 2005–2007 fieldwork notebooks. People in Acholiiland had arrived at their own everyday understanding of the workings of accountability, the buzzword of the neoliberal developmental regime. They called it “akwal-tability,” after the Acholi word kwalo (to steal). In English, accountability then translates as “the ability to steal.” Jimmy continued,

I think the problem is with the donors as well. Most of them have tried to cut it off now. It is their problem as well really. I think, for them it is a way of life. For me now, I see what USAID is doing. If you go inside USAID, what they do, the Americans are very clever. They have one agenda, of course, of looking for something. But also the second one: many, half the staff, they are Americans. So they pay back themselves a lot of money. It is simple.

As Jimmy’s critique suggested, more than the empowerment of local beneficiaries, a consequence of humanitarian and development intervention is the entrepreneurial extraction of local resources. At the same time, if humanitarian intervention is money driven, humanitarians themselves often trade in truth to be able to sustain and legitimate their interventions. As Peregrine writes, referencing Lyotard, “the more money spent on a given claim to truth, the greater its performativity and the stronger its ability to legitimately claim to be ‘true’” (Peregrine 2013:645).

In the production of the winner’s history, and of the truth, whatever rebel leader Joseph Kony and his comrades in arms say will be interpreted as senseless by most humanitarians and more profoundly by the media industry. Other alternatives are kept secret, as when I interviewed a European working for one of the most influential nongovernmental organizations in northern Uganda. He denied that the rebels had ever presented any political claims (legitimate or not), although I knew for a fact that he had several rebel documents in the folder that he had closed and placed between us on his office desk. I also knew that the rebels had addressed some of their written communications to his organization. I had met with the person who took the letters from the rebels to the international organizations in Gulu town and Kampala. Once again the telling of war was steeped in relations of power. Yet the anthropological effort to scrutinize the control over representation (and thus of truth) may render vulnerable the informants and their secrets, something I will turn to next.

June 2004: Uppsala, Sweden

Tonny is visiting Sweden, and one late afternoon we are sitting on my balcony, chatting, and enjoying a cold beer. One aspect of my research has been to try to understand the political motivations of the LRA, which, as I indicate above, unfolded during my fieldwork as public secrets. The terror and violence committed by the rebels over the years tended to take focus away from the political grievances of the noncombatant population. The war is frequently described as a bizarre African war that really cannot be comprehended, and my informants were often careful when they expressed their views publicly. But the LRA did produce intelligible manifestos (Finnström 2010a). In northern Uganda during the war, this was a public secret that local people and government and army representatives shared with representatives of most outside humanitarian organizations. Yet among government officials and humanitarians, there seemed to be agreement to keep this confined to northern Uganda. It was not reported. It was not part of any analysis or of any publication. It was denied and produced as a secret.

When in 1997 a Ugandan journalist showed me a rebel manifesto that had been given to him, I immediately showed it to Tonny. By then we had built quite some rapport, and he was willing to assist in connecting me with people who were in possession of more rebel documents and those who had active links with the rebels. On this basis, I had some data to draw on when I eventually analyzed the political claims of the rebel movement. Now, years later and a continent away from the war in Uganda, Tonny read my analysis of the rebel manifestos in my thesis (Finnström 2003). That June afternoon in Uppsala in 2004, he wanted to further substantiate my analysis. He took a sip of beer, and told me that he used to have all those rebel documents himself, although he neither told me about them nor showed them to me. There was a time, he said, when things were so sensitive and tense that he decided to destroy them all. I did not ask whether this coincided with me being brought in for questioning by the Ugandan security apparatus. In early 2000, Tonny had warned me that security personnel were asking questions about me and had approached people in my surroundings. I had already figured out that one of my friends from my 1997 visit to Uganda was working for the Ugandan security organization, and when I returned in late 1999, I tried to distance myself from him. My interview by security officers was tense, but they gained little from questioning me. Apparently I had created suspicion when I had stopped attending the public security briefings that the army regularly held with the international organizations. As I explained to them, the army’s security people had ejected me from one of the meetings and banned me from attending more. But I toured the rural area on a small motorbike, refused convoys with military escorts, and did not end up in any rebel
ambush: to the security officers this was proof that I was a link between the Ugandan diaspora and the rebels in the bush, and that I was traveling extensively to meet with rebel units. Indeed, a rebel sympathizer in Gulu town had secretly offered to send an “amnesty order” to all operating rebel units inside Uganda so that my small motorbike was never ambushed. I had declined this and other offers from the rebel side.

Can I really deny what my presence in northern Uganda, however innocent, seemed to suggest, namely, a link between rebels in the Ugandan bush and their supporters in Europe and Sweden? One day in 2005, I had two Ugandan visitors in my Uppsala University office—Tekkwo and Patrice, both in Sweden as political refugees. They shared my concern about the difficult situation in northern Uganda, and with me as a mediator, they wanted to meet. Patrice had joined Yoweri Museveni, the guerilla leader, who after 5 years of war in central Uganda in 1986 captured the capital Kampala, marking the beginning of the war in northern Uganda. Patrice drew the line of Kampala highway, from the crossing of the Nile River and northwards to Gulu town. He described how he advanced with his troops along the highway. He then marked out a particular bend of the road. “At this junction,” he said, “we met stiff resistance.” Tekkwo, a former army soldier turned rebel commander with the 1986 change of government, looked at the map. “I know,” he said, “I sent my boys there.”

They had been fighting the same war, even the same battles, on different sides. They had survived each other’s bullets and were now living in exile. They were united in the fact that they both had been forced to leave Uganda because of threats from Museveni and his close military associates.

When Patrice left my office, Tekkwo remained. We were silently contemplating the map on the whiteboard. I knew Tekkwo well and that he had been arrested, tortured, and imprisoned in Uganda. It was only a daring escape to Tanzania that had saved his life, but not all of those with whom he escaped survived. Tekkwo had revealed his life history only slowly and over a long period of time and many meetings. There was no way, he told me as we stared at the map, that an influential army commander such as Patrice could claim innocence in relation to his arrest. Patrice must have known of the systematic torture of rebel prisoners, if he had not sanctioned it. When Tekkwo and Patrice had negotiated possible ways to join hands against Museveni’s government, the war had united them right there in my office. This moment was, however, lost; their respective war histories were too tainted by the secrets of this dirty war. The experiences of the past eventually caught up with Tekkwo. He could no longer escape the war that followed him wherever he went. He kept too many secrets not because they all had to be kept secret but because few Swedes believed him, especially Swedish immigration authorities and various health establishments. His narrative did not fit the system’s set formula for posttraumatic stress disorder. As with Theidon’s (2013) Peruvian informants, “there are secrets that eat away at a person from the inside out” (364). In 2012 Tekkwo traveled back to East Africa, and he died in a mysterious way before he could return to Sweden (see also Finnström 2008: 121).

Like Tonny’s balcony story that opened this part of my paper, Tekkwo’s struggles reflect aspects of the complex realities of doing research, of life and death, of the telling and withholding of information, of vulnerability, and of how the secret is implicated in the private-public relations that constitute the anthropological endeavor.

December 1999: Northern Uganda

The Ugandan researcher Lino Owor Ogora grew up in central and southern Uganda and knew his Acholi fatherland in northern Uganda only through stories and horrifying tales of war. He first set foot in Gulu town in March 2000 and was received by an “atmosphere … so tense that no one dared to venture from the centre of town after dusk. The streets were deserted early in the evening as many people strove to respect the curfew that had been imposed by the Ugandan army” (Ogora 2013:27). Over Christmas 1999, after almost a year’s lull in fighting, rebels again entered Uganda in large numbers. A diplomatic deal between the governments in Khartoum and Kampala, facilitated by the US-based Carter Center, had effectively excluded the LRA, at the time one of the most active and most violent armed groups in the region. Partly as a consequence of being excluded from the deal, the LRA, with a growing feeling of humiliation and abduction, launched new attacks. Just back from a safari to the border of Sudan, Tonny and I had spent Christmas in Gulu town when rumors about the fresh rebel intrusion started to circulate. We soon confirmed the news. The Ugandan army was responding to the rebel intrusion by ordering rural civilians to return immediately to the camps. People found outside the camps would once again be treated as rebel suspects. Some were shot point-blank. This time the army announced a 48-hour deadline after which the areas surrounding the camps were shelled and bombed (Human Rights Watch 2003:62, 67).

Research interventions were also to escalate. Sometimes the storyteller is completely powerless in the face of the massive and invasive power of the listeners, as Ogora’s account illustrates. In 2005 Ogora returned to northern Uganda, working first with a large international organization and then as a researcher with a community-based initiative. By then the horrors of war in northern Uganda had attracted countless outside researchers (me included), graduate students, young and often inexperienced humanitarians, and even war tourists (Nibbe 2012). In this situation of increasing intervention from the outside, Ogora’s competencies were unique. Without language and cultural barriers, and without equally common barriers raised by distancing tools like the journalists’ cameras and microphones or the researchers’ questionnaires and standardized interview formats, research-fatigued informants whom Ogora met no longer felt obliged to greet the visitor with the prescribed courtesies. One day he went to Atiak, best known because of a brutal rebel massacre of over 200 people in 1995.
“Since the fires burnt and cooled in Atiak, I am tired of research work that has been going on here” an old man told Ogora in their mutual mother tongue before he stood up and simply walked away. “I have lost hope in researchers…. We have not seen any results” (Ogora 2013:37). The only agitative freedom left for this research participant was to stop talk, to refuse the unsilencing, and to walk away. This time the secrets of war were to remain untold.

I have partly struggled to stay away from those spectacular and iconic episodes of war, concerned that they would take full possession of the narrative, overshadowing other, more mundane aspects of hope and life in the shadows of war, as when I, the visiting anthropologist, was frequenting Kofi’s booming barber shop. In conversations with Kofi, Tonny, Jimmy, and others, I saw how people’s stories, based on their journeys in life, were not necessarily linear or with any clear direction. Lives are often messed up; so are their chronicles. Yet most scholarly efforts to order people’s narratives in structured chronologies, day-by-day, year-by-year, have a tendency to emphasize critical events that are officially memorialized—the battles and massacres of war, for example—while the small but anthropologically so important moments of everyday life are left unnoticed. Yet everyday stories mediate between the local and the global and between past and future in ways that give new and fruitful understanding to any simplistic chronology of life events, even to the events themselves (cf. Arendt 1961).

This focus on the messiness of everyday stories is not always an easy achievement. It risks muddying the account. In an otherwise positive review of Living with Bad Surroundings (Finntström 2008), Catherine Besteman is more than fair when she notes that my “narrative strategy of shifting back and forth between Ugandan political history and debates about Acholi ethnic identity is interesting but confusing.” Her suggestion to add “a simple chronological timeline of political history, rebellions, and peace accords” (Besteman 2008:3056) seemed to me as more than obvious. “Ah,” I thought. “Why did I not do that? What a good suggestion.”

Yet chronologies may assign the anthropologist the role of the amateur historian while the anthropologist in the process surrenders anthropology to the historians. So, if some historians spice their chronologies of war in Africa with outdated anthropological tropes, as discussed above, the anthropological intervention can strive to produce something else. By way of the everyday, yet to the outsider unfamiliar, anthropology can take issue with the tropes of its own past while offering a critique of the structure and linearity of mainstream analysis. It is also a way, I suggest, to deal with the production of secrets or the stuff that too often is kept away from most analyses and thus left behind and confined to the geophysical war zone.

December 1997: Amuru Camp, Northern Uganda

When I first arrived in war-torn Acholiland, the Gulu branch of the Ugandan Red Cross—whose members were given periodic work by the international mother organization when its relief lorries were loaded and off-loaded—kindly encouraged me to travel with them to rural areas that would otherwise have remained inaccessible. In Kampala, the staff at the Ugandan Red Cross headquarters had before that judged my research to be “too political,” yet one friendly guy had secretly mobilized his personal contacts to help approve my research permit, and it was a Ugandan Red Cross vehicle that took me to the war zone in northern Uganda for the first time. I traveled to Amuru camp for internally displaced Ugandans with a humanitarian Red Cross convoy. There I met Primino, a 60-year-old man who, because of the rebels, was forced in 1993 to leave his village for the camp. The man spoke in Acholi, his native tongue. A Red Cross volunteer from Gulu town, Alayi Sempa Amos, acted as my interpreter. Sempa had moved from Amuru to Gulu town in 1987. The Red Cross now used his old primary school for distribution of relief items. I had met Sempa at a Red Cross function in Gulu town, when we had ended up next to each other during the dinner. He was a medical student and wanted to train as a pediatrician. I told him that both my parents were medical doctors and that my father was a pediatrician. We talked a lot. With Sempa as my interpreter in Amuru, Primino’s story was fascinating, surprisingly personal, and honest. Primino’s wife and child had both been killed by the rebels. He outlined what he saw as the central differences between the initial rebellion led by Alice Lakwena and the rebellion led by Joseph Kony and his LRA that now rocked the region. Our conversation was still with me some 10 years later when I was finalizing my monograph.

A clan elder in Amuru camp smiled at me as I asked my naive question— couldn’t the spiritual world and the ancestors counter the potent but violent spiritual powers of the rebel movement and especially Joseph Kony? “Acholi spirits can only confront other Acholi spirits,” he then explained. . . . “The evil spirits of Kony are something new. They are beyond Acholi spirit mandate; Acholi spirits can’t cope with them. During Alice’s time, there were few [unlawful] killings, even though she failed [in her mission]. She failed, but then there was not as much suffering as now, with Kony. Kony is worse. Alice was fair, at least. Kony kills people who perform the spirits of Acholi. Kony’s spirits are not Acholi. Kony is the root of the evils.” (Finntström 2008:202)

“Spirits are there to help people,” Primino also told me, “if men are impotent and women sterile.” He continued: “If the elders help you to sacrifice to the spirits, by the end of the day you will perform. Spirits make you dance, not kill. That is the work of the spirits: social, cultural.” This part of the interview was, however, lost to me, recovered only when I recently again read my old notebooks. My analytical gaze had been fixed on war, not dance. In telling something, we tend to withhold something else, and this, as Meinert, Obika, and Whyte (2014:14) point out, is never innocent.

After the interview with Primino, Sempa and I traveled back to Gulu town where we drew some preliminary plans for continued research. We bid our farewells to each other,
Wiianaka, Tonny

More than 10 years after I joined Sempa’s Red Cross colleagues preparing the body for the funeral with clean clothes and a coffin, my research took on new dimensions. It was now also personal and private. No one among the European staff with the International Committee of the Red Cross staff attended Sempa’s funeral despite his hardworking, dedicated volunteering in their relief distributions. I felt an intruder and outsider. When I finally raised the courage to ask whether I could take some photos, my friends became almost angry. “We thought that you forgot to bring your camera,” I was told. “Of course you must. We need photos, we need the memory.” At the funeral I learned things about Sempa’s life he had not told me; his secrets perhaps. He had left Amuru for Gulu town in 1987 because he had decided to leave the rebellion, in which he had been an influential commander. Amuru had been his base of insurgency operations. Ethnography was indeed a learning experience.

October 2010: Wiianaka, Northern Uganda

More than 10 years after my first visit, I was again back in Wiianaka, Tonny’s village, to which he and his whole family had returned. We were to spend 1 week together there. This was a kind of peace. All efforts to reach Wiianaka since our last visit in 1999 had failed as rebel presence in the area had just been too high: the rebels had always returned from their bases in (South) Sudan when I returned from Sweden. Now, Wiianaka was beautiful and peaceful. Tonny’s father’s burial site under the shade of a tree at the periphery of the compound made me think of Sempa and other friends who had passed away over the years of my research. We walked the fields and gardens, and we could now finally spend the evenings by the compound fire (wang oo), which would have been impossible during the years of war. The compound fire is a place of tales, remembrances, and teaching stories from where the young can grow and carry with them “all the libraries of facts and happenings,” as an elder once described it. Tonny told me a story from the beginning of the war, in the 1980s, when there had been rumors of a forthcoming army operation against the rebels, including a sweep of Wiianaka and the surrounding area. Every evening when the sun was setting, Tonny and his neighbors deserted their huts to hide deep in the bush, avoiding any crossfire. One night Tonny and his wife Doreen decided to remain at home, but the night was very hot, and they left the door of the hut open. Tonny pointed toward his and Doreen’s old and long since dilapidated hut, located just 100 meters from where we were now seated. He continued his story. The night had been silent, but something suddenly woke them up. “Can you smell?” Tonny had whispered to Doreen. “There is a smell of Imperial Leather.” Doreen nodded. “And cigarettes.” They found it strange to be woken up by the smell of soap and tobacco, but they had no time to think about it. Within seconds Ugandan army soldiers were marching through the vicinity, from compound to compound, door to door, kicking the doors open in search for people. But they found all the huts deserted. There was only one door in Tonny and Doreen’s compound that the soldiers did not have to kick in. The door to their hut was already open, and the soldiers assumed that it was deserted. They did not bother to search it, and instead, proceeded to another compound. Soon the night was silent, the air filled only with the lingering scent of the soldiers’ cigarettes and Imperial Leather.

Seated around the campfire listening to Tonny, I could almost smell it myself. And I realized why Tonny, over the years of our research collaboration, had always come back empty handed when I had asked him to buy me a bar of Imperial Leather, the brand that I had bought when I arrived in Uganda in 1997. Tonny often returned with a polite excuse that the shop he had visited did not have my brand. My insistence must have been torturous for him, yet I had naively concluded that perhaps Imperial Leather was some kind of upmarket and fancy brand, rare in rural shops. Tonny’s war was very different from mine; it still is. It continues to surprise me how my research and my personal decisions may expose the privacy and secrets of my informants, yet the progress of my research depends on such revelations.

Disentanglements: In Conclusion

In the above account, I have followed the dictum of Adamu Jenitong, Paul Stoller’s (2014) informant: in telling stories of my research interlocutors, I have also told something about myself. My aim with this approach was to be methodologically open and self-critical, laying bare a second thread of thought of the ever-present scholarly crafting and editing of data and experience. I have argued that my story line, even as it jumps back and forth in time, should not be taken as a series of isolated episodes but as illustrating events coming out of other events that together form a pattern of lingering potentialities of war and peace. As I illustrate, vulnerability and secrets are produced and sometimes unveiled, and so is an invitation to discuss the secrets of ethnographic fieldwork.

This is an ethnography of process and product, and my stories have touched on everyday, small yet vital conjunctures while acknowledging the sensitive politics involved in “the unsilencing of others” (Whitehead 2013:27). If I have focused on everyday things that remain unmarked and are secrets of a kind, I have also pointed to the need to reevaluate the ethical imperatives and editorial power of the ethnographer’s own subject position, past and present. “The life that lies behind me is opalescent, a shimmer of many colors,” Malinowski (1967:114) wrote. “Some things strike and attract me. Others are dead.”

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Veterans’ Homecomings
Secrecy and Postdeployment Social Becoming

by Birgitte Refslund Sørensen

For Danish soldiers, returning from the battlefields and army camps of international operations to the tranquility of everyday life at home can be a challenging and unsettling experience. Homecoming is often particularly daunting for veterans who leave the army and are compelled to develop a new social identity and find a meaningful life in the civilian world. When doing so, they need to navigate an ambiguous political environment and emergent public imaginaries of the veteran while also wrestling with their own military socialization and personal experiences of war. The certainty previously provided the soldier by rank, function, and mission vanishes and translates into an imperative ontological question about possible veteran subjectivity. In this article I argue that the veterans’ struggle to create postdeployment, postmilitary social identities entails profound secrecy work where past experiences, present conditions, and future ambitions are embedded in webs of concealment, disclosure, exposure, deception, lying, silence, and so forth, only partially controlled by the veterans themselves. The intricacies and anxieties associated with secrecy work are discussed in relation to three veteran trajectories that reflect some of the possible positions that contemporary Danish veterans see for themselves in Danish society.

Over 700 veterans in camouflage uniforms and a similar number of civilians gather on the Royal Life Guards’ grassy drill ground. The veterans have recently returned from 6 months’ tour of duty in Afghanistan and are today officially welcomed home. After inspecting the troops, military commanders address the veterans and their families. Some speak about the veterans’ achievements in bringing security to the local Afghan population, while others emphasize how the veterans relinquished the safety and comfort of home in order to fight for a better world. Yet others pay tribute to the families, stressing their valuable support and acknowledging their suffering. After a march through the streets of inner Copenhagen, crowded with flag-dipping spectators, politicians express their gratitude on behalf of the nation. After the final “Dismissed!” the veterans depart to commence their postdeployment lives.1

Speakers at public homecoming events typically contrast Afghanistan as an alien, dangerous place with Denmark as their safe and cozy home. Yet not all veterans experience their return as a simple journey home. Months of intensive training followed by deployment, life in a camp environment saturated with military culture, and an everyday constituted by the realities of war generate an embodied sense of being at home in the military that does not easily dissolve (Maringira and Carrasco 2015; McSorley 2013; Woodward and Jenkings 2013). As many veteran interlocutors expressed it, Denmark and everyday life in civilian surroundings loses an intimate sense of home and reappears as an anxiety-provoking terrain or one devoid of purpose and meaningfulness. What is publicly referred to as homecoming many veterans experience as a displacement into an unsettling environment. While most veterans struggle to feel at home after deployment, army leavers face particular challenges as they reinvent themselves in a civilian world. For them, homecoming constitutes a “critical event” that requires new social practices and relationships and that demands entirely new narratives (Das 1995; Humphrey 2008).

Self-Creation through Narratives

Narratives are verbal or material articulations of the self in a social world, and storytelling is central to the (trans)formation of social identities and relationships (Davis and Manderson 2014; Jackson 2002; Ricoeur 1991). Mattingly (2013) argues that when it is “uncertain what kind of self one ought to become” (301), the construction of moral selves is never

1. In this article I use the term “veteran” in accordance with Danish policy, which defines a veteran as “a person, who—as an individual or as part of a unit—has been deployed in at least one international operation. The person may still be employed in the military but may also have left the military for a civilian life, job, and/or education” (Danish Government 2010-5).
simply a negotiation between available fixed moral worlds and positions but an exploration of and experimentation with open-ended potentialities. Mattingly’s emphasis on potentiality is poignant to Danish veterans particularly because the social category of the “veteran” only emerged with Denmark’s participation in international military operations from the 1990s.

For veterans, homecoming is a process of social becoming or self-creation, where personal stories about one’s life and history, what Baker (2006) terms “ontological narratives” (26), are created in order to give meaning to life as a soldier as well as to the approaching transition to veteran. Veterans’ ontological narratives often remain largely secret, hidden away in diaries or existing in moments of quiet or agonizing contemplation. Or they may be openly shared with a few trusted people or more or less willingly disclosed to intervening authorities and the wider public. While some veterans live in social isolation with little need for storytelling, the majority attempt to reintegrate themselves into civilian society, making themselves visible and in some ways recognizable if not understandable to others (Davis and Manderson 2014; MacLeish 2013). Veterans not only have to share their stories in ways that make sense to a given audience but also they have to engage with others’ narratives of who and what they are (Açiksöz 2012; Davis and Manderson 2014; MacLeish 2013). Baker (2006) distinguishes between “public narratives,” which are “elaborated by and circulated among social and institutional formations” (33), and “collective narratives,” which feature “a polyvocality of personal stories that have gained currency and acceptance and become normalized” (30). As I later show, veterans’ postdeployment lives emerge from complex negotiations between ontological and emerging public and collective narratives.

While the outcome of negotiations of identity is never predictable, the stakes are exceptionally high for people who—like the veterans—are embedded in morally contentious fields, something that makes issues of secrecy, disclosure, concealment, silence, and deception particularly pronounced in storytelling (Jones 2014; Klitzman and Bayer 2003). Manderson (2014:5), however, reminds us that disclosure is never simply a conscious decision but can be both unintended and circumstantial, adding to the precariousness of emerging narratives and the storyteller’s vulnerability. Considerations about what and how much to tell, what to conceal and what to reveal, whom to tell, when and how, as well as concerns about how to get oneself heard and understood and how to resist or accommodate prevailing public and shared narratives are certainly on the minds of many Danish veterans when, after war, they start exploring possible veteran identities in civilian life.

Storytelling and the creation of veteran identities take place in many different social settings, but medical institutions (Carden-Coyne 2014; Kilshaw 2009; Moss and Prince 2014; Wool and Messinger 2012) and commemorative events (MacLeish 2005; Martinsen 2014; Mosse 1990; Sledge 2005; Sørensen and Pedersen 2012; Verdery 1999) are particularly significant and potent arenas, favoring the veteran as “victim” and “warrior” or “hero.” In this article, I focus on the self-creation of veterans in everyday life following MacLeish’s (2013) cue to write the veterans’ stories from “the middle of things . . . before a reassuring story can knit itself closed around an uncertain aftermath” (7). Since 2010, I have researched the emergence of veterans as a new social category in Denmark, focusing in particular on issues concerning social recognition. This has involved participant observation in political rituals, attendance at public veteran events, visits at veterans’ workplaces and private homes, and interviews with veterans, their families, representatives of veterans’ associations, and other stakeholders. These data are supplemented with official documents, published material, and information distributed through mass and social media. As I focus on how veterans try to create, position, and represent themselves in the public realm, my analysis builds on publicly available information or information freely shared with others during public events. Data from interviews and interaction with veterans have guided me in the selection and contextualization of the three cases.

Contextualizing Veterans’ Narratives
As an outsider civilian anthropologist, it is easy to be captivated by the content of veterans’ narratives alone, and it is important to pay heed to the particular political, social, and cultural contexts that influence their creation, circulation, and reception and insert variant doses of uncertainty and ambiguity. As I discuss below, contemporary Danish veterans’ narratives are significantly conditioned by four major factors: the conspicuous importance of secrecy in military and war, the political and moral policing of ongoing wars, the moral ambiguity of violence in the nexus between military and civilian worlds, and the importance of the body as a source of knowledge and authority for veterans.

Secrecy in Military and War
Information management is essential in any war, and what I term “secrecy work” is an integral part of a soldier’s profession. In conversations with veterans, secrecy surfaced as an issue in numerous ways. Anticipation of political decisions and military plans developed behind closed doors and sealed in classified documents were a constant source of conspiracy theories associated with feelings of exploitation or paranoia. Secrecy also pervaded soldiers’ everyday lives at the front. While intercepting enemy secrets was regarded as essential to survival and success, any disclosure of one’s own secrets was unforgivable. A group of deployed soldiers were thus rebuked for putting their colleagues’ lives at risk by thoughtlessly leaking information about a pending patrol on Facebook (Berlingske 2013). Secrecy also crept into the domestic realm and affected intimate relations. Many spouses complained that while they desired information of the whereabouts of their soldier to reduce anxiety and feel a sense of shared presence across distance, soldiers could share little information. Spouses, on
the other hand, were strongly advised by the military not to mention everyday problems or to express feelings of anxiety, anger, or longing when talking to the soldiers. As a consequence, conversations were experienced as artificial, with both parties seeking to extract messages and meanings that the words did not convey from the hour of receiving a call, the tone of voice, the rhythm of breathing, the length of pauses, and so forth (Sørensen 2013b). What was silenced in some situations, however, the military encouraged soldiers to reveal in others. Regular military debriefings and psychological sessions or confidential conversations with chaplains were integrated into life at the front and back home in order to improve performance and boost morale.

Secrecy was clearly also entangled with military careers. Malingering, Moss and Prince (2014) posit, is “an old and enduring concern” (97), and in interviews veterans revealed their tactical use of different techniques to get the diagnosis or clearance that would support their attempts to be dismissed, deployed, repatriated, or redeployed (see also MacLeish 2013: 93–133). Soldiers’ families were drawn into this secrecy game, as when they refrained from voicing any complaints or asking critical questions on suspicion that it might negatively affect their soldier-relative’s ambitions for a military career (Sørensen 2013b).

Veterans are accustomed to carefully manage flows of information from their time in the military, and they know from experience that the ability to do so successfully has consequences for their opportunities, safety, and well-being. As many veterans discover, proficiency in secrecy work is equally crucial in the civilians’ world when negotiating possible veteran futures.

Policing of Contemporary Wars

When in recent years politicians and veteran advocates have urged the Danish population to show veterans signs of social recognition, they have emphasized distinction between war and soldiers. The two are not easily separated, however, and the social status of the veteran is rarely immune to public opinions about the legitimacy, meaningfulness, achievements, and human costs of particular wars. According to Lutz and Millar (2012:483), war constitutes “a privileged site of morality production” because of its politically, socially, and culturally sanctioned definitions of which human lives can be taken, by whom, and how. This “morality of war,” they continue, is “policed at shifting margins” (Lutz and Millar 2012:483). When Danish troops were deployed to the Balkans in the 1990s and a decade later to Iraq and Afghanistan as a manifestation of Denmark’s new “activist” foreign policy (Wivel 2013), it was the first time in almost 150 years that the Danish army had been in combat. The shift from “peaceful” to “belligerent” nation necessitated a renarrativization of Danish national identity that incorporated war. While military historians insisted that war is a politically silenced essence of Danish history and identity (Jensen 2010), politicians and the military were careful not to overemphasize war as a key aspect of Danish national identity, and they invested considerable energy in building an image of “the good war” (Rasmussen 2011), as illustrated by the army’s achievements in providing schooling opportunities for Afghan girls.

Efforts to generate a public narrative of Denmark’s military engagement took place while the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan continued, making veterans’ storytelling unpredictable and uncertain. New investigations and disclosures of military malpractice or new developments in the zones of war could suddenly produce new interpretations and conclusions regarding past and ongoing missions with direct consequences for how veterans would be perceived by both peers and civilians. As Kelly and Thiranagama (2010) assert, “positions that at one moment seemed the epitome of patriotism and loyalty can be transformed to be seen as disloyal and duplicous, as historical conditions create new frames of evaluation” (20).

The veterans’ sense of precariousness often surfaced in interviews, when they would refer to foreign or Danish soldiers who had been forgotten or ostracized by society when they returned from previous wars. Their anxiety also showed in their agitated comments in social media whenever a previously deployed soldier turned whistle-blower, revealing irregularities or dubious behavior in the military. However, many veterans were equally alert when politicians made exaggerated use of a nationalist or heroic vocabulary, suggesting that their real concern was their lack of control over how their past efforts and current situation were molded and morally evaluated.

Violence in Military and Civilian Worlds

War implicates violence and harm of many kinds, but as MacLeish (2013:6) argues, violence is paradoxically often treated as a tragedy or side effect of war. Further, while certain forms of violence are openly addressed, others are surrounded by secrecy and disappear from public awareness. In Denmark, portraits of all dead and most severely injured soldiers have been published in newspapers, books, and online (Martinsen 2014; Stougaard et al. 2010). In contrast, dead enemies and civilian casualties are not even mentioned by numbers, officially due to practical obstacles or strategic considerations but nevertheless suggesting that these are lives of lesser worth. Danish veterans who have committed suicide are likewise largely silenced knowledge, maybe because suicide so ruthlessly shows the soldiers as “at once the agent, instrument and object of state violence” (MacLeish 2013:12) and exposes the military’s and society’s shortfall (MacLeish 2013:225–226).

Violence is a ubiquitous but delicate matter for veterans, a core element in the construction of moral worlds and subjectivities. Violence assumes such importance here because it is the marker sine qua non of the difference between military and civilian moralities. While the social norms governing civilian life prohibit and sanction violence, it is central to the soldier’s profession, and this incompatibility complicates the transition from soldier to civilian veteran. Many Danish veterans
have accounted how civilians—even strangers—have asked them whether they have killed. Such questions are typically felt as an assault, a transgression of a moral boundary, that robs the veteran of the privilege of controlling silence and disclosure about this most sensitive matter. More importantly, asked by a civilian with no embodied knowledge of war and in a context governed by civilian moral norms, the question implicitly taints the veteran regardless of his answer. Sometimes stigmatization becomes explicit, as when civilians name veterans “murderers” or “killers” or suspect them of aggressive behavior for no particular reason. Consequently, some veterans choose to conceal their military background in civilian settings by talking in codes about their profession, adopting a civilian-like casual bodily behavior, and not wearing a uniform or showing visible soldier tattoos or other disclosing signs.

Violence in war also produces heroes. Having endured violence, survived battles, exercised violence to save innocent lives and defend the nation, even death in combat is intrinsic to (national) heroism (McCartney 2011). As Hedetoft (1993:291) contends, the hero is an ambiguous figure in Danish culture given the emphasis on egalitarianism, simplicity, and the “an”th ero” (see also Gerber 1994:545). Current military experiences challenge these perceptions, opening space for transformations in ideas about Danish war heroes and national identity. Danish veterans’ attempts to develop postmilitary identities are caught up in wider cultural reconfigurations and civilians’ moral judgments of war and violence that have resulted from Denmark’s change in foreign policy goals and means. Even if violence is not openly spoken about, implicit assumptions about veterans’ enactment of, exposure to, and embodied traces of violence shape attitudes and may create powerful prejudices.

Embodied Continuity and Bodily Authority

Bodily experiences and embodied memory warrant particular attention when dealing with veterans’ storytelling. Becoming and being a soldier is essentially an embodied experience, or, as Woodward and Jenkings (2013) phrase it, “military experience is a totality of bodily engagements” (153). Hard physical and mental training aims to transform civilian bodies into physically fit, strong, and resilient soldierly bodies capable and effective in combat (Hockey 2012), but as Carden-Coyne (2014), MacLeish (2013), Messinger (2013), and Wool (2012) show, the bodily disciplining of soldiers affects their being even outside of combat. Higate (1998, 2001) moreover contends that military disciplining creates trajectories into postmilitary life, where veterans may experience “embodied continuity” (see also Maringira and Carrasco 2015).

Continuities may be present in veterans’ ordinary bodily posture and movement, which often make them distinguishable from civilians, or in scars and tattoos that bear witness to particular military experiences. For some veterans, embodied continuities are mainly stories of suffering and pain. Prosthesis and phantom limb pain are reminders of battle; aching joints testify to prolonged hard physical wear and tear. A restless body constantly alert or craving action and adrenaline are other bodily signs of a war that has followed the veteran home. Veterans’ bodies not only narrate pain; they also express a “valued legacy” of proficiency, strength, survival under harsh conditions, comradeship, and unlimited allegiance to others, which sets them apart and (according to some) above civilians (Messinger 2013:191).

Whether neutral, dreaded, or appreciated, embodied military experience is an inescapable aspect of veterans’ post-deployment social becoming. Zigon’s (2012) theorization of narratives as “articulations of the embodied struggle to morally be with oneself and others in the social world” (205) succinctly captures the ever-present tensions that stem from the veterans’ senses of embodied continuity. Just as the veterans may struggle with their bodies when trying to create a postmilitary future, so bodily appearance and behavior may also disclose their social identity and profession to others, sometimes against their will and without their knowing (MacLeish 2013:93).

While veterans are incapable of escaping the embodied experiences of the military and war, civilians can only attempt to understand these cognitively. The differentiated access to knowledge easily translates into a strong sense of “us” versus “them” that informs what veterans (care to) tell others. Embodied experience of war, or “flesh-witnessing” (Harari 2008), is seen as the ultimate source not only of knowledge but also authority, with consequences for whomsoever veterans allow to speak about war and veterans, to whom they listen, and who they silence or reject (Winter 2010).

The premise of this section was that because recently returned Danish veterans occupy a morally contentious field while also facing open-ended potentialities, we need to be mindful of the circumstantial factors that influence their narrative articulations and secrecy work. Veterans have to take into account the public narratives that emerge from among powerful institutional actors such as the mass media, the state, and the military as they shape veterans’ social becoming in direct ways by legitimizing and legalizing particular understandings of veterans. Below, I briefly outline the prevailing public images of veterans before moving on to examine how Danish veterans navigate this terrain to re-create themselves.

Emergent Public Images of Veterans as Warriors and Victims

Public understandings and opinions about veterans affect what is (im)possible, (ir)relevant and (dis)advantageous for them to tell in order to claim honor, respect, compensation, and support. In recent years, two separate conceptualizations have gained wide currency in Danish public narratives: the veteran as warrior and as victim. These images, which appear in policy documents (Danish Government 2010), literature (Rothstein 2014), and media features and are enacted in public events and political rituals (Sørensen and Pedersen 2012), resonate with conventional depictions of veterans in other countries and at
other times (Açıksöz 2012; Gerber 1994; McCartney 2011), and so they are immediately meaningful to the veterans and recognizable to others. Neither of these categories is stable or closed, however; they are constantly reinterpreted in relation to developing struggles concerning veterans’ recognition. While the warrior-hero and victim categories contain a possibility for social recognition and support, they may also cause stigmatization and exclusion. Veterans are acutely aware of and ingeniously exploit this through secrecy work in their self-creations as veterans in the civilian world.

The deployment of Danish combat soldiers especially to Afghanistan from 2006 was followed by the invention of many new political rituals to acknowledge them (Kertzer 1989): homecoming events, a national flag-flying day, and monuments and memorials (Sørensen 2013a). While the architects behind these generally refrained from militaristic symbols and language that would easily alienate a population perceiving itself as pacifist, these activities confirmed Denmark’s new role as a “war-fighting nation,” and veterans were dubbed “the new warrior generation” (Sørensen and Pedersen 2012). The camouflage-patterned combat attire, sometimes reinforced by sophisticated military technology and hardware, was used to instill an understanding of veterans as courageous, professional, committed, and forceful. The veterans performed the warrior image in staged rituals with a mixture of reluctance and pride. Many also embraced the image through tattoos (Grarup 2013) and in online videos (Krog 2010), where violence was ever present and explicitly constitutive of the veteran. This aspect of being a soldier was the most contested and difficult to convey to a civilian population unaccustomed to war, and at times, efforts were made to soften the warrior image with images of heroism despite its own ambiguities and dilemmas.

Official celebrations of the veterans are typically restricted to particular dates and certain spaces, and veterans often complained that after the event, they soon disappeared into oblivion. As a novice among war-fighting nations, Denmark was late in acknowledging the psychosocial effects of war and combat partly because of military culture, ideals of hypermasculinity, and fear of its political and economic consequences. The first study documenting post-traumatic stress among Danish soldiers was published in 2011 (Royal Danish Defence College 2011), and gradually veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) began to predominate media coverage. If many Danes were cautious about the warrior and hero categories, the image of veterans as victims seemed more amenable. Helen McCartney (2011) explains that the citizen as a victim or a client of care is a socially accepted category in the modern welfare state, and therefore veterans can easily obtain recognition. Jeffery and Candea (2006) even propose that because of the wider social acceptance of victimhood, decreased stigmatization of veterans, and increased availability of resources to support victims, some people willingly embrace the victim position (see also Carden-Coyne 2014; Kilshaw 2009). In the Danish case, the victim category was quickly turned into a collective identity and the basis for proactive action and demand for “response-ability” (Davis and Manderson 2014:156). This was facilitated by the government’s decision to award veterans with diagnosed psychological traumas the Defense Medal for Wounded in Service at an official ceremony at the new national monument. Having received this first visible sign of public recognition, the veterans organized a demonstration to challenge and demand alteration of the policies that hampered their right and access to compensation after injury. In the process, veterans not only had to share their personal experiences of war and suffering with professionals, they also had to disclose their stories with the public to win its sympathy and support. While many Danes began to acknowledge the veterans’ predicaments, stories of injuries and long-term suffering inevitably also confirmed their marginality. This made them vulnerable to jealousy from peers and to civilians’ fears of veterans running amuck or arguing that the veterans would dry out welfare resources with their need for expensive treatment and care.

The warrior and victim categories each generated their own social worlds of discourse, expert jargon, rituals, regulations, procedures, resources, values, and practices, all offering powerful frameworks for social becoming (MacLeish 2013; Mattingly 2012). However, their inherent moral ambiguities and risks of stigmatization as well as their discrepancy with some veterans’ self-understanding and personal ambitions prompted many veterans to negotiate and reshape these and to experiment with alternative narratives of veteran becoming.

Veterans’ Narrative Articulations of the Veteran Category

From Suffering Victims to Deserving Citizens

Danish media’s coverage of the plight of veterans has made some veterans de facto spokespersons. One of them is Benjamin,2 a so-called Balkan veteran and a passionate and well-known advocate for Danish veterans. Many veterans deliberately or not disclose their background by wearing uniforms or military-style clothing and paraphernalia; Benjamin’s metro or business style does not easily divulge his military background. In 2014, a daily newspaper nominated him for the “Dane of the Year” award (Erhardtsen 2014). Benjamin narrates how, driven by a Christian ethos instilled in him by his parents to help vulnerable people, he signed up for the army. At the age of 19, he was deployed to the Balkans. He was involved in routine searching of private homes, and he nearly shot a civilian. On his return, he experienced difficulties readjusting to normal life. He dropped out of college, became involved in serious crime, and was imprisoned for 6 years. After his release, he threw himself into work to cope with restlessness and sleepless nights. Today, his advocacy work for veterans and

2. Where the analysis is based on public sources and information, I have maintained the veterans’ names as they have appeared in the original material. I have anonymized all other veterans.
his little daughter keep him going, he explains to a journalist and the paper’s readers.

Benjamin’s story is unique, but it is not remarkably different from the narratives that other veterans have shared in the media since PTSD became publicly known and a political concern. Morality, risks, violence, and suffering are core ingredients that generate endless variations of the same story. The media seek human testimonies or “flesh-witnesses” (Harrari 2008) of Denmark’s new foreign policy, and Benjamin’s disclosure of his personal and private experiences was the price he paid for his nomination and continued role as spokesperson. Other veterans likewise publicize their stories of war and personal suffering in order to be recognized and perhaps influence the course of their own life or the situation of veterans more generally.

However, Benjamin usually does not tell individual stories. Instead, he creates a shared narrative that includes all but mentions none, and this gives each veteran considerable control over whether and how to narrate his personal story. Moreover, the shared narrative moves attention away from the past that haunts some veterans and instead highlights veterans’ present battles with, among others, the military, politicians, bureaucrats, doctors, and lawyers at home. In a newspaper interview, Benjamin proclaimed that “the time it has taken politicians to acknowledge that more needs to be done has cost veterans’ lives” (Røndbjerg-Christensen 2013, my translation). While Benjamin maintains the image of veterans as suffering victims, he insinuates that because of its insufficient support, the state, not the war, is the cause of veterans’ real anguish.

As I have described, the state’s initial attempts to recognize and honor Danish veterans followed conventional state-military traditions with military parades, medals, and monuments. While appreciating the effort, Benjamin also challenges these rituals that locate veterans as warriors or heroes: “Recognition is not about a single day with flags and medals—it is about the other 364 days of the year” (Arbejderen 2013). Benjamin, I argue, removes the veterans from the discursive realm of the nation, with its connotations of sacrifice and honor, and instead positions them within the realm of the state and specifically the welfare state. He thus turns the veterans’ situation into a struggle for the self-respect that comes from being recognized as a legitimate claimant of universal rights (Honneth 1995). He sees veterans not as tormented former combatants but as disadvantaged clients with legitimate rights to assistance, not (only) because they are national heroes but because they are citizens.

The Danish welfare system is based on a perception of welfare as universal in the sense that the entire population is entitled to it in exchange for paid taxes (Jøhncke 2011:38). As welfare is not exclusively for marginalized social groups, many forms of welfare benefit carry no stigma. Rather, welfare is an integrating force that defines membership of the collectivity (Jøhncke 2011:40, 42). Access to needed assistance, I argue, thus becomes a marker of the veterans’ belonging and reintegration into the Danish nation welfare state.

Benjamin and his companions articulate this when their demands are aligned with what are considered the shared basic values and standards of Danish welfare society. An example of this is a repeatedly voiced concern over the increasing number of homeless veterans; demonstrating this, groups of veterans have occasionally spent nights in camp beds in busy public places and made appeals to “Mr. and Mrs. Denmark” to recognize their needs. The appeals play on people’s pride in the welfare system and the cultural value of social justice for all citizens. In October 2013, a group of veterans spent nights in camp beds and sleeping bags in front of members of Parliament’s expensive spare apartments, exposing politicians as an elite with little serious concern for the common citizen. Actions such as these present the veteran as a citizen with legitimate rights, allowing for identification between veterans and other citizens at risk.

Understanding veterans as ordinary citizens whose particular needs should be recognized and addressed is widely accepted, but veterans are nevertheless different from civilian citizens, and this difference may be used as a moral triumph in the competition for recognition and resources. This happens when veterans support their claims for assistance by mentioning soldiers’ unselfish contribution to security and stability. This casts them as a particularly deserving group of citizens not because of their predicaments, needs, or vulnerability per se but because their service is a gift that generates a moral debt (MacLeish 2013:190). Danes generally agree that veterans should receive quality treatment, but combat-related injuries require expensive interventions, and occasionally concerns have been voiced that the costs of treating veterans will drain the health sector of resources to treat other patient groups, or that, because of a perception of their situation as a sacrifice for the nation, they will be favored over other citizen groups and effectively come to form a new privileged “military citizenship” (Trundle 2013).

In the process of sensitizing Danes to the price that many veterans pay for Denmark’s international military engagement every day, Benjamin and his fellow veterans have had to disclose personal and often painful experiences about the realities of war only to arrive at a shared narrative that stresses citizenship over victimhood. Additionally, reconfiguring veterans’ predicaments in this way implies that the cultural values underlying the Danish nation welfare state, too, are exposed, tested, and negotiated.

From Traumatized Veterans to Brotherhood of Pain

Among the audience to the fourth annual celebration of the national flag-flying day for deployed personnel, I spotted a group of 30–40-year-old men dressed in black jeans, T-shirts, and heavy leather vests with numerous emblems and patches, many with masculine silver jewelry and dark sunglasses. The emblems identified them as members of Legacy Vets Denmark, a motorcycle club exclusively for war veterans. As I later learned, most had been deployed to the Balkans and some also to Iraq and Afghanistan.
I had earlier interviewed several Balkan veterans, and memories of their homecoming constituted a significant part of their common narrative. There had been no official welcome at the airport; it felt like sneaking in through the back door, many had said. And as though they had just been on weekend leave, they were expected to meet on regular duty the coming Monday. Gathered in the garrison’s gymnasium, an officer had requested the veterans to raise their hands if they felt ill at ease. Of course nobody did so. Revisiting past experiences in light of current efforts to recognize and support homecoming veterans, many expressed a sense of having lived a covert life on the margins of society with no official or social recognition for their efforts and negligible support to cope with their economic and psychosocial problems. Now, almost 20 years later, the veil was being lifted.

The biker-veterans had caught the attention of many, and the following year a film crew produced a TV documentary about them (DR2 2013). Veteranerne (The veterans) follows members of Legacy Vets in their clubhouse outside Copenhagen to the flag-day ceremony and on a trip to visit foreign fellow veterans. Their personal testimonies lay bare for the ignorant viewer war’s embodied traces: recurrent nightmares, periods with too much alcohol, social phobia, broken families, the painful recognition that one is forever stuck as disability pensioner. The verbal accounts are accompanied by footage from the wars they fought. This gives authority to their accounts but also provides glimpses of war’s true face, with the Danish soldiers turned into helpless targets of assaults and witnesses of atrocities against civilians by strict rules of engagement. The documentary provides a public view of the intimate lives of these veterans, although in social life many prefer to stick to each other, avoid public spaces and crowds, and rarely publicize their suffering.

Like Legacy Vets USA, Legacy Vets Denmark describes its members as active-duty military or honorably discharged veterans who served after December 1975 (http://legacyvets.dk/index.php?page=whoarewe; last accessed November 16, 2015). The organization describes itself as a “Brotherhood of Warriors” (Legacy Vets, n.d.), and many members admit a profound longing for military life. Legacy Vets, I suggest, bridges the military past and the motorcycle present by creating a social space in which embodied continuities of brotherhood can be meaningfully practiced, for instance, in the ritual of toasting and observing a minute’s silence “for those who fight, for those who fought, and for those who never returned.” Its admission procedures require prospects to prove their loyalty, discipline, and respect for full members before they are admitted in a special ceremony. This process and the strong culture of brotherhood, unconditional loyalty, and support strikes a chord with military culture. “We stick together through thick and thin,” one states in the documentary, echoing the military ethos of “leaving no one behind.” In peacetime, the “thick and thin” denotes the veterans’ many tribulations that make Legacy Vets a “brotherhood of pain” (Olive-Smith 1999) characterized by an atmosphere of solidarity, loyalty, mutual trust, and honesty in which admitting pain and exposing oneself does not cause shame or emasculation (Carden-Coyne 2014; Kilshaw 2009). As one member stresses, “we are not a bunch of weeping women, but we help each other and keep an eye on each other” (DR2 2013). Veterans generally stress how living conditions during deployment bring soldiers so close together that even the most intimate aspects and secrets of life are shared knowledge. Being “naked” to each other also defines the Legacy Vets brotherhood.

The newly acquired clubhouse provides a valuable sanctuary where veterans can feel at home. Similarly, their motorcycle uniform constitutes a kind of shield against the anxiety that war and society cause. “I feel proud and secure when I put on the black and red sweatshirt and biker vest,” one of them told me. While the veterans enjoy the protection provided by their clubhouse and closed brotherhood, the American mother organization’s policy requires that they extend their solidarity to all veterans (Legacy Vets, n.d.), forcing them to engage with others in public. Members of the Danish branch regularly participate in official veteran events and ceremonies, but their public role is not restricted to ceremonial wreath laying and rituals of remembrance and recognition. They also organize fund-raising activities, and some act politically to force local authorities to implement the national veterans policy. While their agenda resembles those of other organizations, their approach reflects their particular social identity and history as a tight brotherhood that has developed on the margins. Fund-raising primarily takes place among brothers, for instance, through charity runs. When external support is wanted, they typically approach not the general public but the authorities and sometimes inhabitants of those municipalities that house vulnerable veterans. In doing so, they project their own values and expectations of sociality and solidarity onto those whom they approach.

The veterans’ dedication to Legacy Vets’ goals does not change the fact that it is a huge challenge for some veterans to move in public space. Suffering from PTSD, many fear crowds and unfamiliar places; others are simply anxious about people’s opinions and reactions. Paradoxically, it is not their warrior background but their biker outfits that lump them together with ill-reputed and feared organizations such as Hell’s Angels and that pose the greatest risk. They are aware of this, of course, and have different ways of coping with and preempting such misunderstandings of their identity. At an advocacy event in a Copenhagen suburb, I observed how one member stepped aside in order to attach his war medals to his leather vest. “Then people can see that I am a hero and not a villain,” he explained to me. Another member, I had noticed, often brought his young daughter along on such occasions; her presence softens his identities as biker and veteran and shows him as a caring father. And as he admitted, “her presence provides me with a legitimate excuse for not being available for interviews.”

Personal life stories are not in focus when Legacy Vets veterans occasionally campaign in public; instead, they collectively plea the cases of brothers in need. Their own possible suffering is discernible only to those who know how to read the embodied signs of PTSD. With their distinctive appearance
and collective presence at official veteran-related events, Legacy Vets have become a silent but persistent embodied reminder of the long-term consequences of sending young soldiers to war and not attending to the aftermath. The narrative articulation of themselves as biker-veterans, or “PTSD-bikers” (Force Weekly 2013), revealed their previous involuntary marginality but also provided a strong foundation for their lives based on shared histories, solidarity, and a common hobby.

From Wounded Soldiers to Sport Heroes and Coveted Laborers

Until recently, Danes might imagine a veteran to be an old man who had fought in places such as Vietnam and Korea or in the two world wars. Today, mass media and public debate have replaced age with suffering and victimhood as defining characteristics, and although the official definition makes no normative judgment, young veterans only reluctantly describe themselves as such unless for strategic purposes. Their self-attributed identity is as soldiers. The disassociation from the prevailing veteran discourse is explicit in the insistence of many veterans, including many with injuries, that they returned stronger and enriched from their deployment. This stance be-

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skills are taken to demonstrate the emergence from war and violence of a capable and useful young man. The emphasis in the media on Dennis’s skills and competencies acquired during war and the emphasis on his valuable contribution to a prestigious business, I suggest, point to a slowly emergent narrative articulations. How-ever, as I have shown, different narratives coexist and produce contingent, convoluted identities. Secrecy work, the careful attempts to manage and control the distribution of information and knowledge, runs through and across these different kinds of narratives. Veterans are accustomed to handling secrets in their professional life. But their close association with violence also makes secrecy work a particularly salient feature of their endeavor to carve out their future existences with minimal risks of suffering and stigmatization and with good chances of well-being and social recognition.

Conclusion

I have shown that rather than being a rite de passage, homecoming events mark the beginning of an extended homecoming process with ongoing struggles for veterans to find themselves and their place in the civilian social world. Conventional understandings of homecoming as reintegration into a familiar world, maybe aided by treatment, rehabilitation, and requalification, fail to capture this search for new social existences and the consideration of and experimentation with different possible identities, which figure prominently in the cases discussed here. As Mattingly (2013), Zigon (2012), and MacLeish (2013), among others, have suggested, narrative constructions of identity are always open ended and emergent, but the Danish veterans’ experiences also draw our attention to the defining role of specific corporeal, institutional, and social factors in their postmilitary self-creation.

Veterans’ bodies, I have shown, play significant roles in their social becoming. Just as the soldier profession accentuates the body, so embodied continuities mark the life and ontological narratives of veterans. While embodied memories of soldiering and combat negatively condition the psychological state and physical capacity of some veterans, they become a source for identifying and pursuing new ambitious goals as sport heroes or coveted experts. However, the state of veterans’ bodies is never only a private matter; they also often threaten to reveal the veteran to the outside world through posture, movement, disfiguration, and adornment.

Public images also shape veterans’ lives after homecoming. The veterans belong to a universal category invested with huge symbolic and moral value due to their significance as representatives of the nation, with the right to take and give life in its name. As I have shown, this implies that even though the “veteran” is a recent social category in Denmark, public narratives rehearse well-known stereotypes of the veterans as warriors and victims, and to a lesser extent as heroes. Veterans cannot escape these powerful understandings of their being, and so they embraced, appropriated, reinterpreted, or replaced them reflectively and strategically in order to match their self-understandings, earn recognition, and mobilize resources.

While collective narratives lack the institutional power of public narratives, the development of shared articulations of possible veteran identities was hugely important for many veterans. Military socialization emphasizes the collective over the individual, and veterans have all experienced and come to appreciate the confidence, loyalty, solidarity, and support that the collective offers. When faced with the challenges of reintegration into civilian life, they mimic their past and establish veteran communities around, for instance, political agendas, hobbies, and interests. The biker-veterans developed a community that served as a shield against the outside world; the veterans advocating for veterans’ rights as citizens and those seeking recognition through sports and employment instead tried to shift public veteran discourse.

I have used the distinction between ontological, public, and collective narratives to point to the different actors, interests, and processes involved in veterans’ narrative articulations. However, as I have shown, different narratives coexist and produce contingent, convoluted identities. Secrecy work, the careful attempts to manage and control the distribution of information and knowledge, runs through and across these different kinds of narratives. Veterans are accustomed to handling secrets in their professional life. But their close association with violence also makes secrecy work a particularly salient feature of their endeavor to carve out their future existences with minimal risks of suffering and stigmatization and with good chances of well-being and social recognition.

Acknowledgments

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When Privacy and Secrecy Collapse into One Another, Bad Things Can Happen

by Don Kulick

This article discusses privacy and secrecy in relation to the sexual lives of adults with significant disabilities. It compares ideologies and practices of privacy in two Scandinavian countries that diverge dramatically when it comes to sexuality and disability. In Sweden, the sexual lives of adults with disabilities are hindered and blocked by the people the welfare state pays to assist them. In Denmark, those same kinds of assistants facilitate sexual lives. A reason for this difference hinges on how “privacy” is conceptualized and practiced. In Denmark, to label something as “private” configures a particular kind of ethical space of engagement. In Sweden, “private” means “secret,” “off limits,” “beyond the boundary of knowledge or engagement.” This collapse of privacy and secrecy into one another has dire consequences for people with disabilities.

Secrets are always social. Even secrets that people keep from themselves—awarenesses they decline to consider, perceptions from which they avert their eyes, realizations they push back from confronting—even private secrets of the most intimate kind are inevitably linked at some level to sociality and to living in a world together with others. The unconscious, that vast ocean of secrets we keep from ourselves, partly in order to be able to carry on living at all, is not just something we have with us from birth, like a brain or a heart. Any psychoanalytic theory tells us that the unconscious is made, constructed through the repression of instincts and desires that threaten to dismantle, overwhelm, or destroy our relations with others.

Because secrets are social, they are also socially distributed. They get embodied, they become enl fleshed. The social distribution of secrets, in practice, means that some kinds or some groups of people come to be expected to have few or no secrets; other kinds or groups of people are expected or even required to have secrets. Nationally known politicians, to take the most obvious example, are culturally incited, these days, to be transparent. This is why any revelation that individual politicians do have secrets (especially secrets pertaining to sex or money) makes easy news and frothy scandal. On the opposite end of the spectrum is the kind of view that prevailed during the Cold War with regard to homosexuals: the McCarthyite insistence that gay men and lesbians were inherently and dangerously secretive, duplicitous, treacherous, and threatening.

The mechanisms through which secrets become socially distributed in ways like this are not obvious or explicit. They are, themselves, a secret—hence the outrage that can follow their exposure. Edward Snowden’s revelations that the American National Security Agency regards all of us as under suspicion of having secrets that it wants access to demonstrates, furthermore, how the social distribution of secrecy is never innocent or neutral. It is always a reflection of relations of power and of the desire of some people to manage or control the behavior of others.

Snowden’s revelations also make evident what can happen when people who are supposed to embody secrets protest and direct attention to the assumptions and structures that figure them in that way. When that happens, the exposure of arrangements that had operated in secret can foster a rift in public perception and generate a template of engagement that has the potential to resignify bodies and social relations. One result of such resignification can be the acknowledgment of rights that a veil of secrecy previously had prevented from being perceived, a realignment of practices that reproduced inequality and prejudice, and perhaps a vigorous public debate about social justice.

This article discusses such a process in relation to a class of people whose lives in many ways are imagined to be secret. That group is adults with significant physical and/or intellectual disabilities. These are people who may not be able to speak because of a physical impairment such as significant cerebral palsy. Or they can communicate, but because of an intellectual impairment such as Down syndrome or autism, understanding what they want to say may take time, patience, and sometimes years of experience working with or caring for them. Although “secretive” is perhaps not the mot juste to characterize the general social impression of adults with significant disabilities, the fact that their desires and inner lives

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are often regarded by nondisabled people as mysterious and perhaps inaccessible implies a kind of invisibility or concealment that is fundamental to the notion of secrecy, and that easily flows into perceptions and images of secrecy.

Furthermore, some vital dimensions of the lives of adults with significant disabilities are unambiguously “secret,” and in the view of many nondisabled people, should stay secret. The most evident one is their sexuality. Disabled people are not supposed to have a sexuality or be sexual. In 1996, in a groundbreaking book titled The Sexual Politics of Disability, the authors spent 200 pages presenting material from questionnaires and interviews in order to conclude that disabled people “can talk about sex. We can have sex—we are entitled to have sex and find love. We do face oppression, abuse and prejudice, but we can fight back and we can demand support and the space to heal” (Shakespeare, Gillespie-Sells, and Davies 1996:207, emphasis in original). That such startlingly self-evident truths needed to be asserted with such insistence as recently as 20 years ago testifies to the staggering resistance that confronts people with disabilities simply to be regarded as adults.

This resistance, which is also reflected in an almost utter scholarly silence on the topic, is nurtured and sustained by deeply ingrained prejudices. Many commentators have pointed out that the widespread belief that “disability = helplessness” encourages people to associate disabled adults with children, and hence, with sexual innocence and asexuality. Others have described alternative reasons that might explain the incomprehension and sometimes naked hostility that expressions of sexuality among disabled individuals can provoke in nondisabled people. Alison Lapper, a British artist born in 1965 with no arms and shortened legs, spent her childhood and youth in various institutions. At one point, when staff suspected she might be engaging in “activity below the waist” with a male friend, the couple were whisked away and interrogated separately by “a board consisting of the headmaster, the warden, the deputy warden and just about everybody else who had any rank” (Lapper 2006:129). Lapper was forced to undergo a gynecological examination, and she and her male friend were forbidden to meet, talk, or even look at one another ever again. They were also both ordered to undergo separate sessions with a psychotherapist. The reason for this extreme (but, in the late 1970s, common) reaction, Lapper thinks, is because “the general view among the staff was that we shouldn’t be thinking about sex at all. . . . Firstly, they thought we were too repulsive physically for anyone able-bodied to possibly consider us sexually attractive. Secondly, there was something so fundamentally wrong about our shapes that it would not be right for us to contemplate any sexual activity even with each other, even if we felt the inclination” (Lapper 2006:129).

Disability in itself does not necessarily disqualify an adult from the realm of the erotic. Spinal cord injury, for example, is popularly portrayed as compatible with sex, and even sexy, in films such as Murderball, a multiple-award-winning 2005 documentary about swaggering disabled men who play wheelchair rugby; Coming Home, a 1978 feature film starring a buff young Jon Voight (nowadays better known as Angelina Jolie’s father) as a Vietnam veteran who returns home to California in a wheelchair; and the 2011 French blockbuster Intouchables, about a suave billionaire who became disabled as the result of a paragliding accident.

Spinal cord injuries, though, are usually acquired impairments. And when thinking about practically anything having to do with disability, particularly sexuality, the distinction between acquired and congenital impairments is crucial. Many nondisabled probably find it possible to express understanding of and sympathy for the sexual desires of, say, a good-looking 23-year-old hockey player who breaks his back and ends up a paraplegic in a wheelchair, for example. Far fewer people have comparable levels of understanding and sympathy when the person with sexual desires is a 54-year-old man with Down syndrome or a woman born with cerebral palsy so severe that she has no verbal language, drools occasionally, and has arms and legs that need to be strapped to a wheelchair to help control spasticity. That a man or a woman like that might have a sexuality they need assistance in understanding and realizing is a thought that disturbs many people, who would much rather prefer not to have to think about such things. But those kinds of significantly disabled adults are the ones who need the most help in realizing their sexuality. They are the ones who present the biggest challenge to the way we think about things such as equality, justice, ethical engagement, and the nature and function of the secret.

In 2011, I spent a year researching the sexual lives of adults with disabilities in two Scandinavian countries, Sweden and Denmark. The impetus for the research was a lecture I had heard in Sweden several years previously by a counselor who advised people with disabilities about sex. This counselor recounted an incident involving a quadriplegic woman who lamented to him that after many years of having no erotic sensation, she had begun experiencing orgasms when her male attendants lifted her out of her wheelchair to bathe her. The problem she had was that those attendants had stopped doing that when they noticed that she found being lifted pleasurable.

This relationship between care and suppression became the focus of my recent work with a Swedish historian (Kulick and Rydström 2015). The book that has resulted from that work

1. There is little academic literature about sexuality and disability. There are medical texts concerned with rehabilitation, advice books to professionals or parents, sex advice manuals to people with disabilities, and memoirs by adults with disabilities that mention sexuality (such as the one by Alison Lapper (2006)). But scholarly engagement with this topic is exiguous. See Kulick and Rydström (2015:7–11) for a review.

2. The analysis presented in the book is based on 98 interviews with a wide variety of people, archival research, and ethnographic fieldwork in three group homes, two for adults with physical impairments and one for adults with intellectual impairments.
contrasts Sweden and Denmark. In Sweden, it turns out that the story told by the counselor is typical. Throughout that country, the sexual lives of adults with significant disabilities are consistently and purposefully denied and blocked by the very same individuals whose job it is to help disabled women and men participate as fully as they can in social life. In Denmark, in contrast, that same group of people understands basic human dignity to include the possibility of erotic expression, and they consider it part of their jobs to encourage and facilitate sexual exploration and contact. Differing conceptualizations of privacy and secrecy play a central role in accounting for this contrast.

How to Impede and How to Facilitate the Erotic Lives of Adults with Disabilities

Sweden and Denmark are both prototypical welfare states that share much history and have grammatically similar languages and recognizably similar cultural traditions. Their many historical and structural similarities make all the more perplexing their dramatic divergence in ideologies and practices regarding the erotic lives of people with significant disabilities.

In Sweden, whenever professionals, social workers, and caregivers discuss the sexuality of significantly disabled individuals, two phrases recur that succinctly sum up the Swedish approach to disability and sexuality. One is the proverb Väck inte den björn som sover (Don’t wake the sleeping bear); the second is the adage Om jag inte gör något så har jag i alla fall inte gjort något fel (If I don’t do anything, at least I haven’t done anything wrong).

The first of these two sayings is the Swedish equivalent of the English-language proverb “Let sleeping dogs lie”—do not draw attention to something that is not seeking it. Here the idea is that disabled people’s sexuality is not something that necessarily naturally expresses itself. This might be because the person with the disability either does not understand that he or she has erotic desire, or because the desire the person may have is satisfied in ways that do not involve genital eroticism, such as by hugging, holding hands, or by giving people kisses on the cheek. In cases like these, for anybody to raise the issue of sexuality—for example, in educational programs, group discussions, or private conversations—is to project his or her own sexuality onto a sexual innocent and thereby risk awakening in that person a theretofore secret desire that can manifest in unforeseen, unhappy, and possibly even uncontrollable ways.

The second formulation that occurs very frequently in Sweden when sex and disability are discussed among personal assistants and others who work with disabled adults—the mantra, “If I don’t do anything, at least I haven’t done anything wrong”—is related to the “sleeping bear” perception that anything having to do with sex is potentially harmful to people with disabilities because they may not understand the implications of sexual activity. So rather than offer any help to understand those implications, it is better not to do anything, “just in case.” The “not doing anything” part of the “If I don’t do anything” formulation is misleading, however, because personal assistants, staff in group homes, and others who use the phrase do not actually do nothing. The “nothing” they believe themselves to be doing is always actually “something,” usually something that discourages sex or impedes it. This can take the form of interrupting an intertwined couple on the dance floor of an arranged dance for adults with intellectual impairments, telling the couple it is time for a coffee break in order to pry them apart. It can be a refusal to insert a pornographic DVD into the DVD player of the person one is assisting, because one is opposed to pornography, or a refusal to assist a couple with mobility impairments who need help to lie together and caress one another, because one does not consider helping people have sex to be part of one’s job. It can be an insistence that a disabled person take down pinups that he has had a friend help him tape to his bedroom wall, because the disabled person’s home is one’s workplace, and to be confronted with sexual images in one’s workplace is a form of sexual harassment.

In contrast, during the time I spent doing fieldwork in group homes in Denmark, I never heard anyone cite a mantra that corresponded to either of the Swedish ones. If one existed, it would likely be the inverse of what Swedes say—it would be, “If I don’t do anything, then I have done something wrong.”

Unlike its northern neighbor, Denmark has a set of national guidelines that advise people who assist adults with disabilities how to engage their sexuality. Since 1990, it also has had an educational certification course that social workers can take to become what are known as seksualvejledere, or “sexual advisers” (the verb vejlede means to “advise” or “supervise” in the sense of guiding and offering counsel and support). There are currently nearly 400 certified sexual advisers in Denmark, and three different diploma programs for the qualification exist in the country.

The national guidelines that advise about disability and sexuality are titled Vejledning om seksualitet: uanset handicap (Guidelines about sexuality: regardless of handicap). These guidelines offer instructions for how people who work with adults with disabilities can help facilitate their access to an erotic life. The Guidelines document begins with an assertion that “People with a reduced physical or psychological functionality [Mennesker med nedsat fysisk eller psykisk funktionsevne] have the same basic needs and rights as other people.” It then continues:

A significant goal with a social intervention is to improve an individual’s social and personal functionality and their possibilities to develop. The intervention shall also help improve the individual’s possibility to develop his or her own life by assisting with, among other things, contact and being together with others. This context includes the question of support and help in connection with sexuality.

In the UN Standard Rules for Equalization of Opportunities for People with Disabilities (rule 9), it is empha-
sized that people with reduced functional ability shall have the possibility [skal have mulighed] to be able to experience their own sexuality and have sexual relationships with other people, and that they, in accordance with this, shall be supported through legislation and relevant counseling. (Socialministeriet 2001:5)

The document details how this kind of support might be organized. It explicitly prohibits sexual relations between a helper and the person being assisted, it forbids providing sexual assistance to anyone who has indicated in any way that he or she does not want it, and it prohibits any form of sexual assistance with children under 15 years of age. But the following kinds of assistance are permitted: assistance can be provided in learning how to masturbate (hjælp til oplæring til onani), assistance can be provided to persons who wish to have sexual relations with one another, and assistance can be provided to contact a sex worker (Socialministeriet 2001:33).

The Guidelines document does not make it obligatory for the staff at group homes and personal assistants paid for by the state to carry out any of these forms of assistance. However, it does make it a duty for the person who is asked for assistance to see to it that the adult who has asked for help gets it one way or another. The way this is formulated in the document is as follows: "A helper should be aware that he or she should be able to counsel and support an individual in relation to sexuality. However, a helper may not be ordered by his or her workplace to help an individual learn to practice sex. If a person needs assistance to practice sex, then the helper, however, does have the duty to see to it that another helper or a qualified expert is referred to that person" (Socialministeriet 2001:13, emphasis added).

This qualification ensures that the burden of responsibility for securing assistance is not placed on the adult with a disability. In other words, the individual who needs help is not required to keep on asking people until he or she perhaps eventually finds someone who is willing to help purchase a vibrator or assist a couple to lie in the same bed. The person with a disability only has to ask once, and the helper she or he asks is then responsible for seeing to it that she or he gets the assistance. If the helper does not have the expertise or the time to help, or if she or he thinks the whole idea of sex and disability is too problematic to deal with, then it is that person’s responsibility to find someone else who can help.

How does this happen in practice? How is it possible to facilitate something like masturbation without actually engaging in sex with the person one is assisting?

In Sweden, discussions about sexuality and disability run aground on questions like that. No one seems able to imagine that it is possible to facilitate sex for a disabled person without either contacting a prostitute who would have sex with that person (which would mean engaging in a criminal activity in Sweden, because purchasing sexual services or helping someone purchase sexual services is illegal there) or, barring that, by actually sexually servicing the person being assisted. Even individuals in Sweden who recognize and lament the fact that adults with disabilities are impeded from having sex do not consider that helping them have sex could involve something other than prostitution or sexual servicing.

Danes are more imaginative. Here is an example of how it is possible to assist a disabled person to have sex without having sex with her. Helle is a young woman in her late twenties who lives in a group home for adults with cerebral palsy. Helle has no verbal language. The only part of her body in which she has even limited movement is her head. Helle communicates with her eyes, by smiling and making a variety of sounds, and also with the help of a laser strapped to her head that she can use to point to symbols on what is known as a Bliss board (named after the creator of the symbols, Karl Blitz, who fled Nazi Germany and changed his name to Charles Bliss). The following is a plan of action (handleplan) for Helle, handwritten by a sexual adviser who works as a social worker in Helle’s group home.

Plan of Action for Helle Rasmussen

Helle would like help in positioning her sex aid. Helle is laid naked on her bed. A large mirror is placed at one end of Helle’s bed, so that she can see herself. A pillow under her knees, legs spread. Put lubricant on the sex aid and on her privates. Place the sex aid on her privates. The helper asks Helle how long she would like to lie alone, 5 minutes or 10 minutes or 15 minutes. Helle will nod at the exact number of minutes she wants. The helper goes back in when the agreed on minutes are up and asks Helle if she is done. If she says no, ask again how much longer Helle would like to lie in bed. When Helle is finished, wash the sex aid and ask Helle if everything is OK.

A “plan of action” like this is made possible by the Guidelines document, because that document makes it clear that persons with a disability are entitled not just to a sexuality but to sex, and it obligates helpers to be observant about sex and to provide or find someone who can provide help to anyone who expresses a desire for such help. “Plans of action” break down a sexual activity such as masturbation into its component acts in a way that allows a helper to facilitate sex without performing it or without intruding any more than necessary on the privacy of the person who needs the help to have sex. They exemplify a fundamental feature of the help sexual advisers provide: they help individuals have sex, but they do not have sex with them—in fact, as I have noted, helpers are
explicitly prohibited by the Guidelines document from engaging in sexual relations with the women and men they help.

This means that sexual advisers who facilitate the erotic lives of adults with disabilities are not sex workers or what are sometimes called “sex surrogates.” They are social workers with special training and competence. One reason sexual advisers give for writing “plans of action” like these is that they help guard against abuse—on both sides. If a contract like this exists, the person with a disability has grounds for saying “You transgressed our agreement” if the helper does something not in the agreement. And the person providing the help knows exactly what she or he is agreeing to—she or he can also refuse to do anything beyond what is made explicit in the agreement.

Plans of action like that for Helle are not public documents. In a group home, they are not part of a resident’s file in the way his or her medical needs might be. Instead, they are agreements between a resident and a particular sexual adviser or some other staff member who is willing to assist, and they are kept with the sexual adviser or staff member. If the person receiving assistance ever wanted a copy of such an agreement, they would be given one. What is public knowledge among full-time staff in a group home is that particular staff members assist some residents to have an erotic life. This is discussed in staff meetings. So everyone working in Helle’s group home, for example, would know that Helle relies on the sexual adviser who wrote her plan of action, and perhaps several other staff members as well, for assistance with sex. But the details of that assistance—exactly what it consists of, when and how often it occurs—are not known by others.

Agreements like the one with Helle come about through conversations with staff members of group homes, who often take an active role in talking about sex. They organize discussion groups in which men and women sit together in same-sex gatherings and talk about sex, relationships, love, jealousy, contraception, parenthood, and anything else they want to talk about concerning their intimate lives. Some group homes in Denmark stage role playing, where people with disabilities act out scenarios—such as how one manages a situation such as seeing that one’s boyfriend wants to dance with someone else or where one feels attracted to someone but does not know what to do.

Some group homes also have printed policy documents about sexuality that are handed out or read aloud to anyone who moves in. Titled “Sexual Politics of (name of group home),” those documents say things like “All people are sexual beings and have the right to a sexual life,” “If residents ask, staff will help with counseling and the procurement of sex aids, or they will refer the resident to a sexual adviser,” and “Staff are obliged to wash and clean used sex aids for residents.”

Documents like those, together with discussion groups and role-playing sessions, contribute to an atmosphere that makes it clear to residents that sexuality is a possible and acceptable topic of discussion. This, in turn, permits both residents and staff to broach the subject of sex with individuals, some of whom have never discussed sexuality before in their lives.

When Ingrid, a 26-year-old woman with cerebral palsy, moved into the group home she now lives in 5 years ago, she received a brochure like the one just quoted. This led her to ask a staff member about sex, as she explained to me.

I didn’t know I had a sexuality. We had had some lessons about sex in the school for the handicapped I went to, but it was talk about how we had uteruses and would get menstruation. I didn’t know I had a sexuality. So when I got here, I asked, and they told me, “Yes, you do, and you can receive help to explore it if you want, and there is a lot of different kinds of sex aids that are available.” I was really happy [rigtig glad] to learn that, because I didn’t know.

Privacy as a Means of Keeping Things Secret

Sweden lacks a sexual adviser training program and anything resembling the Danish Guidelines document. There are historical reasons for this—for example, Swedish disability rights activists never highlighted sexuality, and the key individuals in Sweden who engaged with disability and sexuality during the 1960s–1980s, when the Danish Guidelines were being debated and formulated, were concerned with rehabilitation and acquired disabilities, not with people with congenital impairments. Those key individuals lobbied for state-subsidized sex aids, not sexual facilitation. There are also political reasons. The feminist backlash against the sexual revolution of the 1960s was powerful in Sweden, and the version of feminism that since the 1990s has become a form of “governance feminism” in the country attends to sexuality primarily in terms of the danger it is said to represent (Halley 2006; Kulick and Rydström 2015: 232–240). The enduring international stereotype of Sweden as a libertine playground is outdated and wrong. In political rhetoric, journalistic accounts, and popular debate, sex in Sweden today is habitually portrayed as an act that has a great potential to cause harm. Hence, vulnerable people need to be protected from it.

An important cultural reason for the absence in Sweden of anything resembling the Danish sexual advisers or the Guidelines document is the pervasive insistence in Sweden that sexuality is “private.” The affirmation that sex is private is partly motivated by the memory of the shameful history of institutionalization that still casts a shadow over how disabled people are treated in society. Until as recently as the 1970s, when the large institutions began to be dismantled, people with disabilities had nothing even approximating a private life. In 1972, a Swedish writer named Gunnel Enby published a memoir titled We Must Be Allowed to Love. Enby was a childhood victim of polio, and her book recounted her life in the institution in which she was raised during the 1950s and 1960s. For people with disabilities in that era, independence or privacy was unthinkable. “Let us describe what it was like to be young and handicapped in an institution,” Enby wrote, “How it felt to be put to bed in the afternoon in the summer when the sun was shining on the hospital walls and it felt pretty good to be...
alive. The angst that tore at one’s chest that made one want to cry out to everybody that here we lie, put to bed for the night at 7 o’clock when the young people in town are just getting ready to go out” (Enby 1972:37).

In the institution where Enby grew up, “One ate on schedule, was washed on schedule, was turned on one’s side for the night and given one’s medication, sleeping pills and drugs” (38). There was no such thing as privacy: “One isn’t allowed to have any personal belongings in the room, except for a photograph and the usual toiletry items. The staff walk in and out without knocking, and one is often forced to share one’s room with other patients—rooms that at any rate can’t be locked” (1972:66–67).

Given a disturbing, oppressive, and still fresh historical legacy such as this—one that of course is far from exclusive to Sweden—it is understandable that issues of privacy should resonate powerfully for people with disabilities and everyone involved with them and that the right of disabled people to have a private life should be treated with the utmost respect. In Sweden, however, “privacy” tends to be invoked at precisely the moment when helpers might be called on to do something positive or helpful in relation to the sexual lives of disabled people. The point of insisting that sexuality is private seems to be not so much about accommodating or facilitating a private space. The formation of an area demarcated by privacy seems to be more as a shield or a fence to demarcate an area beyond the bounds of engagement.

The way privacy is invoked in Sweden to discourage engagement with the erotic lives of people with disabilities is summed up in a particularly distilled form in a review of two films about masturbation that were scripted by the sexologist Margareta Nordeman in the mid-1990s. Nordeman explained to me that she was inspired to make the films because at every group home or activity center she went to and lectured about sexuality, the problem of masturbation came up, and nobody seemed to know how to talk about it or what to do about it. The films, made with the support of the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (Riksförbundet för sexuell upplysning [RFSU]) and which came out in 1996, consist of three scenes in which a nondisabled man masturbates to orgasm and three scenes where a nondisabled woman does the same thing. They have been used in Denmark, Norway, and Finland, Nordeman told me. They have even been dubbed into Japanese.

But they were shot dead in the water in Sweden. As soon as they appeared, the films were reviewed in Intra, a respected journal for people who work professionally with individuals with intellectual impairments. The two editors of Intra excoriated the films, calling them “vulgar and indiscreet” (vulgar och oblyggi). They wrote that Nordeman and RFSU that financed the films were “clueless” (aningolös) and asserted that allowing intellectually disabled people to watch the films could easily be considered a form of sexual abuse. The editors ended their review with these forbidding words:

‘It is obvious that an intellectually impaired person [den utvecklingsstörde] has the right to his or her own sex life. The form that such a life takes is none of the staff or anyone else’s business as long as it isn’t directly offensive for others. In that case, the person can require help to close the door and protect his or her private life. Because at the end of the day, that is what this is about: that everyone has the right to a private life, and other people’s well-meaning advice and meddlesome guidance [beskäftiga handledningar] is often more harmful than it is beneficial.’

“The right to a private life” has a very specific, and very circumscribed, meaning here. For adults with disabilities, it means the right to hide sexuality, to keep it secret, to shut it up behind closed doors, out of sight and beyond the awareness of anyone else. For individuals who work with disabled adults, “the right to a private life” means that any attempt to offer advice, guidance, or assistance is not just “meddlesome”; most likely it is “more harmful than . . . beneficial.” Privacy, in this understanding of sexuality, implies “don’t get involved.” It signifies “back off.” It means—and the editors actually use this word at one point in their text—“Halt” (Grunewald and Hallerfors 1997).

The notion of privacy also comes up in Denmark when disability and sexuality are discussed, for example, in the “Sexual Politics” brochures handed out to new residents in some group homes as part of their welcome package of information. But in Denmark, labeling sexuality as private does not shield it with the same forbidding armor that bars the Swedish usage. Danish social workers and others use the word “private” to mean “out of public view,” as in “Residents who can manage their own sexual needs have the right to do so, in a private space.” It also means confidential, as in “Individual residents’ sexuality is not discussed, therefore, in staff meetings, etc., unless the resident has requested that it be.” What it does not mean is “back off” or “halt.” Referring to sexuality as private in Denmark does not consign it to the frozen outer limits of engagement. On the contrary, it configures a space of respect in which particular forms of engagement can occur.

This space is mutually constructed between helpers and people with disabilities even in cases where the person with a disability is quite significantly impaired. The plan of action worked out to help Helle explore sexual pleasure, for example, was a collaboration between Helle, who has no verbal language, and the sexual adviser who helps her. The adviser had long conversations with Helle to determine what kind of sex aid she wanted, and she helped Helle try out several before they settled on the ones Helle liked best. The sexual adviser added some details to the plan of action that Helle had not thought of herself—the instruction that a large mirror be

4. Kulick and Rydström (2015:126–134) is a detailed discussion of these films.
placed at the foot of the bed so that Helle could see her whole body was the sexual adviser’s idea, because from many years of experience working with people who had spent their entire lives in beds and in wheelchairs, she knew that someone like Helle had probably never actually viewed her entire body naked.

In Denmark, those who usually take the initiative to discuss sex are the people employed to work with disabled people. They take this initiative because they know that many adults with disabilities have received little sexual education—at most they might at one point have heard the kind of uterus-and-menstruation anatomy lesson mentioned by Ingrid. Individuals who work with people with disabilities also know it is unlikely that many of them will have heard much about sex from the parents who cared for them before they came to live in the group home. Ingrid’s surprise to discover as a 21-year-old adult that she even had a sexuality is not an uncommon occurrence among women and men with congenital impairments.

With little concrete knowledge about sex and no language to broach or explore the topic, people with significant congenital impairments are hardly in a position to start a conversation about it, particularly if they sense that the topic is distasteful to, or taboo among, the people employed to assist them. In such a context, Swedish instructions to personal assistants and group home staff not to talk about sex because it is private and because the form that a disabled person’s sexual life takes is nobody’s business are directives that effectively smother sex under the guise of respecting privacy.

Women and men with disabilities who require assistance to understand interpersonal relations or perform activities such as moving, bathing, and eating often define privacy and respect differently from the people who formulate and follow the rules about such things in Sweden. The disabled adults I spoke to in Denmark did not think it was such a big deal to ask for help with sex, because as far back they can remember they have always had people fussing with their bodies. Privacy in the sense demanded by individuals such as the editors of Intra magazine is an impossibility for many adults with significant impairments. They need assistance to undress, to get into bed, to position their bodies, to tidy up afterward. To insist that all this is private and therefore beyond the bounds of assistance is not to do nothing, as the adage that is so popular among Swedish helpers would have it. On the contrary, declining to assist in cases like this is a purposeful undertaking that actively deprives people with significant disabilities of the possibility to experience an erotic life. One man with intense cerebral palsy I interviewed wasadamant that such a deprivation is not defensible. “Being able to have a sexuality and being able to explore my sexuality has made me a whole person,” he told me, expressing a sentiment that few adults—disabled or nondisabled—could contest, deny, or condemn.

For nondisabled people to recognize not only that people with significant physical and intellectual impairments may have erotic desires but, also, that they require assistance to be able to understand, explore, and express those desires is to do something important. It is to recognize both a fundamental sameness but also, just as important, a crucial, irreducible difference. The space between that familiar sameness and the in many ways unknowable difference is the space of ethics. It is the space of engagement and extension; the space where privacy and secrecy are disaggregated, not collapsed into one another.

The Most Agonizing Secret of All

Danish acknowledgment that adults with significant disabilities can have erotic desires illustrates how the separation of privacy and secrecy can facilitate modalities of engagement and processes of change that are thwarted if one insists, like Swedes such as the editors of Intra do, that privacy and secrecy are synonymous. One realm where the collapse of privacy into secrecy produces particular anguish in relation to disability and sexuality is in the relationship that can develop between disabled individuals and their parents, as children mature into adolescence.

Parents of disabled children often find themselves having to become engaged in the sexuality of their children in ways they are not prepared for and that they find deeply discomforting. They may have to deal with issues such as inappropriate language or public masturbation, or with the distress of trying to make sure that their intellectually impaired daughter is protected against possible pregnancy. Most disturbing of all, however, is the way that the love and the intense emotional and physical bonds that severely impaired children have with their parents—particularly, in most cases, their mothers—can transform as the child matures into an adult and begins to express an interest in sex. Especially in cases where the child has intellectual impairments, the boundary between care involving things such as bathing, dressing, or going to the toilet and erotic satisfaction can become murky, sometimes putting the mother in an intolerable situation.

This infected dimension of care for a disabled child—particularly a disabled son—is a source of tremendous shame among mothers. I came to learn that parents do not discuss this aspect of their child’s sexuality with anybody, including with other parents of disabled children. One mother who is the exception to that rule, however, is a well-known Danish actress, Lone Hertz. In 1992 Hertz published Sisyfosbreve (The Sisyphus letters), a memoir about raising and living with her son Tomas, who has severe autism. The book discusses struggles, breakthroughs, emotions, and relationships that will be familiar to many parents of children with significant disabilities. But a part of the book that makes it unique is Hertz’s insistence on also discussing sexuality. She relates in some detail how the love between her and her son gradually came to be eroticized as Tomas grew older and entered adolescence. Their relationship reached a crisis point when Tomas, who at the time was sixteen or seventeen and twice his mother’s size, had an epileptic seizure in the middle of the night.
Hertz heard Tomas flailing about, and she rushed into his room, half-naked, throwing herself on her son’s bed in order to help him as she had always done. “It’s important to hold your arms,” she writes in the narrative mode of direct address to her son that she uses throughout the book, “so that the convulsions don’t wrench your shoulders out of their sockets, and to wipe your mouth regularly so that you don’t choke on your vomit. And to push all the blankets and pillows out of the way, so that they don’t get drenched in pee when the convulsions wear off and your bladder becomes slack and empty. I’m always thankful when that happens, especially if you don’t defecate, too.” That night, Hertz continues,

You came out of it and became clear minded sooner than you usually did. You pulled me down into bed so that I would lie with you and take care of you like I’ve always done in all the years of your convulsions—often they come back, several in a row. That night you wouldn’t let me pull up a blanket around me, you kept pulling it off and throwing it out of the bed. I tried not to resist, because I was familiar with your mood swings that almost always followed right after a seizure. I feared them more than the convulsions. You became unpredictable and despotic. I needed to calm you down and not provoke you.

I tried to play, like it was a game of exchange, so I took your blanket, but the game didn’t work. You made your darkest sound, a throaty howl that I felt was a warning. You took my arm and threw me up against the door, and you pressed up against me . . .

I had thrown my undershirt on, because this was very wrong, I knew that. I understood that. You stood there naked, with an erection, and touched yourself. Not violently, more like searchingly, innocently, like you were trying to find some answer there. You stood and looked at me, sat beside me, and lay down on top of me. Like you were in doubt, like you were trying something out. I let you take charge and I tried to keep calm and collected, emotionless, to pretend that it wasn’t me. But during all this I knew that unless I took control somehow, this would end very badly. You had so much strength and an enormous desperation. If nothing else, the whole thing would have ended very badly for me. I tried to tell myself that I was just imagining this, that you didn’t have these wild feelings. That this wasn’t really happening. That it wasn’t you I was afraid of; I was afraid of my own apprehension. But that wasn’t true. I was afraid of you, Tomas. It’s pitiful to be afraid of your own child. I forced myself to be calm. I spoke calmly to you at the same time as I edged toward the door. And with an awkward kind of shrimplike flip, I was out in the corridor, where I tried to turn the key to the door. You ran after me with surprising energy, you grabbed the door so that I couldn’t lock it. We pulled back and forth on the doorknob, like a parody, and you shrieked and roared, until I couldn’t take it anymore. I don’t know how I did it, but suddenly I gave you a big push into the room, and I turned the key and pulled it out.

In the middle of all this horror, Tomas, the saddest part of all is perhaps an admission I have to make to myself that my work as an actress stayed with me, even in that “naked” situation that we were both in there. Despite the despair, I was coolheaded enough to think, in the middle of it all, that I really need to remember this, in case one day I should play a scene like “mother with a psychotic son.” (Hertz 1992: 304–306)

Here, and in several other places in Sisyfosbreve, Hertz discusses, with the kind of tough wryness she displays here, the anguish she felt in relation to her son’s developing sexuality. She felt desperate as she came to understand that her son wanted to have sex with her, and she felt utterly forsaken as she realized that there simply was no one to whom she could turn for help or advice. In the mid-1980s, when Hertz was confronting Tomas’s sexuality, Danish professionals were still uncertain about how to engage with the sexuality of people with significant disabilities. The Guidelines document was just being formulated, and at the time there were as yet no certified sexual advisers who could offer a mother like Hertz any meaningful guidance about sex. In the end, she sought help in the only place she could imagine finding it—she helped Tomas purchase sexual services from a sex worker.

Lone Hertz may be unique in publicly airing some of the normally unspeakable issues that can arise between parents and their children who have significant impairments as the children enter puberty and begin to seek ways of understanding and expressing their erotic desires and needs. But Hertz is far from unique in having the kinds of experiences she describes.

Gull-Marie is a soft-spoken, matronly Swedish woman in her fifties. She has a son in his late teens who has been diagnosed with a condition she described as a combination of mental retardation and autism (en utvecklingsstörning med autistiska drag). She and I had been talking about the differences between Sweden and Denmark, and I had just mentioned that it did not seem to me that in Sweden parents were given much information or advice about disability and sexuality. This remark seemed to unleash something in Gull-Marie. She became flustered, and she spoke quickly, in a gush. “I think it’s terrible, completely, awfully terrible [jobbigt, helt fruktansvärt jobbigt],” she said. “It’s exactly like you say. When he was a teenager,” she said, talking about her son, he started to masturbate everywhere. And it’s hard as a mother. You move to a new neighborhood . . . he likes to be on the playground where children are. I went around and knocked on all the neighbors’ doors and told them—because I thought it’s better to be open about it. Then the parents won’t be scared, anyway, and they’ll come to me if anything happens.

I looked everywhere for help, everywhere. Doctors, everywhere, and everybody said the same thing: “We don’t
know what to do." Or else they said, "It'll pass when he's no
longer a teenager."

But what was I supposed to do? I couldn't follow him
around everywhere and guard him. He just disappears from
home sometimes, and I don't know where he goes, and you
can imagine, before I find him . . . I don't know what anyone
has done to him, or what he has done to anyone, you know?

But then I talked to a sexologist—who was from Den-
mark, in fact—and she said, "Has he ever ejaculated?"

"I don't know," because I said that he can carry on for
hours.

And she said, "You have to help him to ejaculate."

Gull-Marie paused here and looked at me with an expression
that was both plaintive and resigned.

It feels very strange to hear that as a mother, you know?
But I went around and thought about it all the time and I
thought, "I'll ask his brothers." He has two brothers who
aren't disabled, and I thought they could help him in the
sauna or somewhere. They wouldn't. My husband wouldn't
help him either.

So I thought, "Well, the only one left is me." I was so
afraid—you know how it is here in Sweden with people
phoning up the police and everything. And so I talked to him
and I thought to myself, "Now, today, I'm going to do it."

On the day I thought that, he comes out of his room
and says, "Mama, mama, this white stuff came out of my
wiener" [snappen].

And so I didn't have to do it.

Gull-Marie's story articulates a dilemma so sensitive and
traumatic that it is hardly surprising that parents who share
dimensions of her experience do not often talk about it, not
even with one another. The love that a mother has for her
child and the desire to keep him out of harm's way—and to
keep him from harming others—becomes explicitly linked,
in a situation like this, to satisfying him sexually.

The advice the Danish sexologist gave Gull-Marie is com-
mon in these kinds of contexts (e.g., Johansen, Thyness, and
The theory behind the advice is that some young people with
intellectual disabilities have a difficult time discovering on their
own that masturbation can actually result in something plea-
surable. "Many mentally retarded people [udviklingshemmede]
get afraid when they feel that it starts to tingle [kilde] and that
sort of thing," one sexual adviser told me. "They think, 'What's
going on?'" So they stop or they redirect their focus without
ever understanding that manipulating their genitals can have
a purpose and an endpoint.

Danish sexual advisers recommend that individuals who
seem to have that problem be taught to masturbate. If this
cannot be done through verbal counseling alone, then other
methods are sometimes used—one sexual adviser said he has
helped some men learn to masturbate by writing a plan of
action that permits him to sit in the same bedroom with the
person he is helping. The sexual adviser holds a dildo, which
he strokes to demonstrate to the person learning to mastur-
bate what to do. That person then imitates the adviser's actions
on his own penis. Sexual advisers say that once individuals
discover that masturbation has a purpose, they can be taught to
go into their bedrooms or some other private space when they
feel like obtaining sexual pleasure.

Unfortunately, when the individual who has the problem
understanding masturbation does not live in a group home
in which a Danish sexual adviser or someone else with knowl-
edge of these issues is employed, the delivery of advice such
as "You have to help him to ejaculate" is often accompa-
nied, as it was in Gull-Marie's case, with no further coun-
seling or practical help. Mothers like Gull-Marie are left on
their own.

What some mothers in Denmark do decide to do is publicly
insist that their children's sexuality is not their responsibility.
This was one of the reasons why Lone Hertz discussed her
son's sexuality so candidly in Sisypshove—she wanted public
acknowledgment of the predicament she depicted, and she
wanted help, for herself and other mothers in similar sit-
uations.

The director of a Danish group home for adults with ce-
rebral palsy once recounted to me her personal encounter
with a mother who had a similar message. This director re-
membered very clearly that one of her first encounters with
the sexuality of people with disabilities occurred in 1988, when
the group home where she still works was built and residents
started moving in. The mother of one of the young men who
moved in insisted on having a meeting with all the staff mem-
bers. The director recalled,

She sat there, the mother. And she says, "There's something
I want to say to you all"—and we didn't even know one
another, we had just all started together in this completely
new group home. "One thing I want to say to you. My son
has tried going to a prostitute, and it was good for him. You
all need to damn well follow up on this." His mother said
that. She slammed her hand down on the table and said that.
And so we were all forced to figure this out, even though we
didn't even know one another and we'd never even spoken
about things like sexuality.

The director said the mother's insistence that the group home
staff acknowledge her son's sexuality was the spark that led to
collaborations and to engagement with the sexuality of the
residents.

We began to develop some basic policies around sexuality.
And then after about 2 years, the same woman's son got a
girlfriend, who was also in a wheelchair. And they wanted
to have sex. That was a bit difficult because they weren't able
to do it by themselves, and at that time the idea that we might
go in and help them was really new.
And so in comes his mother again. And she says, "They want to have sex. Surely it can’t be reasonable that I, his mother, should be the one to go into his room and lift them up onto and down from the hydraulic lift. That’s your job. I don’t want to know anything about it. Because I am his mother. I shouldn’t have to have anything to do with this. But you should."

“She was fantastic,” the director said of this cantankerous, plainspoken woman. “She was completely adamant.” This adamant mother also illustrates the way that parents can use their status as parents to bring about change. The ingenuous argument that “surely it isn’t reasonable” to expect a mother to get actively involved in her child’s sex life is a difficult one to counter. By declaring that she was not going to accept that a private activity like sex should also be a secret, this mother was delegating responsibility and demanding that others engage with both her and her son.

That simple declaration demonstrates the significant power that parents can have in contexts such as these to compel others to take seriously the reality of their disabled child’s sexuality and to devise ways of helping to facilitate an erotic life. It demonstrates the kinds of changes that become imaginable when the social distribution of secrecy is made explicit, and thereby challenged.

References Cited
Health is often a sanctuary of personal secrets, yet its boundaries can differ considerably across nations, depending in part on their respective ideas about collective responsibility and individual liberty. Unlike in the United States, where state interventions in the realm of personal health tend to trigger individual liberty, the Japanese state on their respective ideas about collective responsibility and individual liberty. Unlike in the United States, where state interventions in the realm of personal health tend to trigger individual liberty, the Japanese state has long mandated large-scale corporations to hire occupational doctors and provide health measures for their employees (such as annual physical checkups and extended maternity and childcare leave). Many corporations, operating under the lifetime employment system, have in turn devised various health programs, including sick leave up to a few years, daily exercise periods, weekend sporting events, and training programs as opportunities for strengthening management-worker solidarity (Kelly 1993; Rohlen 1974; Waring 1991). Such “holistic” corporate care has been generally welcomed by workers as a form of protection and self-cultivation (Borovoy and Roberto 2015). Given the excessive hours of overtime they are expected to endure (Harden 2008), some workers I interviewed for my ongoing research on depression discussed how these programs help affirm a feeling that they are not mere instruments of labor (cf. Fisch 2015).¹

Yet one realm that Japanese companies had long hesitated to enter is workers’ mental illness, which, up to the late 1990s, had been a no-touch zone, largely hidden away as personal and family secrets (see Umegaki 1989). When mental health became an issue in occupational medicine in the 1960s, prompted by the spread of psychotropic medications, some corporations in Japan began to provide in-house psychiatric consultations but under conditions of strict privacy. While this stance served as a protective shield for the mentally ill, its fatal flaw was revealed in a 1982 Japan Airlines crash caused by a schizophrenic pilot who killed 24 people (Ogino 2011). Though this tragedy brought about Japan’s first national attempt to seriously address workplace psychopathology, lack of funding and a strong stigma attached to mental illness meant that little change was made. Psychiatric care continued to be demarcated as a space reserved for psychiatric hospitals, right up until the 1990s, when their minds and bodies become the repository of valuable secrets.

¹ This article is based on more than a decade of ongoing research on depression in Japan. This consists of (1) archival research on psychiatric, legal, and popular books and articles on depression; (2) participant observation in various psychiatric institutions in 2000–2003 and again in 2008; (3) in-depth interviews with more than 50 psychiatrists and 30 patients as well as informal conversations with numerous others at psychiatric conferences and on other occasions (more recently including those working in occupational medicine, early intervention, and Rework); and (4) participant observation of mental health training for human relations staff and interviews with five workers about mental health checkups in 2013–2014 supplemented by research on 10 blogs written by depressed workers who have experienced Rework (for further details, see Kitanaka 2012).
of privacy, where corporate surveillance was off-limits. This tradition of secrecy around mental illness persisted partly to avoid stigma but also because, for Japanese companies with their corporate culture of care, to be let in on such personal secrets was to assume partial responsibility for the worker’s state of being. Workers’ psychological health has thus marked the border of what can be imagined as benevolent surveillance over one’s intimate, private life.

The idea of workers’ psychology as a kind of sanctuary became fundamentally destabilized in 2014, when the Japanese government’s revision of the Labor Safety Hygiene Law institutionalized “stress checks” for workers, requiring corporations to provide not just physical but also psychological health monitoring of employees (Asahi 2014). The government made this move partly in response to the high national rate of suicide (currently about twice that of the US national rate) and depression, which has emerged as a quintessential “illness of stress” of the recession era. The stress checks are also an end result of the politicization of depression, whereby a grassroots workers’ movement has legally established that depression is not only an impediment to work but also a hazard of work itself. From the 1990s, workers and their families, doctors, and lawyers have joined together to problematize what they term “overwork depression” (karō utsubyō) and “overwork suicide” (karō jisatsu). They helped bring about the epoch-making Supreme Court verdict in 2000 that held Dentsū, Japan’s biggest advertising company, liable for the suicide of a young worker judged to have become depressed from chronic work stress (Asahi 2000). Publicly talking about mental illness and suicide, sometimes as a means of discovering the truth about the death of loved ones, families and distressed workers as well as lawyers and doctors involved in the movement have helped turn depression—a formerly stigmatized and strictly secreted illness in Japan—into a collective symbol of recession that signifies the psychological burden of work stress and the scars of emotional labor (Kawahito 1996). In response, the government has implemented a series of important policy changes, all of which have helped establish the idea that psychopathology can be socially produced. Particularly because both the government and corporations can now be held liable for failing to foresee the risk of employees’ suicides—even in cases where employees themselves were not aware of their own psychopathology (Nihon Sangyō Seishin Hoken Gakkai 2006)—they are searching for effective means of psychological management even though they are alarmed by the public criticism that workplace intervention would constitute a violation of privacy (Asahi 2010).

The politicization of workplace psychopathology is not restricted to Japan. Just as suicide emerged in the nineteenth century as a political problem triggering novel ways of understanding collective maladies (Durkheim 1952[1897]), work-related depression today is quickly becoming a new “social pathol¬ogy” across the globe, providing a map of collective efforts to quantify (un)happiness, and profoundly politicizing the private. In France, where spates of suicides, including that of a worker who set himself on fire in his office parking lot, have shocked its citizens (Chrisafis 2011), the rise of workplace psychopathology has been debated as an ill effect of neoliberalization that is destroying its traditional culture of work (Moerland 2009). Italy has already experimented with “mobbing” experts in corporations to provide help to those workers who report depression or other psychiatric breakdowns caused by stress (Mole 2010). Germany, in response to the suicidal act of a copilot in 2015 that led to 150 casualties, is searching for ways to intervene in the lives of “burned-out” workers without seriously violating their privacy (Goode and Mouwaww 2015). Taiwan, where leading corporations have been condemned for driving workers to overwork suicide, has also institutionalized a system for compensating workplace psychopathology (Lin 2012). Across nations, formerly private and often secreted workers’ mental illnesses have emerged as weapons of the weak with which workers can demonstrate tangible damage of work stress and claim recognition (and compensation) for their suffering (cf. Kleinman 1985; Petryna 2002; Young 1995). Yet as in Japan, making workplace pathology visible can also heighten public awareness about the risk individuals pose to the social body (e.g., a mentally ill pilot), thereby initiating calls for closer scrutiny of private lives in the name of prevention and early intervention. As each society grapples with the boundaries between the public and the private as well as collective responsibility and individual liberty, the Japanese attempt to instill stress checks as a “protective shield” raises questions of who is protected. It also prompts us to ask how it might be possible and/or desirable to truly care for distressed individuals, what that might do to their sense of private self and family life, and how, in corporate-medical contexts, one can separate care from surveillance (cf. Stevenson 2014).

2. The official stress checks are to begin in December 2015, even though many corporations, following the government’s announcement in 2010 that it planned to install mental health screening (Asahi 2010), have already implemented e-learning and digital screening for the mental health of their employees.

3. This shift started with the 1999 development of the stress evaluation tables listing 62 stressful life events assigned specific scores with which experts can “objectively” measure workers’ stress levels (Kuroki 2002). This was followed by the creation of the Basic Measures for Suicide Prevention (2006) as well as revision of the Labor Safety Hygiene Law (2014).

4. Some workers and doctors are suspicious of the government’s claim that the stress checks are simply a means of promoting workers’ self-awareness about their mental well-being and thus should be conducted (and their “secrets” shared with their employers) only with an individual worker’s consent.
In this article, I investigate what happens to our sense of private self when juridical, medical, governmental, and economic forces come to intersect one another to promote the corporatization of psychological health. What complicates psychological surveillance (as opposed to the monitoring of the physical body) is the fact that there is more freedom for individuals to hide what they regard to be private information—more possibilities to choose what to tell and not to tell, to deliberately keep "secret" certain aspects of one’s psychological profile while revealing others as a way of holding the state and/or corporations to account. By exploring the tension between individual freedom to conceal and societal demands to reveal (even as a condition of caring for that person), I will illuminate how emerging state and corporate surveillance—an ironic result of the workers’ movement—gives rise to what I refer to as the "rebirth of secrets." This process, featuring stress checks and medical diagnoses, first prompts workers with mental health issues to come forward and report them while also generating, for others who had never looked at themselves in a psychiatristized way, a new realm of self-knowledge (Danzinger 1997; Foucault 1973; Rose 1996). As Japanese workers adopt psychiatric language for scrutinizing their own moods, biorythms, and cognitive patterns, they come to see themselves with a novel sense of health—and of self. Second, as such intimate monitoring becomes an aspect of the new culture of care and individual psychology becomes an object of rehabilitation and further (re)training, workers face increased demands for self-disclosure. This brings about a fundamental shift in ownership of self-knowledge, giving workers a new understanding of what counts as a valuable secret. Third, in their attempt to carve out new boundaries of privacy, workers come to generate a facade of self as well as forms of silence, thereby cultivating a realm of a secret—even sacred—self. By investigating the rise of the "caring" form of surveillance around depression and consequent debates over the new corporate "care of the self" (Foucault 1990, 1994), this paper asks what happens to people’s subjectivities when their minds and bodies become repositories of valuable secrets.

Depression and the New Care of the Self

Working from early morning until late at night, with every move being managed, criticized by those around me, I feel that I have lost myself. I don’t know what kind of person I am, what I’m thinking, what I can express. [A scribble left by a worker in her 20s before she threw herself to her death. She had been working from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. daily, sleeping an average of 3-4 hours per day for 8 months.] (Kawahito 2010:14–15)

Since its neurobiologization in the 1990s, depression has emerged as an important entry point for interrogating workers’ subjectivities, anomalies of which are to be detected in low energy, lack of concentration, negative affect, and distorted cognition (Rose and Abi-Rached 2013). What characterizes this so-called neuro-turn is its explicit link to economic rationality, where depression is increasingly discussed as an illness of productivity. Unlike the age of anxiety of the 1950s–1960s (during which tranquilizers—the "housewife’s little helper"—were often prescribed; Tone 2009), the current neuro-turn transports depression out of the private realm into the public sphere (Martin 2007) while also degendering what was formerly an “illness of emotion” (a subjective, psychological experience of sadness, mainly affecting women) to a “disorder of affect” and an “illness of inaction” (Ehrenberg 2010; Metzl 2003). Psychopharmaceutical interventions have been offered for the afflicted, generating hype around Prozac in the United States in the 1990s, when it was initially hailed not only as a cure for depression but also as an enhancement technology for people to transcend limits of their former selves (Elliott 2003; Martin 2007; Metzl 2003). Similarly in Japan, where psychiatrists assumed until recently that depression was rare, the number of depressed patients more than doubled between 1999 and 2005, now recording over a million, and sales of antidepressants grew fivefold between 1999 and 2006 (Tomitaka 2009). With the rising sales of psychopharmaceuticals globally, critics have warned that such neurobiologization may serve as an apparatus of neoliberal capitalism by manufacturing constantly productive and “happy” workers who remain oblivious to the social roots of their distress and who operate with an illusionary sense of control (see Elliott 2003; Elliott and Chambers 2004; Healy 1997).

Yet to see depression as a collective pathology of labor is also to open up a political problem, generating novel meanings for workers’ psychological secrets. In Japan, the neurobiologization of depression has not led to brain-centered, individual reductionism as North American critics have feared but has instead provided a condition for a new form of “local biology” (Lock 1993; also see “situated biologies” in J. Niewöhner and Margaret Lock, “Moveable Environments and Molecularized Biologies,” unpublished manuscript), in this case, a medico-legal understanding of depression as an illness rooted in both biology and society and a misfortune lying beyond workers’ individual responsibility (cf. Kleinman 1986; Ong 1987; Young 1995). This has helped turn workers and their families into moral witnesses of the potentially psychologically toxic nature of Japanese workplaces, testifying to their (or their loved one’s) experiences of excessive overwork and/or psychological bullying (e.g., the Dentsū employee who was forced to drink sake out of a shoe) to the point of being driven to psychiatric collapse (Fujimoto 1996). Depression has become a legitimate idiom of distress (evocatively termed a “cold of the soul” or kokoro no kaze), as apparent in my interviews in the early

5. This reconceptualization has been accelerated by the fact that the World Health Organization, in collaboration with World Bank, has placed depression high on the list of what it calls the “global burden of disease” affecting more than 350 million people worldwide.
2000s with depressed workers at various psychiatric institutions in the Tokyo vicinity. A 49-year-old banker discussed a time when he was working daily from 7:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. while his new boss repeatedly scolded him in front of his colleagues, one time throwing up in the air a document he had carefully prepared. A 50-year-old civil servant talked about being yelled at and criticized by union leaders, and despite his dislike of alcohol, making an effort to join them every night in drinking in order to smooth things out, until one day he could not face work anymore. A 63-year-old vice president of a construction company told me how, as the recession deepened, he was forced to accept contracts from large, powerful companies not face work anymore. A 63-year-old vice president of a construction company told me how, as the recession deepened, he was forced to accept contracts from large, powerful companies that resulted in losses and how humiliating it was, after desperately trying everything he could think of to pay his employees every month, to be lectured by the judge in bankruptcy court about “collective responsibility.” Many of the men with depression I met discussed the injustice of the government protecting big corporations in the recession while abandoning individuals like themselves. By publicly accepting a diagnosis of depression, a long-stigmatized psychiatric category that used to be strictly guarded as a personal and family secret, these workers asserted that their suffering was real and that their subjective, emotional experiences should be recognized as tangible damage to the brain and the body. Indeed, the scale of their suffering is now validated by the “stress evaluation tables” that were created by psychiatric experts for the Ministry of Labor in 1999 to measure the severity of life-event stress in workers’ lives and to determine their eligibility for worker’s compensation. Providing a way to demonstrate how individual distress is also social suffering, psychiatry has emerged, somewhat unexpectedly, as an agent for social transformation while helping lay the groundwork for mental illness secrets to be made into objects of public management. In order to demand recognition and accountability, workers have to accept the psychiatric idiom of distress and give up their psychological secrets.

But one also wonders what might be the ultimate effects of psychiatry-enabled recognition that leaves the politics of causality in the hands of biomedical experts, potentially transfers ownership of workers’ secrets to state and corporate management, and may well give rise to a new system for gathering and processing health information as a kind of colossal repository of personal secrets. Such a biomedical system of surveillance—even as offered for the benefit of the individual and the community—has triggered some public anxiety: it leaves little space to hide (cf. Bauman and Lyon 2015). For now, the psychological space—essential for a private sense of self—remains largely elusive for such surveillance technology. But as health-monitoring systems evolve, will such a realm of “self” continue to be set aside, either regarded as irrelevant to public surveillance and thus marginalized and devalued or, instead, be revered as a cherished embodiment of personal liberty? This would seem unlikely, as some of the biomedical experts involved in developing health-tracking devices have pointed out to me in interviews how partial, incomplete, and unsatisfactory monitoring will remain unless they find ways to incorporate the psychological. Some of them have expressed expectations that in the future, psychiatry might develop technologies more sophisticated, precise, and reliable than existing psychotherapeutic and biological tools for effectively mining psychological secrets. Such innovation could then turn around the old model of secrets, where individuals might intentionally keep their secrets from their employers, enabling those who uncover secrets to gain fuller knowledge of the “self” than the individual persons the secrets are about. If psychiatry eventually does develop such technologies and further extends its capacity to work as a repository of psychological secrets, and if psychiatry itself becomes further incorporated into systems managed by corporate and governmental institutions, how will it change the terms in which we conceptualize health as well as our sense of self? If a much deeper exploration of psychological secrets becomes possible and is coupled with a culture of risk aver-

6. Note that whatever universal and objective scales or terms are adopted to define and examine mental health, these limit its definition by what they leave out.

7. Information on the Smart Wellness City effort in Japan is available at http://www.swc.jp.

8. There is, however, increasing research on how to read subjectivity via neurobiology, such as in the decoding of dreams.
sion (Lyon 2006) as well as forces of privatization and calls for early intervention (Singh and Rose 2009), will it significantly limit the manner in which workers’ experiences are understood and impoverish people’s subjectivities, thereby violating their sense of privacy, or might it instead succeed in generating technologies used in genuinely “caring” forms of surveillance?

The Therapeutic Value of Nonintrusion: Corporate and Biomedical Care for the Depressed in Japan

Despite the tradition of acceptance of corporate intervention into personal health in Japan, this has not applied, as noted previously, to the realm of mental illness. Corporations have generally adopted a “hands-off” policy when it comes to issues involving the inner realm of the private self, allowing psychological secrets to remain secret. To be sure, workers’ psychological health has received some corporate attention and engagement: workers I interviewed discussed having benefited from holistic corporate care that offers, beside health promotions, training programs and encounter-type group meetings where workers are urged to ponder the meaning of their lives and ways to achieve happiness (also see Garon 1997; Rohlen 1974; Waring 1991). They told me how they enjoyed being given a time and space to reflect on themselves without having to reveal the content of their innermost thoughts. Yet until recently, comprehensive care was rarely extended to address the issue of mental illness per se. In many cases, workers who exhibited symptoms of mental illness were either urged (however indirectly) to quit work or—like some of the workers I met in the 2000s—compelled for years to keep their illness hidden from their superiors and colleagues (cf. Moll et al. 2012). Long debating how best to treat mentally ill workers, Japanese occupational doctors have generally adhered to the conceptual distinction between “diseaseness” and “caseness” in order to protect workers’ privacy. That is, rather than actively detecting and uncovering workers’ hidden psychiatric “diseases,” occupational doctors have long made it a rule not to intervene unless workers exhibit maladjustment in the workplace and surface as “cases” (Katô 1996; Ogino 2011).

The corporate remove from workers’ psychological issues is not surprising given that Japanese psychiatrists themselves have often expressed ambivalence, even skepticism, toward intruding into a patient’s psychological inferiority or kokoro (mind/heart/soul). Unlike in the United States, where psychoanalysis has long penetrated popular consciousness, in Japan the Christian tradition of confession remains foreign, and academic psychiatry from its inception in 1886 is steeped in the German neurobiological perspective and its emphasis on severe psychoses. In conjunction with this, psychotherapeutic exploration has been “viewed with deep suspicion” (Lock 1980:258) as therapeutically risky, intrusive, and mostly marginal to clinical practice. Even for the small number of psychotherapeutically oriented psychiatrists, the act of excavating kokoro for personal secrets has at times been met with interdiction in relation to the sacred nature of secrets, as suggested by a debate in the 1970s among leading psychotherapists, who struggled to translate and implant psychoanalysis in Japan. They questioned the dialectic model of a psychotherapeutic encounter, where an increased awareness of the accumulating contradictions in one’s life inevitably leads to a confrontation that allows the patient to face the secret as “hidden truth.” For instance, the highly influential psychoanalyst Takeo Doi critiqued the Western psychoanalytic obsession with revealing pathogenic secrets (such as unconscious desires, anxieties, and conflicts thought to be deeply rooted in childhood experiences) and pointed out the therapeutic value of kept secrets by discussing himitsu (secret), originally a Buddhist term referring to esoteric knowledge and hidden truth not easily attained (Doi 1972). In so doing, Doi cautioned other doctors and therapists of the fundamentally abstruse nature of self-knowledge and the pervasive sense among lay Japanese that there is something sacred about the inner self that doctors should not carelessly intrude on. Legendary psychiatrist Jöji Kandabashi elaborated on how to advise (particularly psychotic) patients to keep their own secrets to themselves as a way of protecting their self-boundedness and encouraging self-growth through social withdrawal (Kandabashi 1988 [1974]; cf. Corin and Lauzon 1992), thereby asserting the therapeutic importance of being left alone. These doctors helped elevate psychological secrets to an essential element for a healthy sense of self.

This therapeutic caution against intruding into the psychological space as a quintessentially private realm has been extended particularly to care for the depressed. In the early 1970s, when the initial hope waned that newly introduced antidepressants would cure depression, Japanese psychiatrists began to experiment with existential/phenomenological psychotherapy with the depressed only to find, by the end of the decade, that such psychological probing often left patients worse off than before (Kasahara 1978). Some doctors attributed failed treatment of depression to the rigidity of the personality structure of the depressed, long theorized in Japanese psychiatry as “melancholic premorbid personality” and characterized as showing high levels of diligence, responsibility, and consideration toward others—that is, an embodiment of the idealized Japanese work ethic (see Hirasawa 1966). Others blamed themselves for mistreating those who were otherwise well adjusted to society by exposing hidden conflicts and destabilizing the culturally ingrained assumptions on which their patients had built their lives (e.g., Iida 1973). This observation that psychological treatment destabilized the self was shared by many of the female patients with depression I met throughout the 2000s, who criticized what they saw as the intrusive, even violent, nature of psychiatric inquisition, associating it with unexpected harm resulting from well-meaning but overprobing and therapeutically ineffective doctors. These women articulated their ambivalence toward dependency on doctors through one-sided psycholog-
ical exploration and emphasized the importance of guarding secrecy, particularly in a psychiatric encounter. Not surprisingly, then, caution on the part of psychiatrists was apparent in my fieldwork in Japanese psychiatric institutions in the early 2000s, when I would hear veteran clinicians talk of insight-inducing psychotherapy as “taboo” for depression.

Given such principled hesitancy about intrusion into the sacred space of the inner self, the psychiatric biologization of depression has likewise worked, in Japan, to allow patients to maintain a sense of self as secret. Psychiatrists I talked to during my fieldwork emphasized that biomedical jurisprudence extended to only certain aspects of patients’ whole being and that their own expertise lay not in attempting to excavate patients’ hidden psychological secrets but in attending to and fostering changes in patients’ conditions at the somatic level, which they hoped would be accompanied by changes at the psychological level (cf. Good 1994; Luhrmann 2000). In addition to prescribing medication and ample rest, they encouraged patients to monitor their own somatic conditions, such as how fatigued their body had become, and systematically to develop a kind of “bodily insight.” While cultivating such somatic awareness, psychiatrists also utilized the notion of melancholic premorbid personality as a therapeutic social narrative to suggest that depressed patients are, if anything, idealized Japanese whose strong sense of selflessness is what led them to psychological collapse. By pairing the biological and social in this way, psychiatrists sought to provide care for the depressed without intruding into the psychological, secret self. Yet this therapeutic approach, together with the “hands-off” policy generally followed by corporations, has come under strain as psychiatrists and companies have both been confronted with a substantial number of depressed workers and growing assertions that patients’ interiorities are, in fact, in need of attention.

Further Transformations of the Depressed: From Moral Witness to Corporate Risk and Collateral Damage

Public interest in interpretation of workers’ subjectivity emerged as a focal point of legal disputes regarding overwork suicide in Japan. In the 2000 Dentsū case, noted above, judges, lawyers, and psychiatrists heatedly debated what to make of the fact that the worker had exhibited a melancholic premorbid personality, which seems to have led him to take up more responsibility than he was able to cope with. The debate over workers’ subjectivities—legally and medically re-framed here as “vulnerability”—resurfaced in a 2001 Toyota case in which the employee in question was reportedly an “ideal Toyota man,” highly diligent, responsible, and considerate, who seemingly drove himself to excessive work stress and eventual depression and suicide (Asahi 2003). Yet because the reported hours he spent in the office did not seem much longer than those of his peers, the plaintiff argued that it is not the quantity but rather the quality of work that should be considered and how the man (who showed every sign of melancholic premorbid personality and was thus deemed vulnerable to depression) experienced the stress more keenly than others. Judges accepted this argument and declared that work conditions should be set to accommodate those who are “most vulnerable to stress.” Even though the government questioned this radically “subjectivist” approach, they complied with the juridical decision that worker personality could not be wholly responsible for suicide and installed policy changes that emphasized environmental stress over individual vulnerability (Okamura 2002). In 2006, the government also recognized sexual harassment and “power harassment” (signifying a wide range of harassments that occur particularly in workplaces and often take the form of verbal abuse) as causes of psychopathology. This further legitimized depression as a means of embodying social injustice. The media was awash with testimonies from burned-out workers—bullied, humiliated, and exploited in their workplace—who expressed their chagrin, resentment, and anger in talking about their experiences of depression. As they emerged as moral witnesses of the condition of Japanese workplaces, depression also became one of the most frequently cited reasons for taking extended sick leave (Tomitaka 2009), raising public controversies about what has caused the nation’s workforce to be so depressed.

The debate over individual vulnerability intensified in the mid-2000s, when, with the increasing prevalence of depression in society, the nature of depression itself began to change, and the discourse around it took on moralizing overtones, setting in motion a kind of “looping effect” (Hacking 1999). Most depressed patients I met in the early 2000s told me they had never imagined that their low energy and dejected mood was a psychiatric malady, nor had they ever really thought about such things as their biorhythms, affective patterns, or distorted cognition. But as people heard more about depression from doctors, the media, the pharmaceutical industry, and the government, and as they gradually became more aware of their mental and bodily conditions, they more readily began to think that they might be “ill.” As people began to excavate their psychological secrets and voluntarily seek medical care, psychiatrists and other doctors faced many patients afflicted with milder forms of depression who often did not respond well to the traditional psychiatric treatment of medication and rest; in some cases, this treatment was even found to be detrimental. In the latter half of the 2000s, the potentially serious side effects of antidepressant medications were reported in the media, as were the chronic and protracted forms of depression with which some were affected (NHK 2009). Psychiatry has therefore come to be seen as unable to provide a straightforward, linear path to recovery from depression. To make matters worse, the typical depressed per-

9. That is, as long as their personalities remain within an acceptable range found among the workers doing the same kind of jobs (Asahi 2001).
son—a burned-out, middle-aged man with a traditional work ethic—was identified as a root cause of Japan’s lagging status in the neoliberal global market; his diligence, tenacity, and dutifulness came to be seen no longer as virtues but as inflexibility and lack of skill (impressions that, according to psychiatrists, were increasingly expressed by patients themselves). At the same time, younger people with depression became subject to moral blame in media stories that asserted that the afflicted were not suffering true depression (supposedly affecting those who are hardworking and responsible) but were experiencing “new-type depression,” the cause of which lies in patients’ “immature” personalities. While experts representing the Japanese Society of Depression rebutted this dangerously moralizing discourse,10 such characterizations renewed the questions of how to conceptualize depression and treat the depressed beyond neurochemical interventions, and they provoked corporate interest in closer inspection and recategorization of workers’ subjectivities.11

The limits of the government’s biosocial approach to depression were further exposed as the depressed in the workplace came to be seen, by the late 2000s, as collateral damage. An important factor in this idea of the depressed as collateral damage was increase in claims for workers’ compensation, which introduced another logic of joint liability: the burden of depression was increased to test the developing limits of each individual’s potential. Then there are those whose “depression” is caused by inherent disabilities for the time being even as it seeks ways to retrain them and make best use of the abilities they possess.12

The effect of the labor policy changes has been profound. Before 2002, cases of workers’ mental illness were rarely approved for workers’ compensation, and few workers could even imagine holding their company legally liable for psychiatric breakdown. After the stress evaluation tables were established in 1999, the number of approved cases (a significant portion of which involves depressed workers) increased to 108 (43 suicides) in 2002, 269 (66 suicides) in 2008, and as many as 475 (93 suicides) in 2012. See http://www.mhlw.go.jp/file/04-Houdouhappyou-11402000-Roudoukijunkyokurodouhoshoubu-Hoshouka/seishin_2.pdf (accessed May 29, 2015).


11. Some corporate personnel department staff and occupational psychologists I interviewed in 2012–2013 had developed their own categories to classify the depressed. A psychologist working for an employee assistance program (EAP) company told me they recognize three categories of depressed workers: traditional, new type, and those with developmental disorders. While traditionally depressed workers can be expected to recover and return, those with new-type depression are implicitly encouraged to seek jobs elsewhere where they may be able to fulfill their potential. Then there are those whose “depression” is caused by inherent disabilities to communicate effectively. Those individuals are not expected to change fundamentally, and the company has little choice but to accommodate itself to their disabilities for the time being even as it seeks ways to retain them and make best use of the abilities they possess.

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Reprogramming Workers through Rework

One psychiatric response to these therapeutic demands can be found in a new regimen called Rework. A crossover between medical treatment and occupational training, Rework has been increasingly adopted by many companies to help depressed workers return to work. In contrast to the legal conceptualization of the depressed as passive victims driven to depression by stressful social relations, Rework borrows from cognitive behavioral therapy to redefine patients as active agents who are complicit in driving themselves to depression through distorted interpretations of their social relations. At leading institutions of Rework, patients are urged to manage their depression by closely keeping track of their biophysical rhythms and affective changes and to engage in communal tasks in order to correct patterns of miscommunication and distorted cognition. Programs vary across clinics and can include table tennis, calligraphy, painting, yoga, SST (social skill training), debate, and PowerPoint presentations, all of which are employed to increase patients’ awareness of their own physical and psychological strengths and weaknesses. Through such daily activities, Rework therapists carefully control the level of stress that patients are exposed to and gradually increase this level to test the developing limits of each individual (Utsuyō Riwāku Kenkyūkai 2011). Rework thus seeks to instill in patients a new technology of self-governance as a way of enhancing their human capital.

Rework also sidesteps the problem of intrusion on the private self by strictly limiting its interest in workers’ “self” and its secrets. As with cognitive behavioral therapy in general, Rework does not assume that there is no deeply hidden realm of

13. Because large-scale companies tend to be gravely concerned about damaging their corporate image by firing mentally ill workers and being legally challenged by them, some of them, in search of “safer” and more efficient means of psychological management, have reduced their traditionally in-house psychiatric consultations and begun outsourcing care to EAP companies featuring various psychological tests and mental training.
the self but that this interior aspect of human experience is mainly irrelevant for its aims (cf. Lemov 2005). This is because the depressed are generally regarded by the leading Rework doctors I interviewed to be, as one put it, “well-adjusted people who can achieve self-improvement by mere suggestion,” who need to be not so much “saved” (as might be expected of a genuinely clinical encounter) as to be “equipped with a set of survival skills to protect themselves.”

Rework’s focus remains on patients’ cognitive/affective mal-functionings, especially their failure to deal with their own negative emotions, including anger and resentment. Doctors say that while some patients are tormented by a sense of guilt—often disproportionately—“others feel too angered and victimized to grasp that they themselves may be regarded as perpetrators of stress, burdening their colleagues and accumulating affective debt in everyday social interactions. Many others fluctuate between these poles. They are thus unprepared, when they return to work, to deal with how others’ feelings and resentment can haunt them. To facilitate insight, Rework patients are placed together with other patients in a mock office environment that serves as an experimental lab (which turns into an emotional theater at times) where they are urged to reenact the scenes of their cognitive and affective malfunctioning that originally drove them to depression. They are then asked to analyze, discuss, and understand how they may appear in the eyes of others so that they can better protect themselves and support neutral to positive social engagements. In this regard, the therapeutic regimen reproduces the Japanese corporate ethos, where depression becomes an entry point through which workers are made to own up to their shortcomings, regain a sense of social embeddedness, and start repaying their affective debts.

The aim of such a therapeutic process, one may argue, is to provide a kind of “care of the self” without providing—or even working from—a “sense of self.” By the time workers graduate from Rework programs, they are expected to be in control of their emotions and reveal just enough of themselves to maintain smooth work relations, even generating a facade of self, if necessary. This process may open up a new space for workers to regain a sense of private self, thereby laying the groundwork for a rebirth of secrets. Rework psychiatrists I talked to said they hope to redefine the depressed from a burdensome “corporate risk” to “human beings with full potential for growth” in terms of both psychosocial maturity and economic suitability (cf. Martin 1994), thereby reactivating a culture of care, a source of pride for Japanese corporations. Yet without a definitive idea of what it means to be mentally healthy, psychiatrists involved in Rework may inadvertently let a corporate logic slip in to fill the philosophical vacuum that might otherwise mandate a certain kind of “recovery” for depressed workers. Such an elaborate ritual of reintegration and social engineering—which shifts people’s attention away from the societal factors contributing to mental health issues—can be problematic, particularly if we believe government-commissioned research that suggests that all that some workers may need in order to avoid depression is a few more hours of sleep each day.

Yet a therapeutic space is rarely deterministic and is often full of surprises. During fieldwork carried out in the 2010s, I met some Rework psychiatrists who were experimenting with ever more diverse forms of therapeutic programs. They were seeking to reclaim, on behalf of patients, psychological interiority—as a territory of personal secrets—from being a target of cognitive/affective monitoring to being a realm of individual liberty. Some of these doctors’ attempts reminded me of a general depression support group I participated in for over a year, beginning in 2001, that had been formed by patients of a prominent doctor trained in Morita therapy (described by many scholars as having a philosophical resonance with Zen Buddhism). In this group, patients were given an opportunity to disengage from pathological social relations, critically examine the nature of their self-subjugation, and ask whether their happiness really lay in pursuing the kind of life they had taken for granted. These patients, including many from the “elite” tier of society, tried to experiment with alternative ways of being while embracing the Morita philosophical stance of “let it go.” That is, they were prompted to admit their imperfections and abandon the illusion of self-control in order to accept themselves “as they are,” thereby creating a vision of “self-transcendence” that probably would not easily be endorsed in the mainstream form of Rework, with its principle of self-enhancement and maximum optimization for the workplace. As some Rework psychiatrists began to question the “capitalization of the meaning of life” (Gordon 1991:44) and avoid channeling patients to think narrowly inside the corporate box, they were—in ways similar to those I encountered in the 2001 depression support group—more respectful of patients’ needs for silence as well as attentive to their desires to disengage and explore alternative ways of living and find their own paces for recovery (cf. Nakamura 2013; Ozawa-de Silva 2009; Zhang 2014). Yet as doctors are also pressured by corporate demands for quickly restoring workers’ productivity, it may well be that Rework is destined to serve primarily as a means of reclassifying apparently dysfunctional workers and restoring productivity, assisting corporations that no longer consider it their responsibility to care for the worker as a whole person. It thus remains to be seen whether Rework can provide a more truly “caring” form of surveillance and an alternative place for recovery—even for nurturing a sense of

14. Psychiatrists are certainly sensitive to the growing criticism that Rework—with relatively little personalized psychotherapy and an emphasis on individual responsibility to adjust and cure one’s self—is a machine for “quality control” and “cream skimming,” revitalizing only those competent and competitive enough to survive the rigorous program (Saio 2012).

A national desire for controlling psychological health—as seen in the rise of mandatory stress checks and regimens such as Rework—might provide fertile ground for preemptive medicine to transform and prevent people from becoming mentally ill rather than simply treating those who already are. Outside of Japan, such a therapeutic ethos is already found in resilience training, promoted by the US military since the September 11 terrorist attacks. As discussed by Allan Young (2012, 2014), resilience training is an instrument for encouraging soldiers to adopt positive mental health as a way of increasing their psychological fitness so that they can either overcome or prepare themselves for war-inflicted trauma, including haunting memories of atrocities they might experience in the line of duty. Yet underpinning the disarmingly benign-sounding notion of “resilience” is that its appeal lies largely in glamorizing the transcendental power of the individual while it masks the absurd predication of war and the geopolitical implications of economic neoliberalism (Howell and Voronka 2012). Moreover, as the concept of resilience is adopted in many countries, including Japan, and applied to nonmilitary contexts, it renders what was once assumed to be a natural ability of people in adverse situations to recover from traumatic experiences on their own and lead a healthy life into a process to be managed with therapeutic technologies. Increasingly, dealing with life stress and trauma is being redefined as “something to be achieved with the help of experts” to the extent that resilience may soon come to “displace effortless ‘normality’ as the default condition of human life” (Young 2012; see also MacLeish 2013, 2015; Young 2014). Seen in this context, the Japanese government’s calls for nationwide stress checks of workers may be an ominous sign of a coming global age of “positive mental health” with its sights set on far more than merely caring for the mentally ill.16

In this new care of the self, what happens to people’s sense of self when they feel eroded by demands to record their every move and mood, even to predict how their future selves will react to stressful events? While there is certainly apprehension about being seen and having oneself exposed, there is for some also the opposite desire to “escape from freedom,” or rather escape from the responsibility of self-surveillance by means of active self-disclosure and to be again holistically cared for (as in the paternalistic corporate welfare of the prerecession era in Japan). Moves to reveal and manage the self in corporate settings—including depressive affect as well as intimate domains of personal health through stress checks—may be understandable given that individuals are increasingly bestowed with a responsibility for “self care” at a time when, structurally, they lack the power to do so. One person I interviewed, a highly overworked but seemingly healthy employee of a leading electronics company, discussed her experience of routine mental health checks at her company and told me she always marks “feeling suicidal” in her stress check even without actually feeling that way at all. She does this to indicate her vulnerability and therefore secure a consultation; she believes that this “data double” of herself can serve as a shield of protection and proof of her stress in case she does become depressed. As Bauman and Lyon (2012) point out, to expose and leave a record of one’s own vulnerability in the networks of ever-expanding digital monitoring may well be the best self-protection amid increasingly sophisticated systems of surveillance and control. Yet this can go both ways, as her revelation of suicidal feelings also raises a red flag to management that indexes her as a potential candidate for future layoffs. Furthermore, while her self-impression management (Goffman 1959) is a mere response to the tightening web of corporate surveillance, the facade of the self the worker presents would likely evoke confusion and mistrust among health professionals, many of whom continue to regard themselves as caregivers rather than surveillance officers. In the emerging surveillance system, individuals are pressed to choose whether to give up their secrets without knowing whether doing so will work for or against them.

For the time being, the state and the corporate world still require workers, as agents of their own emotional self-knowledge, to report their malfunctions; the old technology of self-disclosure and self-disciplining still remain key means for enacting care of the self. But what will happen in the coming age of preemptive medicine and its technologies of mass screening via neuroimaging and genetic testing—when everyone becomes identifiable as “pre-symptomatically ill” (Rose 2007) and the brain and the body are further turned into the seat of valuable secrets? Even as preemptive medicine has been criticized as premature for psychiatry (which, after all, lacks such essential tools for early detection as solid disease categories [Frances 2013]), in Japan, where it is estimated that the total number of mentally ill patients (including dementia) is double that of cancer patients (Nihon Keizai 2011), the government’s desire for efficient biomedical containment runs high. As the state and health professionals desperately search for more objective, biological means of diagnosing and screening for depression (e.g., with grants going to the development of a wearable optical topography system for mapping prefrontal cortex activation) in place of the stress evaluation tables, it might not be long before this newly opened-up psychological space of depressed workers becomes replaced by thoroughly biological stress management. Such surveillance would likely shift attention away from workers’ social

16. In Japan, particularly alarming is that contemporary “resilience” discourse (e.g., Fuji 2013) has been used by some to advocate a strengthening of the country in ways that echo the nationalistic and eugenic discourse of the pre–World War II period in Japan (see Matsubara 1998), when the state spoke of strengthening citizens’ bodies and minds in order to bolster national security.
experiences and emotions to objective signs of stress as neurological abnormalities to be detected at the level of cells even though some leading neuropsychiatrists have expressed to me skepticism and fear that such technology engenders unrealistic expectations and potential for abuse. As with the Smart Wellness City, what is also troubling about digitalized psychological surveillance—as it shifts its primary concern from individuals to combinations of “factors [and] statistical correlations of heterogeneous elements”—is the ways in which it could not only dispense with the subjective but also devalue the reciprocal relationship of “the carer and cared” (Castel 1991:288). An overwhelming collective fear of the eruption of the unpredictable could sever human reciprocity, bring death to individual privacy as we know it, and fundamentally transform the material and social life of the secret.

Alternatively, the process of creating the means of collective psychological management could lead to a kind of “ecological” perspective (Lupton 1995; also see Raikhel’s [2015] recontextualization of Bateson 1972)—attentive to the fact that collective mal-affect is not simply reducible to an aggregate of individual mal-health—and calls for structural transformation (Bêhague 2009). If so, this could help generate new ways of diagnosing and intervening in the health of the social body in order to address both forms of vulnerability—individual and environmental—and their interactions with one another, which in turn may lead people to problematize the increasing expectations placed on workers’ self-governance as a panacea for structural malfunctions.

I have often been struck in my interviews with doctors involved in preemptive psychiatry by the fact that some of them are direct descendants of the 1970s antipsychiatry movement and are explicit about needing to address both individual biology and societal problems even if their aggressive (and often heavily pharmaceutical) interventions have raised public concern. Their zeal is also echoed by some occupational doctors who are now requesting that the government include questions in their health checks not just about workers’ stress levels but about problems of the workplace as they search for ways of using surveillance of individuals as a way to do surveillance of the workplace itself. Their hopes may well be realized as the Diet recently enacted the Overwork Death Prevention Law in an effort to prevent further tragedies (Yomiuri 2014). As silence around mental illness is broken, and as the nature of secrecy radically changes in the workplace, could it be that the psychiatrization and further neurobiologization of workplace psychopathology will help develop a novel and truly caring form of surveillance that leaves workers feeling both left alone and cared for? Psychiatric screening and early intervention are still experimental, so it is too early to tell. But one cannot help hoping that out of such collective attempts to engage with the realm of workers’ secrets will come a way to strike a balance between the constraints of the neoliberal workplace that demand resilience and a more caring system of health protection that will recognize, even cherish, fundamental human vulnerability.

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Curating Secrets

Repatriation, Knowledge Flows, and Museum Power Structures

by Chip Colwell

Museums often keep secret information concerning the acquisition and stewardship of their collections even though retaining such privileged information may contradict the ideal of the museum—serving the public good in the public trust. Over the last three decades, this paradox has been particularly revealed during repatriation debates, which have threatened many museums with the loss of objects while exposing histories of illicit and unethical collecting. In this article, I provide a case study to the theme of secrecy by exploring how, in the United States, the institutional culture of museums creates a process that shelters certain kinds of knowledge. While repatriation law in the United States was intended to increase transparency about Native American collections and thus shift power asymmetries between museums and tribes, the law has ultimately reinforced preexisting power structures. Repatriation reveals the tension between concealing and disclosing secrets.

Consider the War Gods

Secrecy, however varied its manifestations, is simply a social resource (or adaptive strategy) used by individuals, groups, and organizations to attain certain ends in the course of social interaction. (Tefft 1980a:35)

In the fall of 1968, Mary and Frances Crane received a letter from Claire Morrill, the owner of the Taos Book Shop. By then, over 17 years, the Cranes, as husband and wife, had spent millions of dollars collecting Native American artifacts to build their Southeast Museum of the American Indian (Herold 1999). The couple had first met Morrill in 1954 when they took a massive collecting trip across North America. As their journey neared its end, they stopped at the Taos Book Shop in northwestern New Mexico. Mary wrote in her journal that they “spent considerable time here going through this fascinating shop,” paying $168 for books, two old and one “very rare” kachina doll, and one Navajo medicine bag replete with “a prayer stick and some sacred corn meal.”

Fourteen years later, Morrill recontacted the Cranes. “Remembering your wish to be advised of any old Indian ceremonial objects of really special importance,” she began, “we think we should tell you of a group of Zuni War Gods we have just acquired.” The War Gods—Ahayuuda—are wooden statues that are transformed into gods through ceremonies and are placed in shrines around the Zuni Reservation to protect the land and help hold the universe in balance. Since the late 1800s, the War Gods had become prized objects of ethnography and art for museums (Canfield 1980).

Immediately Francis Crane wrote back to Morrill. He explained that just a month before, the couple had donated their entire 12,000-piece collection, including three previously collected War Gods, to the Denver Museum of Nature and Science (DMNS). He and his wife intended to continue to add to the collection, but they would need time to get approvals from the DMNS staff.

In her reply, Morrill said Denver could prove to be a difficult home for the three gods she was selling. She had hoped to send the War Gods far away, where they could be put on display. Morrill explained, “The Zuni are somewhat sensitive about ceremonial objects of this kind.” She hastened to add that the Priesthood of the Bow—the Zuni religious fraternity in charge of the War Gods at their shrine homes—“is fast dying out and some shrines have been abandoned.” Although she offered no proof, Morrill assured the Cranes that she “obtained the group of figures in an entirely legitimate way—they had already been sold by the Zunis before they came into our possession.” Nevertheless, because Colorado adjoins New Mexico, she had to insist that they could only be sold “at the purchaser’s risk and with the stipulation that they are not to be publicly displayed for ten years.” Such an

1. Mary Crane journal, September 8–9, 1954, Crane Collection Box 2, Folder 13, Denver Museum of Nature and Science (DMNS) Archives. The DMNS was formerly known as the Denver Museum of Natural History.
2. Letter from Claire Morrill to Mary Crane, November 2, 1968, Crane Collection Box 11, Folder 25, DMNS Archives.
3. Letter from Frances Crane to Claire Morrill, November 9, 1968, Crane Collection Box 11, Folder 25, DMNS Archives.
approach was common, she noted, explaining that museums in Santa Fe and elsewhere were keeping the War Gods out of public view, with the curators assuming that "the time will come when ceremonialism will break down to the point where such figures can be safely displayed."

Mary Crane belatedly replied to Morrill: Francis had suffered a heart attack just after Thanksgiving, and he was convalescing in a Maine hospital. Mary wrote that the DMNS had been searching for other sponsors to provide funds for the War Gods but had found none. "I intend to step up myself," Mary committed, "and make the purchase to save this valuable and rare collection for the Museum, because I realize their scarcity and know that they should be preserved in the archives of the Museum!" She asked Morrill for any more information—to be kept secret by the museum for 10 years—and enclosed a deposit of $500.

A week into 1969, DMNS president Roy E. Coy signed his name to a contract drawn up on Taos Book Shop letterhead (fig. 1). The museum accepted "full responsibility of ownership." At the bottom of the page is a footnote to justify this unprecedented agreement for the museum: "Explanation of above stipulation of postponement of display is that certain Zuni tribesmen resent exhibition of these sacred items and might make trouble." With the contract, the museum officials agreed not to display the three Ahayuda until 1979, hoping that by then, the Zuni would have forgotten about their gods.

In 1978, the Pueblo of Zuni’s tribal council passed resolution M70-78-991, which authorized the Zuni religious leadership to begin to reclaim their cherished Ahayuda from museums (Ferguson, Ainyon, and Ladd 1996; Ferguson and Eriacho 1990; Merenstein 1993; Merrill, Ladd, and Ferguson 1993). Zuni priests outlined the basis for their claims, which essentially refuted all of the suggestions Morrill made to the Cranes. To the Zuni people, the War Gods are living beings that cannot be "owned" in a Western sense of private property; they are made and cared for by religious leaders on behalf of the entire tribe. The Priesthood of the Bow was losing members, it was true, but this made the protection of the War God shrines more important, not less so. They insisted that the shrines had never been—could never be—abandoned. Each year the new War Gods created by the Bear and Deer Clan leaders replaced the previous gods, which are reverently "retired" at the shrine, laid to rest where they could naturally decompose and return their powers to the earth. Some of these War Gods were stolen and sold to museums with the help of certain Zuni, but many suspected these individuals were violating the tribe’s laws to get money to sustain their substance abuse. These gods did not belong to the museums, and Mary Crane’s desire for the War Gods to be, as she wrote, "pre-

served in the archives of the museum" was a profound contravention of Zuni traditions.

One of the first museums that the Zuni leaders targeted for repatriation was the Denver Art Museum (DAM), just three miles from the DMNS. After months of the nationally publicized controversy, on March 21, 1979, DAM’s board of trustees voted to return the three War Gods in its collections. DAM admitted that "the War God is a deity and a present, animated object of worship rather than a symbol or an art object." However, with concerns about the precedent of their decision, the DAM trustees did not authorize the "return" of the War Gods but only their "presentation" of them to the tribe. As part of their agreement, the tribe immediately began construction of a "fortified shrine" to ensure that the returned War Gods would not be stolen again. The high-security holy place was finished in 1980. That fall, the three War Gods from DAM were placed in their new abode.

Throughout the public controversy surrounding DAM, the administrators at the DMNS elected not to publicly acknowledge that it held six War Gods—the second largest known holding of War Gods in any museum in the world. Only in 1987, when the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History decided to return its two War Gods, did the DMNS staff finally acknowledge that they would have to act. This conviction was further strengthened when the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) was passed into law on November 16, 1990. Three months later, the DMNS began the deaccession process (J. Herold comment in Merrill, Ladd, and Ferguson 1993:559–560).

The press lauded the DMNS’s resolve, particularly emphasizing the "voluntary" nature of the return (Albuquerque Journal 1991; Denver Post 1991; Indian Trader 1991). An editorial in the Denver Post concluded, "The decision by the Denver Museum of Natural History to voluntarily return the war gods to the Zuni is laudable not only because it demonstrated proper professional conduct. It simply was the right thing to do, by any civilized standard" (Denver Post 1991). But although the DMNS acted with such dispatch after NAGPRA became law, neither the press nor the museum ever publicly discussed how or when the institution received the gods or its contract to secrecy. In the end, the museum had not only successfully collected but also returned the War Gods on its own terms.

**Museum Practices and Secrecy Concepts**

The case of the War Gods provides an entry point to begin an investigation of how secrecy is infused in the museum collection process. In this article, I examine how repatriation—specifically the attempt by Native Americans to reclaim ancestral remains and sacred objects from US museums—has affected the maintenance of public and private knowledge. Re-

4. Letter from Mary Crane to Claire Morrill, December 11, 1968, Crane Collection Box 11, Folder 22, DMNS Archives.
5. Contract dated January 2, 1969, Crane Collection Box 2, Folder 2, DMNS Archives.
patriation is most fundamentally about getting things back or reburying human remains, but underwriting this project is the idea that with such returns, power over heritage resources shift back from museums toward descendant communities (Bray 1996; Lippert 2008). In this context, repatriation law has been composed to facilitate information sharing and to increase the transparency of collection histories, essentially to reveal to tribes and lineal descendants the hidden paths of objects as they traveled from their sources into museums (Bray and Killion 1994; Bruchac 2010; Graham and Murphy 2010; Yellowman

Figure 1. Contract signed by Roy E. Coy to keep the collection of the Zuni Ahayuda out of public view for 10 years (courtesy Denver Museum of Nature and Science).
1996). In practice, however, American repatriation legal regimes reinforce extant power structures by entitling museums to be the ultimate arbiter on the flows of knowledge used to determine the values and histories of cultural objects and human remains.

Methodologically, in this article I draw from the archives, published case studies, and theoretical positions on secrecy to show how under US law, museums—not claimants or source communities or impartial judges—are granted the decision-making authority to decide what knowledge is sufficient for a legitimate repatriation claim. Even when museums accept a claim as legitimate, they control what language is used and what information is provided publicly about their collections and their decisions. When a claim is rejected, a museum is neither required to justify itself to claimants nor explain its decision publicly. Such powers, sanctioned by US law, ultimately serve to reinforce—rather than rearrange—a colonial power structure set in place more than a century ago in which museums are in near exclusive control over what Native American culture in museums is public and private.

Repatriation threatens the public image of museums as public institutions that serve the public interest, although this role is contested (Ames 1986; Karp et al. 2006; Karp, Kremer, and Lavine 1992). Since at least the early 1900s, many museums had evolved from private places serving elite audiences to self-proclaimed institutions of the common citizen (Barrett 2012). Museums of anthropology, natural history, and art often exposed the secrets of the world’s Indigenous peoples—for example, War Gods that ended up at the Smithsonian Institution and Brooklyn Museum were used to re-create sacred, esoteric altars (Culin 1906; Stevenson 1904:116). At the same time, these museums sought to guard their own knowledge systems and the processes by which objects were collected. Repatriation has the potential to expose this information, to reveal the stories of who, how, and when objects were gathered from source communities and directed toward museums (Cove 1995; Hole 2007; Laegassick and Rassool 2000; Platt 2011; Schepet-Hughes 2001). Here, an underlying dynamic of the repatriation battles has been the struggle of museums to retain the power to expose others’ secret knowledge in the name of public interest while preserving their own rights to secrecy.

In this article I draw theoretical concepts from an early and important but often forgotten interdisciplinary contribution to these discussions, Secrecy: A Cross-Cultural Perspective (Tefft 1980b), edited by Stanton K. Tefft, a cultural anthropologist then at Wake Forest University. An important premise of this edited book is that although modern societies frequently present themselves as evolving toward greater democracy, transparency, and openness, institutions within nation-states like the United States have “tended toward the norms of a closed society, as secrecy is now standard operating procedure for government agencies, business, labor unions, churches, colleges and universities, and private associations and organizations” (Lowry 1980:297). Further, “secrecy as an elaborate social system of rules, rituals, codes, and penalties is particularly char-acteristic in modern organizations,” and that with the “rise of bureaucracy as the predominant mode of organizational life, manipulation and persuasion arose as instruments of power within organizational contexts” (Lowry 1980:298). The use of secrecy in museums is thus not an exception to the modern state but representative of it.

In Tefft’s (1980b) Secrecy, “privacy” is defined as a consensual idea of agreed-on areas of life that can be legitimately kept from public view; secrecy, in contrast, is an acute form of denial of access to information that may be illegitimate (Warren and Laslett 1980). Secrecy is “defined as the mandatory or voluntary, but calculated, concealment of information, activities, or relationships” (Tefft 1980:320, my emphasis). In this scheme, museums mainly employ “public-life secrecy,” which is “secrecy on the part of those in power and their agents, acting purportedly in the public interest” (Warren and Laslett 1980:29). Museum secrecy may also be said to be a form of “external secrecy” in which information is predominately shielded from those outside the organization (Tefft 1980c:326).

Secrets are fundamentally a lever of force, because “secrecy maximizes the power potential of the knowledge” (Lowry 1980:299). Communities develop knowledge “security systems” precisely because of conflicts of interests and struggles over the control of resources, prestige, and values, requiring individuals and institutions to “determine the rewards or costs of secrecy or disclosure in terms of their own self-interest” (Tefft 1980a:63). What information is shared—and when, how, where, and with whom—is a mechanism to control the attitudes, beliefs, and actions of different selectively chosen social actors. In this way, secrecy must be seen as instrumental—an adaptive device, a means to an end. “Through regulated control and disclosure of information, individuals as well as groups may exert some control over their environments by making it difficult for outsiders, whether competitors, rivals, or enemies, to predict their actions and take counteraction against them”; Tefft (1980c) concludes, “secret knowledge always gives its possessors some degree of power over others” (321).

NAGPRA, Transparency, and Power

In 1990 NAGPRA established a legal process for lineal descendants and Indian tribes to claim human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and communally owned objects from US museums and federal agencies (McKeown 2013). To date, the skeletal remains of nearly 40,000 individuals and more than 1 million funerary objects in museums have been culturally affiliated; most of these have likely been repatriated.7 Additionally, more than 6,000 sacred or communally owned objects have been returned to Indian tribes since 1990. These statistics indicate that NAGPRA has been successful in facilitating the return of thousands of Native Amer-

7. There are no statistics that document how many of these affiliated human remains and funerary objects have actually been repatriated to date. See www.nps.gov/nagpra/FAQ/INDEX.HTM#What_is_NAGPRA?
ic human remains and cultural items to their living ancestors and caretakers. Still, the work has just begun. It is estimated that only 27% of human remains have been affiliated; the unaffiliated remains of more than 115,000 individuals and nearly 1 million associated funerary objects continue to sit on museum shelves (Colwell-Chanthaphonh, Maxson, and Powell 2011:27). NAGPRA only provides a process for tribes to make claims and museums to consider those claims, but it does not guarantee repatriation. The aim of the act was to make museum collections and records more transparent so that vested tribes had the ability to gauge which human remains and cultural items they might consider ancestral and thus whether or not to claim them. Multiple mechanisms are built into the law to ensure that museums make their records accessible to tribes and that the legal process is transparent (table 1). Essentially, NAGPRA requires museums to make lists of their holdings, be open about how the lists were created, share the lists and the records used to make them, consult with Indian tribes on the lists, and make public any plans for the potential return of cultural items. However, although the law is clear that museums must share information about their collections, consultations, and repatriation, only one single sentence in NAGPRA’s implementing regulations (and no language in the law itself) explicitly keeps information private: authorizing museums, at the request of a tribal official, may take the necessary steps to ensure that “information of a particularly sensitive nature is not made available to the general public” (43 CFR 10.10(f)(2)). These legal requirements were aimed at fundamentally shifting museum practices developed over the last century.

Museums, as they developed out of the colonial era, have largely been closed-knowledge systems, with information tightly controlled and filtered by experts responsible to disciplinary authorities (Barringer and Flynn 1998; Bennett 1995). Over the course of the twentieth century, at least three central factors encouraged museum administrators to collect cultural objects without concern for the effects on source communities and to keep its methods largely out of public view. First was the notion of the “salvage ethic” that underpinned much late-nineteenth-century anthropology, the view that Native peoples were on the precipice of extinction and thus that their material life should be preserved before they expired (Kreps 2003:87). Second was the political disempowerment and economic desperation of many Native American source communities who suffered greatly at the close of the Indian Wars and often either sold sacred materials to make ends meet or were powerless to stop government authorities from taking cultural materials and ances-

Table 1. Sections of NAGPRA (Public Law 101-601) and its implementing regulations (43 CFR 10) that involve making museum information and processes public

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Legal citation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Compile information</td>
<td>Museums must make inventories (for human-remains-associated funerary objects) and summaries (for unassociated funerary objects, sacred objects, and communally owned objects) that identify the geographical context and cultural affiliation of each cultural item</td>
<td>25 USC 3003.5(a); 25 USC 3003.5(b)(1)(B); 25 USC 3004.6(b)(1)(C); 43 CFR 10.8(b); 43 CFR 10.9(c)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Share information</td>
<td>Inventories and summaries must be made available to lineal descendants, Indian tribes, the National NAGPRA Program, and the NAGPRA Review Committee</td>
<td>25 USC 3003.5(b)(2); 25 USC 3004.6(a); 43 CFR 10.8(a); 43 CFR 10.9(a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>For inventories, affiliations must be completed in consultation; for summaries, consultation may follow the completion of this step; for culturally unaffiliated human remains, museums must initiate consultation</td>
<td>25 USC 3003.5(b)(1)(A); 25 USC 3004.6(b)(1)(B); 43 CFR 10.8(d)(2); 43 CFR 10.9(b)(2); 43 CFR 10.11(b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share information</td>
<td>Museums must make a range of information about the inventory process itself available to consulting parties, including lists of tribes consulted, general descriptions, projected time frames, and additional documentation used for cultural affiliations</td>
<td>43 CFR 10.9(b)(3); 43 CFR 10.11(b)(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share information</td>
<td>All records, catalogs, relevant studies, and pertinent data must be made available to the potential lineal descendants and officials and traditional religious leaders of potentially culturally affiliated tribes as well as to the National NAGPRA Program and Review Committee</td>
<td>25 USC 3003.5(b)(2); 25 USC 3004.6(b)(2); 43 CFR 10.8(d)(3); 43 CFR 10.9(e)(5)(i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share information</td>
<td>Museums must share all information they possess about cultural items to assist Indian tribes to make a claim</td>
<td>25 USC 3005.7(d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share information</td>
<td>Museums must inform recipients of cultural items of any known treatments that used pesticides, preservatives, or other substances that could be harmful to humans</td>
<td>43 CFR 10.10(c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public information</td>
<td>Documentation supplied by a federal agency is considered a public record</td>
<td>43 CFR 10.9(e)(5)(ii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public information</td>
<td>Repatriation and dispositions may not proceed until the National NAGPRA Program has been notified and until 30 days after a notice has been published in the Federal Register, the official public journal of the US government</td>
<td>25 USC 3003.5(d)(3); 43 CFR 10.8(f); 43 CFR 10.9(e)(7); 43 CFR 10.10(a)(3); 43 CFR 10.10(b)(2); 43 CFR 10.11(d)</td>
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It is not unreasonable to allow public institutions to keep some information private. As Tefft (1980:319) rightly argues, “Secrecy does not always conceal unlawful, much less, immoral acts.” Yet this comparison is significant because it shows not that museum administrators support keeping some information private—as many tribes seek for their religious practices—but only information that relates to their own economic and political interests. It also illustrates that while museums might promote the self-image of public institutions with all of the associated trappings of transparency, for most of the twentieth century, museums have had firm control over which knowledge is made public and which private. In this sense, repatriation, as a process of selectively using knowledge for particular ends, is not a radical departure for museums but just a shift in their historical practices. Although some might point to the recent trend of museums uploading their collection databases to the web as a demonstration of openness and transparency, this practice does not contradict my argument but fundamentally demonstrates it. In only a handful of cases have museums proactively consulted with source communities about how to appropriately make collections publicly accessible online—addressing such issues, for example, as intellectual property rights, the appropriateness of photographing sacred objects, and respecting how cultural knowledge is managed within local communities (e.g., Anderson and Christen 2013; Henssey et al. 2013; Rowley 2013; Srinivasan et al. 2009). Instead, most museum professionals have ascribed the power over such decision-making to themselves, conferring on their institutions the authority to decide how information should be made public. Museums, as institutions, have long been structured to control knowledge as an exercise of power.

How to Manage Knowledge Flows

The repatriation process threatens museums not only with the loss of objects but the loss of control over information. Because NAGPRA requires museums to share information with tribes, make decisions in consultation with them, and publish some of those decisions in the Federal Register, museums are compelled to give up much knowledge previously kept out of public view. This exposure provokes yet a deeper existential question: if the information shared through NAGPRA shows that museums are not trustworthy (e.g., when documents show museums complicit in thefts), then how can museums truly serve the public trust?

Because of this existential threat, museums have been motivated to continue to control the flow of information surrounding their collections in the repatriation process (a tactic that also reinforces some museum staff’s primary goal of stymieing the process to avoid having to return objects at all). The fear of discovery—“visibility”—of such a contradiction is a potent motivation for “strategies of concealment” (Tefft 1980:322). Suppression of information not only leverages power but also protects individuals and institutions from the risks of embarrassment, legal punishment, political injury, mone-
tary penalty, and damage to a reputation (Tefft 1980:36–37). Over the last two decades American museums deftly navigated NAGPRA so they can manage how knowledge flows to minimize these risks. The implicit goal is to control the balance of private and public knowledge so that museums can operate as public educational institutions (putatively committed to the free and transparent flow of information) while at the same time protecting information that increases its social and economic capital and limits public doubt about the institution’s role as serving the public trust.

From their beginnings, anthropology museums have prized Native American human remains and funerary, sacred, and communal objects. Because few communities have willingly parted with cherished religious objects or their ancestors’ bones, collectors have long had to use creative methods to persuade people to part with them. These methods have now been well documented, from trading to outright theft to fieldworkers seeking out Native American traditionalists in need of cash (e.g., Cole 1985; Cooper 2008; Echo-Hawk and Echo-Hawk 1994; Hamilton 2010). Through this process, objects and remains were removed from their original cultural contexts and assigned new meanings as objects of science, beauty, or curiosity (Cruikshank 1995; Curtis 2006; Jenkins 1994). Classified, cataloged, enumerated, and physically protected in a sterile storage room or exhibit hall, museum processes have worked to gain not only physical control over objects as things but also to establishes a new intellectual context.

The War Gods, for example, once in a museum, were to non-Zunis no longer living beings spiritually protecting the Zuni homeland but mere pieces of inanimate wood that spoke to their place in the pantheon of primitive art or to their role in documenting humanity’s religious diversity (Ferguson and Erichao 1990). The knowledge buttressing this new intellectual context could be controlled by failing to adequately document their original cultural contexts and replacing them with museological values. The accession files of the War Gods at the DMNS, for instance, record no information about their original religious contexts and only give their physical measurements, broad geographical context, and monetary values (Colwell 2014:14). Indeed, the shadowy way in which the War Gods came to Denver would anticipate that little original context could be transferred to the museum; rather, the museum might have been motivated to leave out particular details of their removal from New Mexico and replace them with more generalized meanings as “art” and “artifact” (fig. 2). The control of the context of such objects could be further enhanced through exhibit display in which objects sealed in glass cases and described with brief labels written by curators provided the museum with exclusive authority over the knowledge about them for public consumption.

Through consultation and the information-sharing requirements of NAGPRA, museums are legally required to reveal nonpublic and secret aspects of their collections. Such sharing, however, is almost always determined by the museum in terms of what information is given in summaries and inventories and how and when archival documents are shared. This process also often requires tribes to reveal their own secrets. When consulting on sacred and communally owned objects in particular, American Indian elders and religious leaders are often asked to share their own views of the objects’ significance, which requires sharing cultural knowledge. Often, this can be achieved through conversations or short reports. In other cases, tribes have to go to extremes. For example, in one dispute between Alaskan Indian groups and the Alaska State Museum over a clan hat known as Ye’iit Aan Kaawu Naa S’aaaxw (Leader

Figure 2. Accession card for one of the Ahayu:da, reframing the god as a museological artifact (courtesy Denver Museum of Nature and Science).
of All Ravens Hat), one Native community submitted a 385-page report with detailed interpretations of sensitive cultural practices (Rinehart 2010). This revealing of the Native self is difficult yet necessary to the process, because Native Americans are often seen as responsible for proving their rights to cultural items. In other words, because most museums presume they have right of possession, the burden to prove ownership or control frequently requires tribes to reveal esoteric knowledge.

This responsibility to prove their traditional rights often requires tribal leaders to publicly expose their private selves. This process can be seen in a dispute between the Western Apache NAGPRA Working Group and the American Museum of Natural History. At a public hearing before the NAGPRA Review Committee (a seven-member board that oversees the law), an Apache traditionalist named Ramon Riley presented himself before the committee and the dozens of people in the auditorium. To prove to the review committee the importance of the Apache items held by the museum, he felt it necessary to show the committee his personal medicine bag, explaining that it is to him a “holy object” that he will carry with him until he dies (National NAGPRA Program 2010:33). He continued to describe the contents of the pouch, prefacing this with “I shouldn’t tell you” and ending his testimony by saying, “I never show this to anyone.”

Riley seemed to be consciously using this public setting to make a dramatic point: NAGPRA requires Native American religious leaders to expose themselves in order to get back what they believe is rightly theirs. The act of revealing—his own culture and personal spiritual experience—was a kind of sacrilege, yet it was required by the legal process. Riley was manipulating the highly public venue of a NAGPRA Review Committee meeting—open to the public, a process of becoming a part of the public record—to emphasize his very objection to how NAGPRA obliges such a public revealing. In contrast, the museum involved in the dispute did not provide any information (secret or otherwise); it did not even send any representative to the public hearing.

But in another sense, this moment emphasizes a fundamental contradiction between Western and Apache views of the relationship between secrecy and power. Anthropologists and historians have hypothesized that many Native American religious traditions are secret because of the punishments missionaries and governmental authorities meted out during the colonial period in an effort to end Native religion (Wenger 2009). Joining Ramon Riley’s testimony before the review committee, Apache leader Steve Titla acknowledged this history as one reason for secrecy. He explained how the US Army concentrated Apaches on reservations, prevented them from accessing traditional medicines, stopped ceremonies, and introduced Christian missionaries. Titla spoke of his great-grandparents, who would “travel to the mountains in secret” and “hold ceremonies without the knowledge of the US Cavalry or the government or the missionaries at the time.” Such practices would seem to confirm Tefft’s (1980a) maxim: “Secrecy enables the powerful to escape accountability for their exploitation and manipulation of the weak and enables the weak to escape coercion by the powerful and to oppose them” (67).

Although colonial force played a role in pushing Native religions to be secretive, Elizabeth Brandt (1980:123) has convincingly argued that often “external secrecy directed toward outsiders is merely a special case of a much larger process.” Brandt shows that at least among the Pueblos of the American Southwest, secret knowledge is restricted even within Native communities. Arguably, such restrictions maintain religious hierarchies, promote oral modes of communication, and encourage mentoring relationships. But Brandt suggests that from an emic view, “liturgical knowledge”—information that concerns ritual and religious symbology—is kept secret because of its supernatural force. Anthropologists argue that knowledge is powerful because it is secret; Pueblo traditionalists argue that knowledge is secret because it is powerful (Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2011b; Isaac 2011). This is a very different way of looking at the relationship between power and knowledge, and it is shared with Apache traditionalists who fear offending their Holy Beings. “I cherish this,” Ramon Riley concluded his testimony, holding out his medicine bag for the review committee to see what should not be seen, “and I use this in my prayer and ceremonies, and like I said, I never show it to anyone but because the museum wants more information that’s why I hope the holy people will forgive me for doing this” (National NAGPRA Program 2010:33).

In NAGPRA, museum employees are the ultimate arbiters of what kinds of information are legitimate, how competing knowledge systems can be reconciled (e.g., oral tradition vs. archaeology), how much information is needed to support a claim, and whether the information available, taken in its totality, constitutes a “preponderance” of evidence (the legal threshold of evidence, meaning about 51% certain) for a claim. That the museum is given this responsibility in the law is a source of deep frustration to tribal officials (Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2012: 289). For example, in another dispute between the Apache and the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History (NMNH), the initial report of the museum’s repatriation office denied a claim to six objects, privileging written sources over oral tradition (Hollinger and Botic 2008). According to tribal officials, because Apache traditionalists are so protective of the information surrounding these six objects, they were reluctant to disclose secret knowledge, so they asked six times between 2003 and 2008 whether the NMNH Repatriation Office would submit to them specific questions. As Seth Pilsk, an employee with the San Carlos Apache, explained during a hearing, “The Working Group wished to give the minimum amount of information necessary to justify repatriation, and that this was because the claim involves highly sensitive areas of knowledge that Apaches are not allowed to speak about freely, especially with unqualified people, Apaches or non-Apaches alike.”

reparation office never asked them questions but instead relied predominately on written ethnographic sources. The Apaches cast doubt on the veracity of these older texts, but the museum seems to have accepted them while it regarded contemporary Apache beliefs skeptically. As Vincent E. Randall, a widely respected Yavapai-Apache religious and political leader, said, “Often times, we are essentially called liars about our own history” (in Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2012:281).

Museums not only have the right to evaluate all knowledge around objects; when they decide a claim is not valid, under NAGPRA, the museum has the right to keep the disputed cultural item(s). A legitimate claim and cultural affiliation must be published in the Federal Register, but when a museum denies a claim, it does not have to make public its decision. Thus, rejected claims—so clearly demonstrating a dispute—almost always remain out of public view. If a tribe disagrees with a museum’s decision, its only recourse, other than an expensive and time-consuming lawsuit, is to present the dispute before the NAGPRA Review Committee. Yet as we saw with Ramon Riley, this process requires the tribe to expose more of private and secret knowledge to the public. While most museums do not supply their consultation records to the general public, testimonies and records presented to the review committee do become public.

Further, because the review committee’s findings are nonbinding, museums can easily elide its judgments. For example, to date, the Alaska State Museum has simply refused to return the Yeil Aan Kaaw Naas S’aatxw despite the review committee recommendation to do so. Similarly, in the dispute between the Apache and the NMNH, the Smithsonian’s review committee unanimously found that the museum should return the six disputed items (Hunter et al. 2009). Museum administrators, however, simply and with no public explanation have refused to comply. In fact, of the 15 disputes that to date have gone before the NAGPRA Review Committee, only one (or 7%) has resulted in full compliance by a museum (table 2). Moreover, even the threat of legal penalties have proved toothless. Between 1990 and 2010, of the 69 allegations of failure to comply with the law formally reported to the National NAGPRA Program, only 31 were investigated; of these, only 15 museums were found to be noncompliant; of these, only eight museums had to pay civil penalties, totaling a paltry $42,679.10 In short, even when Indian tribes elevate a dispute to the public sphere through the review committee, museums have almost always been able to act as both defendant and final judge. 11

Even when a museum accepts a repatriation claim or affirms a cultural affiliation, it is the museum that authors and publishes the notice for the Federal Register. The National NAGPRA Program facilitates this process and requires certain standard information, such as physical description of the object or human remains. Most notices have minimal information and lack any detailed explanation of how exactly the museum came into possession of the cultural items. Such an approach, while helping to keep the administrative process streamlined, nevertheless helps museums escape public accountability for any unethical or illicit activities. Hence, even when a museum returns items under NAGPRA, it is empowered to decide what information is to be made public through notification. An example of where this can create conflict is the dispute mentioned between the Apache and the American Museum of Natural History. In this case, the American Museum accepted the tribe’s claim for 77 sacred and communally owned objects (Masberg 2013). However, in writing the notice for the Federal Register, the museum only described these as “cultural items,” a phrase that the Apaches considered deeply disrespectful. American Museum staff have yet to say publicly why they will not refer to them as sacred or communally owned objects, and legally, they do not have to make public such private decisions.

Conclusions

Manipulation and persuasion depend upon knowledge and information. Thus, what one knows and does not know determines who has power and how that power can be utilized. (Lowry 1980:298)

NAGPRA is an important law. It has fundamentally shifted American society’s views of Native American culture, changed how museums curate collections, and provided a process resulting in the return of thousands of objects and ancestral remains (Chari and Lavallee 2013; Fine-Dare 2002; Killion 2008; Tweedie 2002; Watkins 2006). When repatriation is used to give Native peoples an equal role in the care of their heritage, NAGPRA can work well (Harms 2012; Simpson 2009; Sullivan, Abrahm, and Griffin 2010; Welch and Ferguson 2007), and NAGPRA has compelled scholars to consider new kinds of knowledge and moral systems (Bray 2008; Daehnke 2009; Zimmerman 2008). However, although NAGPRA has been successful in many cases, this does not necessarily signify that the law’s framework has rearranged relations between tribes and museums. As I have argued, through the lens of questions about the public and private, transparency and secrecy, NAGPRA substantially reinforces colonialist power structures by conferring on museums the authority to control the flows of knowledge that encircle collections and infuse the repatriation process.

9. The Smithsonian’s repatriation efforts fall under the National Museum of the American Indian Act of 1989 and thus have their own review committee made up of representatives of both the scientific/museum and the Native American communities.

10. These numbers concerning allegations of noncompliance and civil penalties come from personal communication with Timothy McKeown, December 2013.

11. The point with the review committee’s findings is that they are only advisory, and thus museums are not required to follow its recommenda-

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10. These numbers concerning allegations of noncompliance and civil penalties come from personal communication with Timothy McKeown, December 2013.

11. The point with the review committee’s findings is that they are only advisory, and thus museums are not required to follow its recommenda-
Museums have long focused on controlling information despite the aura of transparency that surrounds them as institutions that serve the public interest. When Native communities thus raise concerns about the need for secrecy or privacy, they should not be seen as a special case. Yet there is almost no meaningful discussion among museum professionals about the contradictions between their own interests in secrecy and their expectations of tribal members to reveal their cultural selves. Indeed, as the Kennewick Man case and others suggest, many museum professionals see repatriation as a process only of loss for repositories (Burke et al. 2008; Daehnke and Lone Tree 2003). Arguably, American archives—perhaps because as caretakers of documents, their role as stewards of information is so clear—have done a better job in recent years in considering how Native Americans should have certain rights to the kinds of knowledge embedded in things. In addition to specific case studies (Christen 2011; Huizinga 2012), we might consider the “Protocols for Native American Archival Materials” that offer a set of best practices to permit source communities greater control over documents that reveal sensitive and secret information (Underhill 2006). Although we see the emergence of similar projects in museums (Buijs 2010; Guerrero and Sharon 2004; Hays-Gilpin and Lomatewama 2013; Kreps 2008; Srinivasan et al. 2010), substantial changes await in the field in which source communities are empowered to help shape the stewardship of the knowledge surrounding collections.

A key component of increasing transparency in the repatriation process involves increasing accountability. As Tefft (1980c) argues, “Secrecy that reduces the accountability of private economic organizations whose actions and policies have profound and widespread effects on public affairs and interests proves maladaptive to the society” (339). Furthermore, whatever the necessary functions of “secrecy may be, it is obvious that secrecy also provides a cloak behind which forbidden acts, legal violations, evasion of responsibility, inefficiency, and corruption are well concealed” (Tefft 1980c:327). In some examples of non-Native American collections, such as the long dispute over the unidentified remains of 9/11 victims at the new National September 11 Memorial and Museum, administrators have restricted information sharing with family members as a means to avoid accountability to them and the public (Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2011a).

Because NAGPRA does not inherently give equal rights to museums and tribes in the repatriation process and because museums have yet to widely embrace power-sharing arrangements with source communities, to increase the probability of accountability and decrease the evasion of responsibility, museum administrators could give greater attention not only to what information is shared with stakeholders but also how it is shared. This is an emphasis on process as much as result. Consultations could address methods of discussion that work for all parties (e.g., allowing museums to ask tribal officials what questions they have instead of asking tribes to just tell them everything they know). Museums could also consider voluntarily increasing transparency in all decisions, for example, writing more detailed notices for the Federal Register and finding ways to effectively publicly communicate all major decisions (such as the denial of repatriation claims). It is also conceivable that museums could give more serious consideration to the pub-

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Table 2. Status of review committee recommendations made to settle disputes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Museum or agency</th>
<th>Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization</th>
<th>FI</th>
<th>PI</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>UN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Hearst Museum of Anthropology</td>
<td>Hui Malama I Na Kupuna O Hawai‘i Nei</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Hearst Museum of Anthropology</td>
<td>Hui Malama I Na Kupuna O Hawai‘i Nei</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>City of Providence, Rhode Island</td>
<td>State of Hawai‘i’s Office of Hawaiian Affairs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Chaco Culture National Historical Park, National Park Service</td>
<td>Hopi Tribe</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office</td>
<td>Paiute-Shoshone Tribe</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Denver Art Museum</td>
<td>Western Apache NAGPRA Working Group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Bishop Museum</td>
<td>Royal Hawaiian Academy of Traditional Arts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Bishop Museum</td>
<td>Hui Malama I Na Kupuna O Hawai‘i Nei</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Bishop Museum</td>
<td>Hui Malama I Na Kupuna O Hawai‘i Nei</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, National Park Service</td>
<td>Hui Malama I Na Kupuna O Hawai‘i Nei</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Field Museum</td>
<td>White Mountain Apache Tribe</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>New York State Museum</td>
<td>Onondaga Nation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>American Museum of Natural History</td>
<td>Western Apache NAGPRA Working Group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology</td>
<td>Hoonah Indian Association</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Alaska State Museum</td>
<td>Wrangell Cooperative Association and Sealaska Corporation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals (N = 15) 1 4 9 1

Note. Based on GAO (2010:81–84) and updated by the author. FI = review committee’s recommendations fully implemented; PI = review committee’s recommendations partially implemented; NI = review committee’s recommendations not implemented (to date); UN = review committee’s recommendations status unknown.
lic process of dispute resolution and the review committee’s recommendations as a major step toward shifting NAGPRA’s power structure.

Outside of NAGPRA, museums around the world have the opportunity to use repatriation to open up new dialogues with source communities. The kind of collecting that Mary and Frances Crane engaged in—accumulating objects, however possible, in the sincere belief that they were “preserving them in the archive of the museum” for the public good—is not limited to US museums subject to NAGPRA. Nor is there limited opportunity to “voluntarily” return objects, as the DMNS did in 1991 when it returned the six Ahayuda in its collections. In 2014, I traveled with Octavius Seowtewa, a Zuni religious leader, to five museums across Europe that hold Ahayuda in their collections. Most museum administrators argued that the War Gods contribute to the fundamental good of the institutional goals of preserving objects that tell the story of humanity. One British Museum official, for example, maintained that a Zuni claim for Ahayuda “is not about the precedent set, but about the fundamental purpose of the British Museum and its collection . . . to tell the story of human cultural achievement from two million years ago to the present day” (Donadio 2014). More ironically, an administrator at the Musée du Quai Branly, in Paris, acknowledged that the War Gods could be considered inalienable property—but not for the Zuni. “In France,” Yves Le Fur, the museum’s director of heritage and collections, said, “the national collections are the inalienable and imprescriptible property of the state” (Donadio 2014). The negotiation about how museums may serve the public interest—and its attendant implications for who retains power over objects and knowledge—has only begun.

In sum, secrecy is a useful analytical tool to examine power structures that underpin museums and the repatriation process. The questions raised by secrecy, though, also suggest prescriptive action, ways for museums and tribes to rethink their relations and the control of knowledge over collections. Museum administrators should seek ever more to extend to tribes the same rights and sense of respect that they have for a museum’s need for both a private and public self. The imbalance between exposure and secrecy too easily tips the scales of power.

Acknowledgments

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The Overflow of Secrets
The Disclosure of Soviet Repression in Museums as an Excess

by Eglė Rindzevičiūtė

This article uses the metaphor of overflow to understand the role played by the revelation of previously secret experience in the controversial Museum of Genocide Victims in Vilnius, Lithuania. It shows how efforts to disclose Soviet repression and to consolidate and sustain a particular community of survivors, the Union of Political Prisoners and Deportees, produced an “excess” of revelation in a context of radical political change that in the process led to a failure to represent the complexity of Lithuania’s past by sidelining the Holocaust in its narrative of repression. In contrast to other studies that understand this museum as an instrument of a particular governmental ideology, I suggest an alternative explanation of the origins and character of this museum, arguing that it should be understood as a community museum. I argue that the museum’s failure to provide a balanced presentation of the past is better understood as an effect of an excessive desire to reveal the particular experiences of this community, which I describe as an overflow of meanings, not merely a result of the governmental elite’s will to suppress alternative versions of the past.

The public disclosure of state-sponsored repression played a key role in the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 1986 the head of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Mikhail Gorbachev, initiated a glasnost (openness) campaign, thus allowing greater freedom in public debate. Originally meant to combat the economic inefficiency of the Soviet system by encouraging constructive citizen criticism, glasnost spilled over into political debate around the repressive origins and character of the Soviet regime. Arguably one of the most significant and unforeseen developments was the shattering of the myth of the Soviet Union as a voluntary federation of sovereign republics. On August 23, 1987, groups of Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian dissidents staged public demonstrations to commemorate the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (August 23, 1939), which was signed just before Germany invaded Poland and ceded the three countries to the Soviet sphere of influence.1 This commemoration opened the door to unprecedented publicity about Soviet repression in the Baltic states: the deportation of members of the local population to the gulag, postwar anti-Soviet resistance, and KGB terror (Kasekamp 2010: 160–171). Although this political shift toward transparency was not the only factor behind the collapse of the Soviet Union (the declining economy played an important role), the revelation of Soviet repression was central for the mobilization of Baltic populations and the eventual independence for Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in 1990.

In this political context, a complex dynamic of the revelation of past experiences of violence emerged. In Lithuania, the repression, deportations, torture, and killings performed by the state’s repressive organizations, including the State Security Committee (Komitet gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti [KGB]), affected about a third of the population. This was known to many, yet until the decline of the Soviet regime, neither victims nor perpetrators were publicly discussed, albeit for different reasons. Knowledge of Soviet repression was kept secret by both the state authorities, to protect the legitimacy of the regime, and survivors, out of fear. The disclosure of Soviet repression, therefore, involved confronting a highly complex asymmetry of power but also a difficult problem of stabilizing the transient, ephemeral character of individual, personal experiences that would be lost with the passing of that generation.

In this context, those who survived Soviet repression resorted to the institution of the museum to make a particularly strong, symbolic statement of commitment not only to reveal but also to solidify their revelations in a complex material assemblage, assuring its perpetuation in the future. From the late 1980s, about 40 museums and exhibitions dedicated to Soviet repression were organized by grassroots community organizations across Lithuania (LPKTS 2014). As noted by

1. Knowledge about the pact circulated in small dissident circles in Lithuania from the 1970s. For more, see Šepetys (2006). On Soviet deportations, see Khlevniuk (2004); on deportations from Lithuania, see Grunskis (1996).
Autry (2013:60–62), new museums that emerge around a conflict-ridden past do not necessarily bring about more social cohesion; often, instead, such museums contribute to the fragmentation of society and perpetuation of conflict. This turned out to be the case in post-Soviet Lithuania.

In this article, I examine the formation of the Museum of Genocide Victims in Vilnius, Lithuania, as an attempt to reveal Soviet repression that led to an excessive focus on an ethnocentric narrative of the past. Following David Shearer (2009), I define Soviet repression as the coercive means—such as arrests, jailing, torture, and killing—by which state security organizations such as the KGB and its predecessors controlled the population. In the Soviet Union the first wave of mass repressions began as part of the collectivization of the countryside in the early 1930s; this was followed by the political purges at the end of the decade. When the Soviets annexed the Baltic states in June 1940, mass repression of the local population began; thousands were classified as enemies of the state and deported to the north and far east. Soviet repression resumed after the end of the Second World War and continued until 1953. The lives of those who survived punishment and returned from deportation were marred by social alienation. Until the late 1980s, knowledge about Soviet repression was a “public secret” so ill defined that it hovered in the air as an amorphous cloud of fear.

Giving exact content to this secret ruptured Soviet control of Lithuanian society but also caused huge social tensions, as many locals collaborated with the repressive apparatus, either directly or indirectly, while some fighters against the Soviet occupation in 1944–1953 turned against countryside people. Further, some survivors of postwar atrocities mistreated returning deportees and political prisoners who, in turn, revealed stories about mutual injustice and violence in the gulag. In this context, in line with Autry’s (2013) study on black museums in the United States, I suggest that the shaping of Lithuanian cultural organizations dedicated to the commemoration of Soviet repression is best approached as a highly complex, plural process of revealing that cannot be reduced to a governmental strategy to establish one hegemonic truth. What I propose, therefore, is a substantial revision of the prevailing interpretation of post-Soviet history museums in Lithuania, where an excessive focus on the victimization and heroizing of titular ethnic groups clashes with a requirement to balance the narratives of the suffering of the Lithuanian population with stories about Lithuanian perpetrators, who collaborated with either the Soviets and/or the Nazis. This is a requirement placed on these museums by representatives of minority groups and the international community.

The Museum of Genocide Victims was established in a building that served as the headquarters of both the Gestapo and Sonderkommando, which conducted the extermination of Jews from 1941 to 1944, and the Soviet People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs (Narodny Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del [NKVD]), renamed the Committee for State Security (KGB), from autumn 1940 to June 1941 and from 1944 to 1991. The Holocaust was only acknowledged in passing in the first version of the museum’s exhibitions, which was dedicated mainly to Soviet repression: from the early 2000s until 2010, the extermination of Lithuania’s Jews was only mentioned on an informational plaque in one of the museum’s corridors. This omission and the use of the word “genocide” in the title, led commentators such as Mark (2010) to argue that this museum was an example of the propaganda of post-Soviet ethnonationalist elites trying to obfuscate the participation of the local population in the Holocaust. In order to construct ethnic Lithuanians as a suffering and victimized nation, Mark argued, the Museum of Genocide Victims actively concealed, even made secret, the participation of the local population in the killings of Jews, in the deeds of the communist government, and in the civil war. Their involvement instead was simply framed as anti-Soviet resistance.

Whereas critics correctly register the tension between secrecy and disclosure in the museums of Soviet repression, by constructing their argument around calculated censorship and ideological struggle they disregard the complexity of the social mechanisms at work. Deconstruction analysis offers many perspectives for studying concealment, distortion, and propaganda. But we lack the conceptual tools to understand the social and semiotic mechanisms of revealing as a distinct social practice. One such useful tool, I suggest, can be the metaphor of overflow, which so far has been used to explore consumption and management but also social interaction (Callon 1998; Lakoff 1987) and which was applied by Czarniawska and Löfgren (2014:6) to study the process of meaning making in organization. In line with Czarniawska and Löfgren, I define overflow as excess, generated when a substance leaves one area and enters another, in consequence transforming the new context. This transformative capacity of overflow, write Czarniawska and Löfgren, tends to be evaluated in moral terms, as good or bad. It is in this sense that I use the metaphor of overflow to understand the consequences of the post-Soviet shift from an “acute scarcity” of information about the Soviet repression to an excess. The desire to reveal the particular experiences of Soviet repression crowded the discursive space, with better organized grassroots groups being most effective at disclosing their own secrets. In this case, the overflow, produced by the revelation of Soviet secrets, can be understood as a historically contingent phenomenon, which is not necessarily an expression of censorship, or in other words, a structural dismissal of particular stories.

This is clearly revealed in the case of the Museum of Genocide Victims, where the revealing led to an excess of a particular type of meaning reflected at several levels of the organization: the rationale of the museum, the thematic choice, and the objects on display. In making this case, I draw on a historical and ethnographic study conducted from 2010 to

2. I use the notions of “Soviet repression” and “Soviet terror” interchangeably to refer to the atrocities inflicted by the Soviet regime both through local and occupying actors.
2014, when I made repeated visits to the museum, taking notes on the composition and contents of the exhibition displays and interviewing members of staff. In what follows, I first situate my analysis of the Museum of Genocide Victims in the context of wider studies of Soviet and post-Soviet secrecy. I then outline two circuits through which secrets were revealed in this museum, describe the origins and the exhibits, and detail the ways in which the revelation of the Soviet repression became an overflow.

Soviet Repression as a Public Secret

In order to understand the importance of the institution of the post-Soviet museum in revealing these secrets, we need to begin with an overview of secrecy under the Soviet regime. The practices of secrecy were central for the existence of Soviet authoritarianism, but, somewhat surprisingly, they have rarely been studied as a sociocultural phenomenon. Relevant, albeit scarce, work engages with national security and the control of information in the Soviet Union (Ganley 1996; Hutchings 1987), but the role that secrecy played in controlling the Soviet population continues to puzzle social researchers. According to Oleg Kharkhordin (1999), state control and mutual surveillance pervaded the fabric of the entire Soviet society, which leads him to suggest that secrecy was the prerogative of the state and not individuals. In contrast, Yurchak (2005) and Siegelbaum (2006) argue that social surveillance was not a mere instrument of state control but an instrument of self-regulation whereby Soviet citizens had some room to resist by using irony, complacency, and even indifference toward the official state organizations.

Soviet citizens could, and did, ignore, mock, or even challenge many of the ideological postulates of the Communist Party, but there were very clear limits as to how far one could go. Even after the death of Stalin in 1953, Soviet repression—deportations, the gulag, and the KGB terror—remained a strictly guarded territory about which most people did not joke. This discursive void was formally assured: the state made sure that there was nothing to talk about in concrete terms by concealing the scale of the repressions. The documents pertaining to the NKVD/KGB terror were classified as soverhnno sekretno (in Russian, completely secret) and were thus official state secrets. Although during the Thaw (1954–1964), the mass repressions were acknowledged (and attributed to Stalin) by the Communist Party, concrete data on their scale and character were not released into the public domain in the Soviet Union.

Stalin’s terror was first condemned in the famous “secret speech” by Nikita Khrushchev, delivered to the Central Committee in Moscow in June 1956. In this address, the script of which was promptly and intentionally leaked to the West, Khrushchev blamed Stalin for the repression of innocent individuals, wrongly stigmatized as “enemies of the people,” and he defended Lenin, who, he argued, used violence only when necessary. Khrushchev’s leaked speech was published by the Observer and the New York Times in June 1956 (Reitt 2006), but it took a while before the repression surfaced in the Soviet media, and then only briefly. The prominent Russian writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn recalled that in spite of Khrushchev’s denouncement of Stalin’s repression, he did not dare to show his writings on the gulag even to his close acquaintances. Solzhenitsyn’s intuition was correct: his story about an inmate of the gulag, One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich, published in 1962, was attacked by the Moscow Party Secretary in 1965 and withdrawn from public libraries (Allén 1993). This act of censorship signaled that Stalinist repression was not a legitimate subject for public discussion. The legacy of this policy shift was enduring: for example, recent research indicates that the restriction of the information about gulag appeared to have strongly contributed to the absence of this theme from the public knowledge in Russia (Schuman and Corning 2000:929–930). At the same time, in Soviet Lithuania, local party leaders were just as willing as Moscow to repress this knowledge. The first secretary of the Lithuanian Communist Party, Antanas Sniečkus, passed particularly harsh laws that obstructed the return of rehabilitated Lithuanian deportees and political prisoners from the north and far east to Lithuania; this was, according to historians, a tactical maneuver, because some of the returned deportees successfully sued their denounciators (LGGRTC 2007).

The collapse of the Soviet regime brought about an unprecedented wave of transparency toward the Soviet past (Werth 1989), but the actual disclosure of Soviet repression continued to be limited. In Russia, many survivors of Soviet repression lived in fear of being repressed again as late as the 1990s. This fear was perceived by some Western researchers as rather irrational: for instance, an oral historian described a case when an interviewee, a Russian woman who lived through the Stalinist repressions, became upset with an oral history researcher who was interviewing her, fearing that she had disclosed too much about herself (see Figes 2008:122–123). But such interviewees were right to be concerned: many oral historians did not bother to anonymize their interlocutors, ignoring the sociopolitical conditions in Russia that made revealing risky. In Lithuania, the context for revealing Soviet repression was radically different, as this type of revelation was legitimized by the overall popular support for the succession from the Soviet Union and the overhaul of the repressive state structure. I detail this in the next section, where I analyze the

3. The data involve fieldwork observation of museum exhibitions and interviews and correspondence with the museum staff as well as with relevant heritage specialists and academic historians in Lithuania. Fieldwork was carried out in 2011, 2012, and 2013.

4. In contrast to the gulag, some writings on the Holocaust were allowed, albeit in a highly censored form. Although these admitted the participation of the local population in the killings, they did not specify it, and they placed all blame on the Nazis (Bendikaitė 2010:137; Gaunt 2010). As a result, Jewish suffering was hopelessly lost in the narratives of the great patriotic war (Weiner 2001).
ways in which the flow of the previously repressed knowledge of Soviet repression led to an overflow of meanings requiring new modes of coping.

An Overflow of Revealing: The Community Origins of the Museum

The idea of memorializing the headquarters of the Soviet Lithuanian KGB was suggested by the Union of Political Prisoners and Deportees (UPPD) and adopted in a decree of the Lithuanian Supreme Council in August 1991, even before the Lithuanian branch of the KGB was officially disbanded. Established as a club in 1988, UPPD united the surviving, previously repressed citizens of Lithuania and, in its first publication, declared that it would take up the responsibility to become “a bridge between our own dead ones and the ones who would live after us” (Butkevičius 1988:2). Outlining different means of bringing back previously suppressed experiences of life under the Soviet system, this program involved the making of a museum of the Stalinist repression. When, 3 years later, the KGB left its headquarters, the UPPD quickly mobilized to lobby for the establishment of a museum on the premises. Thus, the initiative to create and also select the highly controversial title for the Museum of Genocide Victims did not come from academic circles or the government but from the UPPD, a grassroots organization. Furthermore, the idea of establishing a museum of Soviet repression built on a rather striking practice of private and secret collection: it appeared that Lithuanian survivors of the Soviet repression kept thousands of images and everyday objects hidden away in family archives with the hope of using them in the future. To compare, far fewer previously repressed Russian citizens preserved objects as mementos of their terrible experiences as gifts for the future, thus making the establishment of the Russian museums of Soviet repression a more challenging task.

The physical location of the KGB headquarters was far from secret: a grand building, built in a historicist style in 1899 and used for different administrative purposes, it was situated on the main Gediminas Avenue, leading from the Cathedral Square to the then Supreme Council, now the Parliament House and the National Library, in the heart of the city of Vilnius, with extensive pedestrian and road traffic going past it. The UPPD wished to turn the whole building into a memorial, a material reminder of the death and torture concealed by its walls for the previous 50 years. However, although the new Lithuanian government officially condemned the Soviet crimes against humanity, it also needed space to house new state institutions, and pragmatism won against idealism: a large part of the building was given to the courts. The remainder housed the newly established Special Archives of KGB records. One wing was allocated to the museum.

Deeply concerned that the memory of the KGB’s crimes would be lost in the turmoil of post-Soviet transformation, the UPPD produced a particular discourse that would soon be criticized as an overflow. Committed to the idea that Soviet crimes were a case of “genocide,” the UPPD’s plan for the museum disregarded the fact that the building also housed the Gestapo headquarters in 1941–1944. The verbatim transcription of parliamentary debates and also my interview with a historian involved in the establishment of the museum show that this striking omission appeared in the very particular context of turbulent political and economic change: the Lithuanian economy was collapsing, and it was feared that the newly elected president, an ex–Communist Party leader, would clamp down on the revelation of Soviet repression. Government interest in tracing individuals who cooperated with the Soviet repressive apparatus was not immediate; it was only in November 1999 that a lustration commission was founded to identify and make public the individuals who cooperated with the KGB and other authorities of the Soviet regime and to formulate a policy limiting the employment of these individuals in strategically important state institutions, including banks, schools, and the government. In spite of a slow start of the lustration process, in the end Lithuania adopted a rather strict policy in comparison to other East European countries (Ravaiytė 2015:49–50, 76).

In addition to this complicated political context, the cultural administrative context was averse to new initiatives that required high expenditure, such as museums. Like many other new cultural organizations of the 1990s, the museum was hastily organized with a limited budget and without any systemic support from heritage or history professionals. In an interview, an official who specialized in the heritage sector at the then Ministry of Culture and Education recalled visiting the newly established Museum of Genocide Victims to find a confused staff, abandoned hallways, and the UPPD’s members sitting in the former prisoners cells as a sign of protest because they were concerned about plans to repaint and sanitize the basement. In the 1990s, the museum was so severely underfunded that it “barely functioned,” according to a member of UPPD (LR Parliament 1997). This situation changed only from the late 1990s, when the museum was transferred from the Ministry of Culture to the Center for Research on the Genocide of Lithuania’s Inhabitants and Resistance.

5. LR nutarimas [The decree of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania], “Del VSK/KGB aukų atminimo įamžinimo” (Vilnius, August 1, 1991).
6. For more, see Auliauskas (2012), Burinskaitė (2011), Rindzevičiūtė (2013). In the 1990s many ex-KGB officers formed private security firms; see Juška (2009).
7. I base this statement on personal communication with Irina Flige, the director of the St. Petersburg Memorial Research and Information Centre, Paris, May 23, 2014.
8. The museum’s mission is “to collect, conserve, study, exhibit, and promote historical materials and documents that reflect the repressions of the occupational government against Lithuania’s inhabitants” (Charter of the Museum of Genocide Victims, July 30, 1997).
exhibition displays were installed in 2000, and since then the museum has boasted a consistently growing number of visitors (63,791 visitors in 2014), has been performing well economically, and is receiving considerable governmental funding (data from the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture, 2013).

However, the excessive focus on the Soviet repression stirred an international controversy. The use of “genocide” to describe Soviet terror in the title of the museum was criticized, and the museum attracted further criticism for dedicating only a very small part of its exhibitions to the Holocaust (Steele 2008). Rohdeval (2008:179), for instance, wrote that the museum solely focused on the hegemonic, ethnocentric narrative framing the Soviet crimes as a disruption of Lithuania’s sovereignty, conflicting with the involvement also of local, ethnic majorities as perpetrators. In all, scholars and commentators saw the museum as evidence that the Lithuanian elites refused to engage with a complex past in which Lithuanians were both victims and perpetrators.9

However, as I indicated earlier, it was not “the elites” who organized this museum but the members of the UPPD, previously repressed, socially and economically disenfranchised individuals, many of whom were elderly at the time of the controversy and who sought to make their experiences known to the public. To be sure, the UPPD saw its mission as a struggle for the “historical truth,” yet its members were building on their personal experiences of Soviet repression. As the UPPD’s efforts eventually crystallized in an increasingly well-attended museum, their community-building efforts overflowed into the wider agenda of the public cultural sector, thus becoming an uncomfortable excess.

Subsequent development of the museum can be understood as an attempt to manage this overflow of the community’s narrative into a public museum. At the beginning of the controversy, the museum’s staff representatives reacted defensively to criticisms of the insufficient coverage of the Holocaust in their exhibitions by pointing to the existence of Vilna Gaon Jewish Museum, which had several exhibitions on the Holocaust, and arguing that in Lithuania, state cultural organizations avoided duplicating each other (although if one applied the same logic to art museums, this argument appears weak). Later, staff agreed that the focus of the museum exhibitions be widened. Substantial changes began in 2010 when a documentary video on the Holocaust was included in the exhibition, with explicit acknowledgment that Lithuanians were involved in killing Jews. In 2013 a prison cell in which Jewish prisoners had been held was refurbished to acknowledge this horrific aspect of the building’s past. In October 2012 and again in 2013, a group of members of Parliament suggested that the title of the museum be changed from the Museum of Genocide Victims to the Museum of Terror and Resistance (LR Parliament 2013). Although the UPPD protested against the renaming, these changes clearly show that museum staff sought to adjust the excessive revealing of the UPPD’s version of the past, thus questioning the idea of a consensual, elite-driven ethnocentrism (BNS 2013).

To summarize, the holding, sharing, and revealing of secrets was central to the origins of the museum as it was established and initially maintained by a particular community of survivors of Soviet repression. Whereas these survivors held it imperative to disclose the details of their terrible experiences, they paid little attention to a more inclusive historical narrative to account for historical complexities during which perpetrators exchanged their positions with victims and for the complex ethnic, political, and social dynamics of Soviet repression. The establishment of the Museum of Genocide Victims was driven by the imperative of giving previously suppressed experience and knowledge to the future (Davis and Manderson 2014; Gradén 2013; Mauss 2000 [1954]). Yet the museum staff found it necessary to face the requirement of objectivity as posed to them by both professional historians and representatives of the Jewish community.

Whereas the establishment and general thematic orientation of the museum can be attributed to the UPPD community’s wish to reveal its own secrets, the actual exhibitions, which were professionally produced, constituted a rather different instance of the revelation of secrets. In the next section, I draw on the idea of strategic disclosures, selective as to what to reveal and what to conceal (Davis and Manderson 2014: 160), to probe the ways in which excessive meaning occurs in the presentation of victims and perpetrators of the Soviet repression in the exhibitions at the Museum of Genocide Victims. My purpose is to alert the critics of the museum to the presence of different kinds of excess at different levels of organization, which should open up analysis to look beyond an ethnocentric narrative. Having briefly described the settings and exhibitions of the museum, I detail several salient examples of such excess.

Overflow in Strategic Disclosures

Curatorial framing plays a fundamentally important role in the Museum of Genocide Victims. The museum is housed in an imposing, large building, but the visitor enters not through the impressive porch (which leads to the courts and the Special Archives) but through a smaller door in a side wing not visible from the main street. The front of the building is marked, however, with the engraved names of people killed by the KGB in its basement. The framing also continues inside, where the spatial setting clearly speaks to the visitor that this is not a purpose-built museum. The entrance hall is cramped, consisting of a midsize stairway and a tiny box office that also sells relevant publications. The exhibitions about the history of repression are situated in the former KGB offices, situated along corridors on the ground and first floors. The basement

9. See Steele (2008). In the museum, the killings of Jews in Lithuania were initially only referred to in the texts that accompanied the exhibitions, although the research center, to which the museum belonged, had done a lot of research on the Holocaust. For a good overview of Lithuanian scholarship on Jewish history and the Holocaust, see Liekis (2011).
contains in situ expositions: prison cells, punishment cells, and an execution room. In this way, the visitor is offered a mediated experience of the history of repression through exhibitions and (relatively) direct experience of the KGB’s prison.

It is a historical museum, and the exhibition narrative is organized around a chronological frame: it begins with the Soviet occupation, briefly touches on the Nazi occupation and the Holocaust, and proceeds to detail postwar resistance fights and deportations from the 1940s to 1953 and KGB activities in Lithuania from the 1950s to the 1980s. In all, the curators introduce eight principal themes, the titles of which mark the halls and are briefly presented in the accompanying catalog. Two sections tell the story of anti-Soviet resistance, three sections are dedicated to the experiences of Lithuania’s inhabitants in the gulag, and two sections detail the activities of the KGB and societal resistance during the post-Stalinist period, from the late 1950s to the 1980s. The most recent addition, from 2011, details the history of the Holocaust in the Vilnius region. At the moment of writing in 2015, therefore, the historical narratives articulated in the exhibition are considerably better balanced than they were in the first version of the displays, installed in the early 2000s. However, there are further unresolved tensions rooted in the over- or under-representation of scale and significance. In cooperation with the Genocide Victims museum, the Museum of Genocide Victims is no exception. The texts, providing background historical information, are printed on the glass that separates visitors from the exhibits. The exhibits themselves largely fall into four categories: objects, original photographs and documents, copies of photographs and documents, and video materials. The overall effect of the exposition is to create an environment appealing to different senses: the walls are dilapidated, although not necessarily authentic: for instance, the cold water punishment cell is a reconstruction, the original one having been removed in the 1950s. In such a cell a prisoner would be left to stand on a small platform just above the surface of ice cold water. Another punishment cell features soft-padded walls; its function is unclear. Nevertheless, these punishment cells require little curatorial framing to emotionally affect the visitor. More surprisingly, the execution room, where about 1,000 individuals were killed from 1944 to the mid-1960s, has been refurbished into a memorial, featuring exhibits and, under a glass flooring, forensic archaeological findings from the KGB’s secret burial grounds.

Thus, the museum exposes to the visitor two environments: one orderly, mediated by the exhibition design, historical narratives, and labels, and another one, relatively raw and untamed, perceived by some as excessive: for instance, an exposition guard told me that it was high time to repaint the basement so that “it would be neater and nicer.” However, as I show below, the part of the exposition that is carefully framed by professional curators also spills over with excessive meanings that are not addressed in the curators’ explicit narratives.

The curatorial framing, as mentioned earlier, principally involves a historical chronology, the division of the exhibition into thematic blocks. But it also provides perhaps the most important disclosure of the scale of Soviet repression and anti-Soviet resistance, something that can only be revealed by numbers that set individual events and cases into a larger context. Numbers, as Porter (1996) has noted, are a powerful rhetorical instrument in political debate. Based on an abstract system of signs, quantification positivizes a highly depersonalizing technique of governing the social. Neither lives nor deaths can be straightforwardly compared with each other; numbers can. Numbers evoke a feeling that something was big or small; they may impress the beholder and help to contextualize an individual case. Thus, a large number of victims would efficiently illustrate the evil of the Soviet system; the small number of anti-Soviet resistance fighters might be interpreted as the futility of patriotism.

The numerical discourse of Soviet crimes is an important context-setting tool that augments the previously abstract awareness that repressions had taken place with a new sense of scale and significance. In cooperation with the Genocide and Resistance Research Center of Lithuania, the museum not only displays but also produces numbers; for instance, it runs a database of Lithuania’s inhabitants who suffered from the Soviet regime. In 2012 this database contained information on about 178,000 victims, approximately 47,530 perpetrators of anti-Soviet resistance fights, and about 17,700 perpetrators of repressions. (This database does not include the victims and perpetrators of the Holocaust; the latter are counted in other, interconnected databases). Although this database is not made available online to the public, it is used internally by museum staff and visiting researchers as a heuristic tool.

10. Because of limited space, I leave out the museum’s branch in Tuskulėnai, established in 2002.

12. In 2014 it was established that at least 2,055 Lithuanian inhabitants directly or indirectly participated in killings during the Holocaust (LGRTC 2012).
a reminder of the growing gap between the incrementally growing knowledge of the scale of the repression and the stability of the exhibition displays, which soon might be out of date.

If the prison and punishment cells speak through their materiality, exhibitions speak through objects and photographs that represent individuals. Many museums of contemporary history rely on the medium of photography to communicate the past; so does the Museum of Genocide Victims. The first thing that a visitor entering the museum encounters is hundreds of photographs, printed on the glass walls surrounding the entrance. If the numerical discourse was produced by professionals, the material part of the exhibitions came from individual voluntary donations to the museum. These donors provided the museum with the means to develop detailed knowledge about the Soviet repression but had little influence on the ways in which the museum curators chose to frame these objects in the exhibitions. This is, naturally, a legally regulated situation: the act of donation includes a clause that allows the museum to use the donated material in any way it chooses in its expositions as well as any other public presentations. The museum’s charter does not cover issues of personal data; according to an interviewed museum employee, instead of drawing on formal guidelines, staff are guided by a tacit understanding of what is an appropriate exposure.

However, giving an object to the museum means opening oneself up to the possibility of being exposed in public with little control over such exposure. Former deportees, for example, donated photographs depicting persons in conditions of distress. All photographs on display are labeled; when known, these labels reveal names, dates, locations, and biographical details. As these labels do not tell any stories, the photographs, I would suggest, are exhibited to turn the visitor into a witness of the Soviet repression rather than a reader, a critic of a historical narrative. As a result, it is not always clear what is being witnessed. The images overflow with potential meanings.

One such distinct example of an overflow of meanings in images, intended by curators to reveal the extent of suffering and ability to endure, is the visual references to issues of class and gender. Here the images of women and anti-Soviet fighters are particularly telling. One photograph, included in the catalog, shows Lithuanian women, in worryingly light clothes, laying rails across a snow-covered forest (Laying a narrow gauge railway, Irkutsk, 1956). Although malnourished, these women do not look unhappy or ashamed of their situation: they pose, some of them holding axes, as elegantly as they can for the camera. But the very existence of this picture of working women deportees and its presence in the museum’s collection is, in fact, telling more than just detailing the hard conditions of labor. According to Dalia Leinarte (2012), the Lithuanian female deportees spoke about the hard labor that they had to do during deportations more candidly than the deported Polish women. Leinarte attributed this difference to the different value of manual labor in these cultures: Polish women found the admission of being able to survive hard work as damaging their class status; they were ashamed of having done and survived hard work and effectively refused to share this experience in public. In contrast, Lithuanian women deportees, as they revealed in their memoirs, did not hide their ability to work hard; this is manifest in this picture.

Similarly overflowing with references to social class are the photographs taken by postwar anti-Soviet resistance fighters. Many pictures show men immersed in their everyday tasks, such as shaving, bathing in a lake, or cooking. Whereas some images are amateurish snapshots, very many are carefully and professionally produced: the film was correctly exposed to the light, the prints are of high quality, the figures elegantly composed. In turn, the depicted Lithuanian partisans appear to know how to pose and sport their uniforms elegantly. For instance, the image labeled The partisans of Sartinas division on the bank of the river Sventoji, 1947–1948 shows a group of six men and one woman looking pensively over a scenic river, an idyllic scene, set 3 years into armed resistance. Other images show the partisans’ liaisons, often attractive young women. The women seen in the image The chief of the East Lithuanian sector with liaisons (no later than 1949) look cheerful and charming; their hair is nicely done. Some, it seems, even flirt with the camera. But, as noted by Ėpulete (2011:122), the contrast between self-representation and the real conditions of the partisans was stark. Partisans dwelled in poverty; they were dependent on food provisions donated by, or, in some cases, extorted from the local population. They mainly lived in secret bunkers, claustrophobically tiny spaces dug in the forest, expecting support from the West that never arrived (Statiev 2010). It is very likely that these photographs were created in order to add an aesthetic dimension, perhaps as a memento of prewar life, and they were framed by the curators exactly as such (this part of the exhibition being titled “Life Continues”). But these images also overflow with class connotations, suggesting that the upper strata of the society was involved in the fight against the Soviet occupation, something that so far has not been addressed systematically either by the museum staff or academic researchers.

My third example of the curators’ strategic disclosure leading to an overflow concerns the issue of privacy in the process of revealing Soviet repression. The sections on the Soviet and Nazi occupations and Sovietization of the 1940s to early 1950s contain many pictures taken by members of the repressive organizations, the NKVD/KGB, which present shockingly graphic images of the mutilated bodies of the anti-Soviet

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13. The museum law regulates only the distribution of the data about collections, which are held elsewhere. However, in addition to this legislation, the Museum of the Victims of Genocide regulates its activities on the basis of the Law on the Protection of Personal Data. According to the modification of 2011, this law does not apply to data about deceased persons.

partisans, some of which were displayed in public places such as the market squares of small towns. One image showed the wife of a doctor, Antanas Gudonis, mourning the body of her husband, who was tortured to death by the Red Army (dated June 26, 1941). This is a private, emotionally charged picture, taken, most likely, as a memento by a friend of the devastated wife. Another group of pictures shows executed anti-Soviet partisans, photographed, most likely, by members of the Soviet security organizations. These pictures illustrate the act of display, intended to perform governmental power through public demonstrations of brutality. In the Stalinist era, according to Verdery (2014), the presence of the NKVD/KGB was made public through such violent displays. In Soviet Lithuania, the display of death in public space was an extraordinary communication device through which the Soviet government sought to terrorize the local population into submission. This changed after the death of Stalin: by the time that the student Romas Kalanta immolated himself in public in front of the central administration of Kaunas as a means of protest against the Soviet regime in 1972 (see Swain 2013), the Soviet government had shifted from proclaiming its power through public displays of violence to actively suppressing knowledge about the victims of the anti-Soviet resistance it had formerly made so public. From the 1960s, the KGB increasingly operated not through displays of violence but through instilling a fear of its omnipresent surveillance; its key features were no longer the severity of violence but its possibility, omnipresence, and predictability (Beissinger 2002:333; Kharkhordin 1999). In this context, any revelations were scarce and were confined to very carefully controlled spaces, for instance, the hidden commemoration of the victims of the NKVD in the 1940s–1950s, when secret monuments were erected in the Lithuanian countryside (Čepulytė 2011:117), or the memoirs of deportees, copies of which were circulated underground, within a small dissident circle (Davoliiūtė 2013).

My fourth example of overflow refers to the asymmetry between the material presence assumed by victims and perpetrators in the museum. If the images of the anti-Soviet fighters and deportees seek to bring back their private experiences of fragile lives into the public domain, the Soviet regime’s formal secrets are revealed in the halls dedicated to the history and activities of the KGB. Small in size, so that only a few visitors can enter them at once, these halls are filled with hundreds of passport-size photographs, normally black and white, fixed on organizational charts. The structure of the KGB, both the all-union and Soviet Lithuanian sections, is revealed as a tree of faces, names, and birth dates. Several photographs document formal occasions, such as the office parties of KGB employees. There are, noticeably, hardly any images of the private lives of KGB officers; the photographs depict only official scenes at the KGB offices, although some pictures of NKVD officers at leisure in the 1940s–1950s are presented.

This absence of images of the private lives of perpetrators could be an instance of the lack of an appropriate form of cultural mediation, enabling the disclosure of either the Soviet perpetrator or what Hannah Arendt called a banal, everyday evil. In Soviet history, Lynne Viola (2013) notes, the figure of the perpetrator, albeit borrowed from the literature on the Holocaust, has remained incompletely conceptualized. There is no established way of presenting an ordinary KGB officer, for example, a desk clerk who spent her or his days eavesdropping on telephone conversations. It is particularly difficult, Viola (2013:10) argues, to populate the bottom of the pyramid of Soviet perpetrators, for where does one stop? Should one include the individuals who provided social support to the KGB officers? Should the members of the Communist Party be included? There is no easy answer to these questions. However, as a result, the museum discloses the private lives of victims but not of perpetrators, thus leaving the prerogative of perpetrators to stay invisible, unchallenged.

**Conclusion**

I have demonstrated how the disclosure of previously secret Soviet repression has led to an overflow of meanings in the Museum of Genocide Victims. First, the establishment of the museum was in itself a statement of disclosure of the Soviet repression as a public secret, its original idea being to commemorate the experience of a particular group of the survivors of Soviet repression. However, when the “public secret” had to be fleshed out with concrete information in order to be revealed to society, the museum initially failed to manage the overflow of the survivors’ own version of the past into the public presentation of Lithuania’s history. As a result, the story about the Holocaust, particularly as it was associated with the museum’s building, was sidelined.

The metaphor of overflow is a good analytical tool enabling us to understand not only the origins of the museum but also the complexity of its expositions. Whereas scholars have so far analyzed the museum through the critical prism of balancing the accounts about the Soviet repression with the participation of the local population in the Holocaust, an ongoing and still not fully resolved issue, the central tension in the museum in fact concerns the multiple effects of revealing where the revealing itself is driven by the tension between the Soviet state and the individual. This state-individual tension is central to understand the asymmetric power to suppress and disclose information in the context of Soviet repression. It is not coincidental that in Soviet studies, privacy is generally defined as an individual’s ability to disclose and not to retain personal information. According to Reid (2006), for an individual, “privacy is constituted not by concealment or solitude per se, but by discretion over disclosure of information about oneself, the right to make decisions, to promulgate rules of action, to dispose over resources and space” (148). Accordingly, to reveal her personal experiences of Soviet repression in public was the ultimate way for a Soviet person to assert her right as a private individual. Here the revelation of past secrets emerges as a highly transformative and complex process of
meaning making concerned not only with historical truth but also with the ethics and aesthetics of revelation.

Some victims of the Soviet regime wished to make their private lives public. They sought to show the ways in which the Soviet state brutally intervened in their private lives, stripping them of both their privacy and, if they survived, any role in public life for them or their children. For them, to enter a museum was to enter a special, elevated public sphere, to become a significant element in the grand narrative of political history. In contrast, the perpetrators, the agents of power in Soviet society, tried to keep their public lives private and their pasts secret. This post-Soviet practice of revelation cannot be properly understood when considered separately from the mechanism of secrecy in Soviet society. The keeping of a secret under the Soviet regime was a complex and ambiguous activity: people were to keep secrets from one another, particularly about the activities of the state, but they were not to keep secrets from the state, and the control of secrets about individuals by the state was a key component of its power. The existence of state repression was known to many, either directly or indirectly, but this knowledge was rarely shared, even in private. The sharing of these secrets, then, was an act of power, a demonstration from those enacting it that they were no longer under the control of the Soviet regime. The notion of overflow repositions critical analysis, enabling a shift to a different politics of balancing the different narratives of a difficult past. The logic of revealing, rather than concealing, may lead to different conditions for dialogue and sensitize researchers to the complex motivations for the disclosure of Soviet repression.

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Perclusive Alliances
Digital 3-D, Museums, and the Reconciling of Culturally Diverse Knowledges
by Gwyneira Isaac

Although social mechanisms for the control of knowledge are widely studied, research into how intersecting groups and institutions reconcile culturally different approaches to knowledge has been limited. I explore this territory by looking at a collaborative project to create digital 3-D scans and replicas of objects of cultural patrimony that was developed between the National Museum of Natural History and the Tlingit tribe of Alaska in 2010. These 3-D reproductions highlight the social values ascribed to digital technology, including its perceived ability to disseminate knowledge and reveal to the public the inner workings of museums, such as the process of repatriation. The presumed and deceptively straightforward nature of copies, however, belies their powers of social transformation. As explored through these 3-D digital replica projects, I argue these are not only about the power to physically replicate something but also the potential to construct relationships and, therefore, to transform the current social order. I look at the problems of using the term “secrecy” in these cross-cultural contexts, opting instead to identify how responsibilities are assigned to knowledge and its use. By also identifying what I term “perclusive” alliances that traverse groups and public/private knowledge categories, I argue for an analytical approach that studies across institutional and cultural contexts, thereby identifying variations in how these responsibilities toward knowledge are assigned and according to which contexts as well as the means employed to negotiate difference.

Imagine you are involved in negotiations over the repatriation of a culturally significant object and you are asked to digitally replicate it so that the facsimile can stay in the museum and the original can be returned to the community. Does it matter whether it is the museum that requests its production or the community? Is it relevant who will pay for its replication? At the end of this process, who owns or controls the data files created by the scanning—the museum, the digital lab, or the community? Also, who decides when future replicas can be made and under what circumstances? Ultimately, what kind of knowledge is involved and who controls it?

When I took up my current position at the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) at the Smithsonian in 2010, I learned that the Repatriation Office, in collaboration with a series of North American tribes, was beginning to explore digital technology to reproduce repatriated objects. Previously, I had investigated how historic replicas made by anthropologists provided insight into different cultural approaches to the reproduction of knowledge (Isaac 2010, 2011). Finding contemporary equivalents to this research on the reproduction and management of knowledge triggered the questions I posed above, and I set out to do an ethnography of these digital replicas of culturally significant objects.

Not so fast—my colleagues at the Smithsonian cautioned—these were sensitive issues requiring long-term associations with communities, many of which have spent years working with the NMNH Repatriation Office. These 3-D replication projects had developed out of these relationships, and it was not appropriate for me to abruptly turn up and ask probing questions. True. Who was I to think that because there was emergent technology involved that was being publicly celebrated as a new solution to old museum problems (Brown 2008; Clough 2013; Keene 1997; Macedonia 2003; Ngata et al. 2012; Rowley et al. 2010; Srinivasan 2009) that this environment was not still fraught with the preexisting and ongoing tribulations faced by tribes and museums over the disposition and control of cultural heritage? After meetings with Eric Hollinger, an archeologist and case officer for the NMNH Repatriation Office and the lead on these digital projects, and Bill Billeck, the repatriation program manager, we decided I would join a project being designed at the time with the Tlingit Hoonah Indian Association (HIA) of the village of Hoonah, Alaska. Hollinger and Billeck stipulated that the community members involved should know from the start of my intentions to document and explore these topics as they
negotiated this new territory into the creation or re-creation of their cultural heritage with the museum.

As a result, this inquiry not only became about the transformative powers of digital technology but also about my own transformation from outsider ethnographer with limited understandings of digital replication to the insider federal Smithsonian employee drawn into relationships of obligation with the Repatriation Office, the Smithsonian Institution, Tlingit clan members, and Tlingit tribal governments. It became about understanding how responsibilities toward knowledge are assigned, and in particular, how these are ascribed according to each context of use. This included looking at how the NMNH and the Tlingit developed cross-cultural agreements over responsibilities toward Tlingit knowledge, such that Tlingit cultural norms were honored when these cultural objects were digitally reproduced and printed as well as NMNH museum practices that valued transparency in the collaborative process, as well as maintaining public access to objects. This research also stimulated an examination into how cross-cultural alliances were formed to navigate these different cultural approaches to knowledge use rights, as well the use of technology to materialize and make visible these relationships. Interviews I conducted with the digital 3-D project participants demonstrated specialized responsibilities toward the use and maintenance of cultural and technological knowledge and identified areas where the new technology presented challenges with the control of future responsibilities toward this knowledge and, therefore, archiving knowledge for future use. In effect, with these “new norms of disclosure and related practices of exposure” (Manderson et al. 2015) cutting across diverse groups and knowledges came responsibilities that required complex alliances, not just over the immediate disposition of heritage items, but also the long-term responsibilities toward them.

This research also drew attention to problems arising from using “secrecy” as a comprehensive term to describe contexts in which knowledge is controlled or restricted. Our options in describing these scenarios generally emphasize dichotomies where if it is not “transparent,” it is “secret,” or if it is not “public,” it is “private.” At times, however, an object or social relationship occupies, traverses, or binds both public and private realms, such as will be demonstrated here with 3-D replicas. What are the mechanisms or knowledge-management strategies used to cross otherwise unworkable and rigid divides between public/private spheres and across cultures? Behind the practice of “secrecy” is a series of protocols that, although they result in concealing or revealing things, also function to match particular knowledge and expertise with what is perceived to be its appropriate use and context. How responsibilities toward knowledge or knowledge use rights and their specific contexts are defined, and by whom, as well as how these are managed over time, are the variant-values used to structure the analytical framework here. My underlying aim is to unpack the principles that make up the mechanics of knowledge management, which are often masked or collapsed together when a value-laden term such as “secrecy” is used.

Consequently, I problematize the two-dimensional divide between public and private knowledge, identifying more exactly a multidimensional conceptualization of knowledge membership that recognizes how responsibilities toward knowledge are assigned and, as seen in this case of the 3-D replicas, may be shared across specialized groups, between institutions, and over time. I call these memberships “perclusive” alliances, as they are constructed to crosscut and integrate diverse value regimes that determine knowledge use. The term “perclusive” intentionally works against the duality of inclusive/exclusive categories, instead denoting responsibilities toward privileged and expert knowledge that must now transect a range of groups with different interests and in a range of different contexts—a series of contradictions raised by these replicas. A perclusive or multidimensional conceptualization of privileged knowledge alliances provides a means to consider manifold internal and external alliances working in relation to each other as well as how obligations toward knowledge are assigned and maintained across groups. This insight is critical when analyzing situations involving knowledge diversity as well as how difference in these contexts is mediated. In particular, it helps elucidate how individuals in multi-interest national institutions such as the NMNH and tribal members such as the Tlingit reconcile and enable the enacting of different cultural values both across departments and divisions within their own institutions and groups and between a range of cultures. This process has become central to museums in general and repatriation offices and tribal cultural management offices in particular.

The idea is to provide insight into the architecture of responsibility and obligations toward knowledge use, as well as how these intersect and engage within cross-cultural environments such as a museum. Although knowledge access—such as digital access to collections—may be seen to be granted to a wide audience, in reality smaller groups of experts—clan leaders, archivists, clan historians and so forth—hold specific responsibility for its maintenance over time. I add to this dynamic the fact that knowledge, unlike objects, once exchanged, is shared between the originator and the receiver. Control is therefore defined by and enacted through use rights and, as is the case here, reproduction rights (Isaac 2014). In a context where museums and Native American communities mediate and negotiate multiple power structures (i.e., federal and state governments, tribal governments and museums, clan leaders, religious societies, archives and education departments, etc.), alliances are key to understanding how rights toward the dissemination and use of knowledge is navigated, shared, or impeded between groups. Critical to this analysis are concepts that recognize how caretakers of objects of cultural heritage and patrimony are, according to many tribes and communities, not conceived as individual owners but as having obligations of care toward these objects and their associated knowledges for future generations. In effect, this multidimensional conceptualization of social membership and knowledge obligations must be able to define cross-cultural
dynamics and explain these through time and over multiple
generations.

In investigating the locus of power and spheres of influence
that control how these replicas and associated knowledges are
conceived and used, I also ask, when we replicate an object of
cultural significance, to what extent do we replicate the social
relationships and obligations embodied by the original? Do
we reproduce or transform these? The presumed and deceptively
simple nature of copies and replicas belies their po-
tentially hidden powers of social transformation. As explored
through these 3-D digital replicas, I argue not only that they
are about the power to replicate something but also about the
potential to transform it and, therefore, to transform the cur-
rent social order.

To tease out these concerns, I present this case study of
the use of 3-D digital technology in NMNH projects with the
Tlingit tribe of Alaska. Although bounded by one institution
and a limited range of Tlingit communities, these projects pro-
vide a means to begin to challenge our assumptions about the
divide between public and private knowledge, who controls what
knowledge within museum settings, and how cross-cultural or
cross-membership practices are created and governed over time,
including into the future.

Digital Replicas and Repatriation at NMNH

The genesis of digital 3-D replicas in the repatriation process
at the NMNH dates from 2007, when the Stockbridge-Munsee
Tribe of Wisconsin, the Delaware Nation, and the Delaware
Tribe of Oklahoma submitted a request to repatriate culturally
affiliated human remains and funerary objects from the
Minisink site in New Jersey. While the Repatriation Office
assessed this claim, the representative for the Stockbridge-
Munsee Tribe, Sherry White, took part in a training program
at the Repatriation Office’s Osteological Identification Labo-
ratory. Here she received instruction on identification tech-
niques used on human remains and encountered a range of
investigative tools such as x-ray, CT scanning, and laser scan-
ning as well as 3-D prints of fossils that had been prepared by
the Office of Exhibits Central (OEC). Before returning the
objects to the tribes, White asked the Smithsonian to scan a
seventeenth-century pewter pipe that had been excavated from
a burial near the Minisink site. According to Hollinger and
colleagues, “White felt the replica of the pipe would allow her
to teach others about early historic Munsee material culture and
about the repatriation, but they would still be able to address
the spiritual concerns with the original by burying it” (Hol-
linger et al. 2013:206). A 3-D replica was produced by the OEC
and presented at a gathering for the official repatriation, where-
upon the attending tribes requested additional copies be made
so that each could have a duplicate to educate tribal members
about their history. Repatriation claims often require nego-
tiations between multiple related tribes who trace their origins
back to a single ancestral culture. This initiated 3-D modeling
as a new avenue within the repatriation process to distribute
heritage knowledge to communities divided by geography but
united by cultural origins, as well as to allow the museum and
each tribe to retain a surrogate.

A year after the Delaware project, a second initiative devel-
oped between the NMNH Repatriation Office and the Tlingit.
Mark Jacobs Jr., the leader of the Dakl’aweidi clan, and his son
Harold Jacobs, cultural resources specialist with the Central
Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, requested
the return of a Dakl’aweidi clan Killer Whale crest hat or Kéet
S’aaaw, which had been purchased for the NMNH by Smith-
sonian ethnologist John Swanton in the early 1900s. The Tlingit
repatriation claim was successful, and the hat was returned in
2005, with Mark Jacobs passing away only days after its re-
turn. During the memorial potlatch for Jacobs in 2007, the
Killer Whale hat was passed down to the clan leader’s succes-
sor, Edwell John Jr. In 2010, John and Harold Jacobs visited
the NMNH, bringing the repatriated hat with them with the
idea of having it scanned and producing a 3-D digital file.
According to Hollinger, Jacobs shared stories of a fire in 1944
that destroyed almost all clan objects in the Tlingit village
of Hoonah; he “observed that the technology could enable
Tlingit clans to digitally archive their important crest objects
in case of loss to fire or other disasters” (Hollinger et al.
2013:207).

The Repatriation Office was also interested in finding ways
to communicate and make repatriation more visible to the
public. Billeck, the head of NMNH’s Repatriation Office, stated
in an interview that he “wanted something in the exhibits about
repatriation . . . that was impossible because if we had some-
thing repatriated—it would be gone. Then we thought if we
could make a replica of something and tell that story that might
suffice . . . That is how we got into 3-D.” The NMNH Repa-
triation Office, the OEC, and Edwell John Jr. entered into a
collaborative project in which the hat was replicated using digi-
tal technology and a milling machine. The resulting replica was
painted using colors matched to the original and fitted with
hand-cut abalone inlay, attached human hair, and ermine skins.
The completed replica was accessioned into the NMNH An-
thropology Department collections and then in 2012 loaned
to Q?rius, the new NMNH education center, as a vehicle for
communicating to the public the cultural values of the Tlingit
as well as this particular repatriation story.

Toward the end of the Killer Whale hat replication project,
the NMNH received a repatriation request from the HIA for
53 funerary objects from shamans’ graves. During consulta-
tion sessions, repatriation staff showed tribal representatives
the 3-D scanning technology and the Delaware and Tlingit repa-
trication projects and inquired whether the HIA would be in-
terested in “exploring opportunities for the application of digi-
tal technology” (Hollinger et al. 2013:209). Consequently, HIA
tribal administrator, Robert Starbard, agreed for objects to be
scanned and replicated for HIA’s educational purposes. From
a Tlingit perspective, these kinds of shaman objects contain
spirits called yeik that could be harmful if not handled appro-
The origins of the term “replica” provide a useful entry point for examining ideas about reproduction. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, “replica” has its origins in Latin, in which it meant “to fold back,” and then in mid-eighteenth-century Italian, *replicare*, “to reply,” a musical term meaning “a repeat.” The history of this term provides contexts for its use and illuminates a relational view of reproduction, where the act itself builds on what went before—not so much a conversation but a sequence in which the reply duplicates what came previously. In this framework the replica is valued for its repetition within a broader exchange.

I emphasize this relational aspect to counter what I see as the overreliance in postmodern literature on interpreting replication according to the dichotomies “original” versus “copy,” and with digital 3-D, the “real” versus the “virtual.” This hierarchy between original and the copy is a conceptualization of knowledge reproduction that is not universally cross-cultural (Isaac 2011). For example, for the Ashiwi—the citizens of Zuni Pueblo in New Mexico—a reproduction made using the same knowledge as the original not only is an affirmation of this knowledge but it maintains the same powers as the original. Representational frameworks, however, commonly situate copies according to issues of authenticity and, therefore, assign them a diminished value in comparison with the original (Stewart 1991). Yet as the Zuni example illustrates, there needs to be recognition of how and why different cultural values are ascribed to the process of reproducing knowledge and how this affects socialization processes of which these values are a part. As Brown and Nicholas (2012) point out, “For some indigenous groups . . . no distinction is made between sacred objects, and the like, and copies (including photographs) of them. All are equally powerful, sacred, or otherwise instilled with vital values and thus require appropriate care and protection” (314). Because of her experiences in Vanuatu and New Zealand, Geismar (2013) also suggests that “we start to consider the digital as the new analog,” as there are “surprising similarities in the ways in which people work with digital and non-digital collections,” not to mention that many things are now “born digital” (255).

In tracing how societies have responded in the past to the invention of technology used for the reproduction of things, we find a well-documented example with the invention of the printing press. The transformative power of the press to materialize and disseminate ideas on a vast scale gave it a recognized power, resulting in heated debates about its control and the concept of copyright (Woodmansee 1994). Much later, the invention of the camera obscura was seen to be the catalyst for a modernist subjectivity and the idea of the “observer” (Crary 1992). The subsequent invention of photography introduced debates about whether it conferred a valuable status to its subjects or diminished their aura (Benjamin 1968). Questions arose about its relationship with power: was it more likely to be used as a surveillance tool for those in power (Tagg 1993) or as a tool for disseminating and revealing social inequities (Azoulay 2008)? Its analogic and indexical qualities have been explored as part of nineteenth-century ideas about positivism (Edwards 1992) and later as part of modernist and postmodernist concerns with the subjective nature of evidence (Mandel and Sultan 1977). In recent times, cyber technology such as the Internet and social media has met with similar concerns: will these technologies help create new societies and democracies or mirror preexisting power structures and inequities (Cameron and Kenerdine 2007; Creeber and Royston...
The continual use and ubiquity of phrases like “digital revolution” or “digital divide” indicate the extent to which technologies such as the web, digital photography, cell phone photography, 3-D scans, and 3-D printing are ascribed the powers of social transformation. Hence, the reproduction of things is not merely about social replication but transformation of the social order. Innovations in technology developed to reproduce things were and are often met with questions about the extent to which their reproductive powers were and are transformative. For example, according to Enlightenment schools of thought, accurate reproductions were an essential part of establishing empiricist frameworks, introducing Cartesian dualism and the separation of mind and body. Later, according to Marxist theories, industrialized reproductions had become about the commodification of labor and, therefore, a project of alienation (Marx 1992). Subsequent social theorists critiqued taste within the reproduction and consumption of commodities as a means of creating distinction and social status (Bourdieu 1984). These varying perspectives all share the premise that reproduction needs to be controlled—whether to gain scientific insight, economic power, or social identity.

From this overview we can assert that not all reproductions are created equal, and neither are they simply copies of things. Replication is a transformation from one being to two, and so on, which creates a collective and a dynamic dialogue. When thinking about the NMNH project of making replicas of objects that have been repatriated to tribes, are we looking at the reproduction of duplicated preexisting power structures and approaches to knowledge-use rights, or are we faced with the redistribution or transformation of power and knowledge-use protocol between institutions and peoples? Below, I explore these questions through the different perspectives that stem from the digital 3-D projects at the Smithsonian, documenting the range of specialized knowledge groups they traverse.

3-D Relationships: Interviews with Team Members

At the heart of this inquiry is an examination of the range of cultural and institutional values ascribed to the reproduction of knowledge as viewed through the replication of an object of cultural patrimony and the mechanisms used to control its use and meaning. Drawing from interviews conducted with the digital 3-D team members and collaborators, I look at Tlingit ideas about the clan crest and the replica as well as the process by which it was created. I chart relationships of obligation toward expert knowledge within and between groups, revealing areas where agreements across groups have built permissive alliances. I consider how expertise is established and how this enables us to think about knowledge production and the extent to which the replica may or may not change pre-existing Tlingit or Smithsonian frameworks and economies for controlling knowledge production.

A fundamental value that the Tlingit communicated to the Smithsonian staff was that of at.óow. At.óow are sacred tangible and intangible property that embody a specific moiety’s lineage and knowledge. To make an object at.óow, the moiety must “kill money” on it during a clan gathering so that this payment is witnessed and acknowledged by the associated opposite moiety, thereby enacting and strengthening cross-moiety obligations. “Killing money” is part of a socialization process that an object or song undergoes in order to “pay back” opposite moieties. At its heart, the practice maintains a cycle of ownership and reciprocity rooted within cross-moiety alliances. The at.óow crests also manifest rights toward clan knowledge and history—all of which become the responsibility of its caretaker. Hollinger suggested in an interview that these crest objects “are owned by the Clan or House as a whole rather than by individuals. They are seen as embodying the spirits of past, present and future generations of Tlingit. Objects that are at.óow are only displayed at important occasions and are ‘brought out’ to match at.óow of the opposite moiety.” Additionally, the “tangible property of the crest objects as well as the intangible property of the stories and songs associated with the crests depicted on the objects are fiercely defended by the Tlingit as the intellectual property of the clans” (Hollinger et al. 2013:202).

At.óow is an important concept in regard to understanding the Killer Whale hat replica, as Tlingit have repeatedly stated that the original one is at.óow, which is why they needed it to be repatriated. Hollinger pointed out that although the Killer Whale hat replica was not at.óow, it was “a depiction of the crest” of the Killer Whale and that this had its own significance. For example, when the Tlingit visited the Smithsonian

2. In the ethnographic literature, at.óow is described as “sacred objects representing the lineage crests” (Kan 1986:196). It has been translated as “an owned or purchased thing” (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1987). It is also recognized as a concept that describes both tangible and intangible property. For example, Thornton (1997) suggests that at.óow are “symbolic property” that are “integral components of Tlingit identity” and include “names, stories, songs regalia, crests and other cultural icons, including clan ancestors and representations of geographic features” (296). At.óow transcend generations such that their ownership “reaches both backwards and forwards through purchase by an ancestor” so that when they are brought out during a potlatch, “the accompanying oratory, is the means by which the speaker links the deceased with the living,” and “through the ceremonial display of at.óow the departed grandparents are made present (Breinig 1994:121). A link between at.óow and land ownership has also been described. For this, see Rosita Worl (1998): “The Tlingit fully understood the significance of symbols as title to property since they themselves use markers and clan crests to identify their claims of ownership to their land and other property” (2). Along the same lines, Thornton (2002) also suggests that “origin sites are often taken as crests by the clan and considered sacred property,” thereby linking the clan to that place (172).

after the replica had been made, they requested permission to access it and dance it. Hollinger observed in an interview that “this is an extension of their interest in using it, as it displays the crest. It is regalia. It is not at.óow, but it displays the crest that represents the at.óow.” An object on which the clan kills money takes on sentient and affective powers. Objects and regalia that evoke the same crest symbol as something that is at.óow do not have the same sacred status, but they do inspire respect by representing a sacred being. Hollinger noted that reproductions have been referred to by his Tlingit colleagues in other ways: “I heard a few times over the years [a clan leader] refer to a replica or reproduction as a ‘shadow’ when referring to copies of hats commissioned to replicate ones that are broken or lost, but before they go through ceremonies to become at.óow.” In agreements between clan leaders and the Smithsonian, Edwell John requested that “whenever the replica is shown, it needs to say it is a replica,” because he did “not want people confusing it with the real thing . . . [or for] other Tlingit to [misunderstand] that he has allowed an object that is at.óow to be displayed in the museum context rather than have it at home.” For the Tlingit, the distinction between the two is paramount.

The replica embodies and transforms the relationships developed through or strengthened by its creation. During clan conferences, replicas were presented as representative of these relationships by the community members involved in the project, leading Hollinger to note that “they were honoring the replica and the product—and the relationship is part of the product.” Gunter Waibel, director of the Smithsonian’s DPO, discussed in an interview how the replica embodied the Smithsonian’s relationship with the Tlingit: “Our relationship is one of trust—that is paramount above all else in dealing with these objects. . . . That makes perfect sense to me that these sensitivities exist and need to be honored.” In venues across the Smithsonian, the at.óow Killer Whale hat was used in performances that revealed that the relationships involved were part of a wider political arena. During the installation of the replica into the NMNH education center, Q?rius, Edwell John Jr., and Garfield George, a clan leader of the opposite moiety, accompanied by a group of Tlingit dancers, displayed the at.óow Killer Whale hat and explained to the education staff the cultural values it represented. Dances and the story of the replica were shared with the NMNH museum board and the public at the NMNH and the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) (fig. 1).

Although not a legal requirement, a letter of agreement written between the Smithsonian and the Tlingit clan leaders was one Hollinger and the Repatriation Office believed was important in establishing the specific contexts in which the replica would be used.

The letter of agreement authorizes the NMNH to make the replica using 3-D digital files, that the replica will be used for standard museum purposes and will not be further replicated without approval of the clan leader, the replica hat is to be accompanied by a tag making it clear that the original hat is an important crest hat of the clan, that the original hat was repatriated from the NMNH in 2005 to Dakl’weidi Clan Leader Mark Jacobs, Jr., and that the reproduction was created with the permission of the current Clan Leader and caretaker of the hat, Edwell John, Jr.; any public display of the replica hat is to be accompanied with labels mutually agreed upon by the Smithsonian and the Dakl’weidi Clan Leader. The agreement also states that the Smithsonian and the Dakl’weidi Clan recognize that the original Killer Whale crest hat is at.óow and any replica of the Killer Whale crest hat produced by the Smithsonian is not at.óow because it has not gone through the formal process under Tlingit customs of having been commissioned and brought out and paid for and that no money will be killed on the replica as would happen when bringing out true Tlingit at.óow and therefore the Dakl’weidi Clan does not assert any claim or right of ownership to the replica of the Killer Whale crest hat.

Hollinger explained that “we have a section that acknowledges the original is at.óow and the replica is not. . . . While there is nothing requiring us to do this, we want to get this straight, either verbally or in writing, that we have an understanding of the context that the hat comes from and, therefore, the potentials and the limitations that the replica might live in.” These obligations were formally codified through the accessioning of the replica by the NMNH Department of Anthropology, which the head of the Repatriation Office considered to be a “push for control of the [replica] object. . . . Because of an ongoing relationship that we wanted this object to have with the Tlingit community, it was important to have it in Anthropology, so that we could have a voice in that object having this continued relationship.” Hollinger noted that this accession also safeguarded the object from loss or damage within the institution. Obligations to the Tlingit and the use of new technology produced an object needing cocuration, with the NMNH Repatriation Office finding institutional means for ensuring these into the future. Notably, the Repatriation Office felt it had a better chance of meeting Tlingit use rights than leaving it to others, such as the Education Department.

Besides clan knowledge, the replicas also now embody a complex series of pioneering digital technologies and knowledge. Looking at these helps chart how expertise and knowledge production is understood and mediated between the groups involved. For example, the Killer Whale hat was scanned and photogrammetry done so that detailed digital files could be

4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
7. Information from the accession proposal for the Killer Whale replica hat, Anthropology Department, NMNH.
compiled for its archiving and reproduction (see Hollinger et al. 2013). A team of technicians training in digital 3-D scanning was at work for the most part of a year perfecting the technology needed to master this experimental process: “You have to have experience to make decisions, and in order to have experience, you need to do it.” Each digital project forged new knowledge, and each stage was shared with Edwell John Jr., the Tlingit partner in this collaboration, so that he both contributed to how the Tlingit form was reproduced and learned the technology involved.

Through engaging both with the object and the reproduction technology, a number of team members noted how new insight was gained. As Hollinger observed, the process became one of knowledge production: “We have come to find that we gained a deeper understanding of the objects themselves and the cultural context in which they functioned originally.” The physical process for the hat replication involved a milling machine that, with the work of OEC technician John Zastrow, created the replica from a block of wood. Zastrow learned that the digital scanner did not always read materials accurately such that there was no recognition of sections where there was abalone shell inlay. As a result, he had to hand carve slots for the shell. The intricacies of inlay and painting techniques also required specialized knowledge from Tlingit artists with whom OEC staff consulted. In the accession records for the replicas, the specific expertise was listed both for the original and the replica: “The maker of the original crest hat was a Desheetaan clan leader named Yeina-wooho who was brother in law to Gushteheen, the original owner/caretaker. The makers of this replica hat were OEC model makers Lora Collins (hair, paint and Ermine skins) and John Zastrow (wood, leather and shell).”

Smithsonian and community members questioned early on whether these mechanical replicas interfered with or altered traditional Tlingit carving practices, expertise, and knowledge economies. It was noted that carving is sometimes undertaken outside the community to meet global market demands: “People from Japan and Germany commission [carvings] and there are long waiting lists. They take years to make a single hat. . . . The carving now—including hats and at.óow—is sometimes being outsourced.” Initially, carvers alerted other


10. Information from the accession proposal for the Killer Whale replica hat, Anthropology Collections, NMNH.

carvers to meet with the Smithsonian team to discuss the possible threats digital printing might pose to them. "They were worried about the technology replacing them, and they told us they were sending tweets or e-mails out to each other saying, 'You better see this. This is going to put us out of business.'" At the first clan conference that was attended by the Smithsonian 3-D team, carvers and clan leaders alike were concerned that the technology might replace them or allow for the rapid commercialization of their traditional objects by non-Tlingits, infringing on their traditional cultural property rights. Once they were involved in team discussions and gained hands-on experience with the technology, some carvers began to describe digital scanning as a tool that could be used appropriately or abused by carvers or noncarvers alike. The discussion became less about the threats of the technology itself and more about the need for the products to be managed according to Tlingit values.

Financial policies also play a role in marking out obligations, and they reveal how particular relationships are codified within public institutions. The projects currently under way to produce replicas of culturally significant objects include objects for the HIA being paid for by the HIA, with a second set for the NMNH being paid for by the museum. A Tlingit clan leader has also decided to have a clan hat depicting a sculpin fish, held at the NMNH, replicated and recreated to its original state, as the original is broken. The clan is considering then bringing it to the community in Alaska and to kill money on it, thereby making it at.daw and essentially replacing and restoring the crest to service in the community. The Smithsonian will retain a digital scan and will restrict access to and use of this according to clan authorization protocols.

Early on in the Killer Whale hat project, the Tlingit communicated concern about the public being able to mass reproduce the replica and requested that once the digital scans of it were uploaded to a public website (SmithsonianX3D), these files not be available to the public to download (http://3d.si.edu/). Currently this is the only object in this 3-D gallery that cannot be downloaded and printed. This kind of request charts a new direction for the museum for the long-term oversight and restriction of access, as Billeck noted: "People are concerned about the ability for people to reproduce an object that looks very much like the original. So we were concerned about where do we put [the files], where do we store them, how do we retrieve them, how do we put controls on them?" Issues specific to federal institutions are also of concern: "How do we protect the digital record within a federal facility? With the Killer Whale hat replica, control of its use is written into the accession documents, but control over the digital information is an area needing further discussion and work between the Tlingit, the Smithsonian, archivists, and technicians." 

Internal Smithsonian directives pertaining to digital collections allow for the museum to restrict or deny access to digital files of culturally sensitive collections, but how these might be fully identified and addressed in the future remains to be explored.

**Conclusion**

In April of 2015, at the meetings for the Society of American Archaeology (SAA), the collaborative NMNH and Tlingit replica project was presented by Eric Hollinger at a session titled "3D Modeling and Printing in Archaeology: Transformative Innovations/ Appropriations." His presentation was met with commendations as to the innovative nature of the project, as well as skepticism by a few participants who had reservations about the use of 3-D printing technology in contexts such as museums, where indigenous groups were already conveying their ongoing anguish about their inability to control objects of cultural significance, as well as any culturally associated knowledge that was held in these institutions. Examples of communities with restrictive knowledge systems, such as the Pueblos, were cited to illustrate how potentially harmful this 3-D printing technology could be if used in an inappropriate context.

This discussion raises a number of critical questions. First, how are preexisting problems treated that arise from the intersection of restrictive knowledge systems, such as those specific to the Southwest Pueblos, and public access protocols by institutions, such as museums? Second, how does the introduction of 3-D printing technology into museums highlight or complicate these intersecting cultural contexts? Laws such as the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) do not in fact provide Native American communities with control over culturally sensitive knowledge. While NAGPRA was designed to provide equal rights to Native Americans in the disposition of their human remains and sacred objects, recognition of the need for protocol for the appropriate treatment of esoteric or sacred knowledge has been overlooked by some institutions or consigned by others to an ongoing and seemingly unresolved debate over the nature of knowledge itself. An attempt to resolve this oversight was introduced in 2006 with the Protocols for Native American Archival Materials (PNAAM), which outlined "professional practices for culturally responsive care and use of American Indian archival material held by non-tribal organizations." They also address the need to include Native American perspectives and to establish models for shared stewardship. The protocols highlight not only the diverse kinds of knowledge involved but the different cultural protocols needed for its management.

If we take a look at how restrictions toward knowledge are viewed in the wider context, we find that in many scientific and educational institutions, responsibilities are assigned alongside use rights. Scientific knowledge is understood to require objectivity and, therefore, it should not be subject to restrictions in its use or dissemination. Scientists or scholars’ responsibilities toward knowledge in their area of expertise is toward its dis-

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12. Ibid.
semination through publication, especially to their peers and colleagues. Present-day library science ethics anticipate that no restrictions be placed on library and archival materials as a means to ensure equal access practices. Additionally, government-funded museums are expected to follow guidelines about fiduciary responsibilities that oblige them to ensure public access to collections in a manner that does not discriminate on the basis of gender, age, culture, or race. In these same realms of research and education, however, knowledge that potentially could be used for harmful purposes can, in fact, be restricted. This includes authors placing moratoriums on access to their archives for a designated number of years in order to protect named individuals during their lifetimes. Knowledge required for certain kinds of nuclear technology (reactors, but mainly weaponry) is also restricted. An individual’s medical or educational information is also confidential, as its use outside of the original context is seen as potentially damaging to the individual.

As “secrecy” is a term that may or may not translate well across a diverse range of cultural contexts, a more effective cross-cultural approach focuses on how responsibilities toward knowledge use are assigned. In many repatriation or cultural heritage contexts, the term “sensitive” is now used to denote knowledge that cannot be removed from its original context and that requires specific responsibilities in its use. This approach also helps elucidate the specific mechanisms used to manage knowledge, especially when traversing cross-cultural contexts—a perspective that is voiced by Native American scholars and archivists in the PNAAM, where the restriction of “sensitive” knowledge may be seen to “be a matter of ‘national security’ for sovereign tribal governments.”

Requests to restrict access to or the dissemination of “sensitive” knowledge by Native American communities are quite common. For example, the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office wrote appeals to museums and archives in the early 1990s to restrict access to field notes, photographs, and archival materials that contained Hopi ritual knowledge. An NMNH project in the 1990s duplicated photographs of Zuni from the National Anthropological Archives (NAA) for the newly established Zuni Museum. Once these were sent to Zuni, consultation with religious leaders resulted in images of esoteric subjects being separated out and housed at the Zuni Heritage and Historic Preservation Office so that they could be accessed only by initiated members of the Zuni religious societies. Subsequently, recommendations for restrictions on the duplication and dissemination of photographs of Zuni rituals were communicated by participants in this project to the wider museum and anthropology community as a means to encourage these institutions to respect Zuni approaches to knowledge (Holman 1996). More recently, members of the Eastern Band of Cherokees have requested the removal from the Smithsonian website of Cherokee medicinal formulas that had been collected by the

Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE) ethnologist James Mooney in the late 1880s. In order to resolve these issues and through working with the Eastern Band of Cherokee, Tim Powell of the American Philosophical Society (APS) has introduced protocols at APS where scholars can access the sensitive Cherokee texts in person and take notes from them, but they cannot photocopy or photograph them, thereby reducing the extent of dissemination without a close understanding of the Cherokee concept of responsibility toward this knowledge. In each of these cases, the knowledge involved is understood to require specific responsibilities toward its use. For Hopis and Zunis, ritual knowledge is used to bring rain and heal the sick—but it can also be used to cause sickness and, therefore, requires appropriate responsibilities for its use. Similarly, Cherokee understand that these formulas could cause sickness if used inappropriately.

Frictions between museums and Native American communities arising from the intersection of culturally different approaches to reproducing knowledge and replicas, however, remain largely unresolved. There is the case of the Zuni War God, or Ahayuda, that was made in the late nineteenth century by the BAE anthropologist Frank Hamilton Cushing and given to the British anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor at Oxford University, which upon his death was gifted to the Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM). The Zuni Tribal Council’s request for its return in the 1990s was denied because the object in question was considered a “copy” made by an anthropologist and, therefore, not an “original” or authentic Zuni object. The Zuni, however, perceived this particular rendering of the Ahayuda held at the PRM as embodying not only the Zuni knowledge that Cushing had obtained when he was initiated into the Priesthood of the Bow but also his theft of Zuni ritual knowledge (Isaac 2011). As part of this debate about the nature of this particular Ahayuda, Bill Merrill, the NMNH anthropology curator who worked with the Pueblo of Zuni on the repatriation of Ahayuda, wrote to the director of the PRM stating that, for Zunis, “there is no such thing as a ‘replica’ or ‘model’ . . . [and] there is no doubt that the Ahayuda in your collection was produced on the basis of Zuni knowledge, and, from the Zuni perspective, should be returned.” From a Zuni perspective, Cushing’s initiation into the priesthood would

15. Ibid.

16. This request was made to the author in April 2015, and has initiated the establishment of a committee to develop appropriate protocol for sensitive materials held at the NAA. See Robert Leopold (2013) for the history of this collection and his discussions with members of the Eastern Band about access and duplication rights for online digital copies of Cherokee formulas managed by the NAA.

have assigned specific responsibilities to him toward this knowledge, which he disregarded when making the Ahayu:da for Tylor.

These Zuni, Hopi, and Cherokee examples highlight the cultural diversity found in approaches to reproducing knowledge, especially in the variation in how responsibilities toward knowledge use are assigned and managed according to specific use contexts. In the recent example of the digital 3-D replica projects, carvers from the Tlingit community and participants at the SAA session raised concerns about the technology and the challenges it presented when being introduced into a context already fraught with ambiguity over who has control over culturally specific knowledge and reproduction rights. It is worth noting, however, that the collaborative 3-D projects of the NMNH Repatriation Office are coordinated with these challenges in mind. In fact, the Tlingit case study ought to alert museums to the extremely high degree of cooperation across the different cultural contexts that were required to make the Killer Whale hat replica materialize. Its creation necessitated all participants to corroborate intimately with each other’s cultural values as well as how these manifested in each use context; the outcome appears to be one of knowledge exchange and the establishing of shared guidelines around cultural heritage in a public space.

I have drawn on these digital 3-D replica projects to argue for an analytical approach that not only “studies up” (Manderson et al. 2015) but also “studies across” a wide range of groups involved in the reproduction and control of knowledge, especially in a cross-cultural setting. Because knowledge is retained both by the originator and the receiver, its transfer creates an alliance often marked by a contract that details use rights. In the case of the Killer Whale hat replica, this was the letter of agreement between the Smithsonian and the Tlingit clan leaders with which the Smithsonian consented to undertake responsibilities toward the replica hat according to Tlingit values and to acknowledge this for an indefinite period of time and within each context (i.e., exhibits, educational, digital, etc.). This perspective enables us to conceive of an object that operates across a spectrum of value regimes and contexts, some of which may be private and some of which may be public. The original Daki:weidi Killer Whale hat has a public Tlingit persona, especially when it is brought out at clan gatherings, but it is also owned by and is the responsibility of the Daki:weidi clan. Once in the museum and following its replication, its reproduction rights are still controlled by the Tlingit Daki:weidi clan leader, thereby enabling private control of digital files maintained by a public institution. At each turn this alliance has renegotiated the public/private divide and established a shared agreement for the caring and disseminating of Tlingit cultural heritage in a federal institution and within a public space. The replica reiterates relationships beyond the Tlingit clans, uniting the Smithsonian and the Daki:weidi clan in a perclusive alliance and a unique form of cocuration where the two visually identical Killer Whale hats reside in but also traverse two distinct and diverse knowledge settings, yet now with greater disclosure as to their values and use of knowledge rights.

Remarkably, the Killer Whale hat replica is under more rigorous controls by the Tlingit than the first Daki:weidi clan hat was before its repatriation. While the replica solidifies social relationships between the Tlingit and the Smithsonian, it also introduces into the museum and codifies Tlingit values that shape how it is used and presented to the public. It is a composite of Native American and Euro-American cultural values and a carefully negotiated surrogate that enables Tlingit to have influence over their heritage within the national arena of the Smithsonian.

These replication projects at NMNH ultimately help us understand how groups endeavor to mediate difference, especially in terms of how they enact and perform the coproduction of something. They invite us to question what in fact we want to reveal or make physical. The 3-D technology not only materializes culturally privileged Tlingit knowledge but it also intentionally renders the collaborative process within a public gallery and education center, making this behind-the-scenes territory part of a now-public consciousness about the very nature of knowledge diversity itself.

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Publicity, Transparency, and the Circulation Engine

The Media Sting in India

by Ravi Sundaram

Since the turn of the century, India has witnessed a growing number of entrapment events or media “stings” in which private, secret, and unknown events, relationships, acts, and structures are publicly revealed. Aided by the rapid spread of technological modernity and low-cost media gadgets such as mobile phones, the media sting has been carried out by print, TV, and new media; transparency campaigners; NGOs; political parties; social movements; and ordinary individuals. As entrapment expands from a police technique to a generalized technology of transparency, it has produced great strains in existing control systems and traumatic disruptions at all levels. The video object produced by the sting is part of a circulation engine as it attaches to multiple environments: the political spectacle, the judicial review, and the online archive. I connect debates in infrastructures, media theory, and law to reflect on the implications of these new truth strategies for contemporary thought.

From the turn of the century, new media and low-cost infrastructures have begun to alter the relationship between power, cognition, and secrecy so central to the modern state. Nowhere is this more apparent than in postcolonial regimes. Confronted by media-enabled populations for which it had no place, the postcolonial design has been subjected to great strains and fissures. In India, paper-based systems in government offices have been subjected to thousands of requests under a Right to Information (RTI) Act, and digitally gathered information has leaked regularly into the public realm. In India’s postcolonial model, the political and the social were clearly distinguished from the domain of media, which existed in carefully regulated institutional sites such as print, cinema, and radio. With the rise of new informal media, media institutions, once seen by the regime as pedagogic institutions meant to nurture postcolonial populations into a national citizenship, have long lost their monopoly. After the spread of low-cost media devices and mobile phones, unregulated forms of media (audio, video, images) began to rapidly circulate from a population hitherto seen solely as social and political actors within India’s postcolonial design. As low-cost media spread through inexpensive cellular phones and populations became producers and proliferators of media, the postcolonial boundaries of the social and the political went through considerable turmoil. The resultant production of a turbulent technomaterial space began to affect many in the country. Across India, journalists, participants in social movements, NGOs, whistleblowers, and ordinary citizens angry at corruption began using concealed media gadgets to record and entrap those they considered responsible. At the same time, transparency activists joined this circulation engine; official paper documents, once kept secret or controlled through statutory rules of access, are now readily sourced through the RTI act and moved into the public realm. These results circulated via national, local, and global media and appeared as evidence in court cases and enquiry commissions. These interventions operated alongside an expanded and often chaotic governmental surveillance regime and a visceral media archive that emerged from the private collections of accident witnesses, estranged lovers, paramilitary torturers, and ordinary citizens with camera-equipped phones. Many of these fragments moved between the mundane and the dramatic, accelerating the pace of the media event and then moving to the painfully slower temporality of the legal review. This unanticipated media ecology has affected, even disoriented, just about every sphere of life in India.

Entrapment is a controversial police technique whereby law enforcement officials induce people to commit criminal

1. The circulation of privately collected media is not specific to India. From prisons to schools, streets, and hospitals, privately produced videos have emerged to make their way into public events and court battles worldwide.

2. This essay is part of a larger book project that examines the consequences of this shift in the postcolonial world.

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acts that might result in a conviction. This includes recording with hidden media devices staged encounters in which the target is induced to commit an incriminating act. In sting operations, undercover law enforcement officials may gather evidence to record illegal acts but not actually provoke criminal acts. The lines between entrapment and stings are often blurred and settled by case law in countries where such operations are legal. The modulation of a police technology by private individuals in India (and across the world) significantly transformed this act: it initiated new fields of circulation and opened larger questions of the “public interest” and sovereignty as systems of secrecy, censorship, and control faced new challenges. In numerous cases, the audio/video material gathered in sting operations ended up in a judicial review, a court case, or an administrative tribunal, sometimes making its way to online storage portals such as YouTube; more often, the material would be attached to an offline judicial archive.

But this movement of information—material collected, presented, shared, and stored—suggests a complex set of fields: the staged moment of entrapment, the affect-charged moment of publicity when the media is released in the public domain, and the quieter, longer stretch of the judicial review.

Michael Warner (2002) points to the “fruitful perversity” of all acts of modern publicity. Once initiated, these acts abandon intended audiences and face the risk of dispersal, misuse, and escape. In the treatment of contemporary entrapment as an ethnographic field, we need to address a complex set of forces: a dynamic mise-en-scène where new actors enter and fade away and where the noise of public debate is filtered through forensic expertise, which validates material as authoritative judicial evidence.

In the first section of this essay, I briefly map out the expansion of media infrastructures in India and the erosion of old systems of information control and secrecy. I then look at the generative implications of this new media constellation by examining a selection of technologically aided exposures of public life by activist media, transparency campaigns, and individuals using hidden cameras and cell phone videos. Often clustered under the shorthand of the media “sting,” these new technologies are connected to new expanded regimes of publicity: the 24-hour news cycle and YouTube videos. I switch between media and legal archives to open up questions about these new strategies, their sensorial-political charge, and the movements between exposure, rapid circulation, and the courtroom. I examine the video as an authorizing yet unstable document of this new constellation as it moves from a public event to the media archive, stored in online platforms and media devices. Video and audio are joined by paper media documents that are extracted from the regime through RTI requests and then remediated via publicity and activist campaigns. Given that rendering secrets public has become one of the main drivers of media modernity, I look at populist movements, transparency technologies, paper files, and the sting.

**Media Infrastructures and the Puzzles of Proliferation**

Unlike societies in the 1970s, our social body is defined by leaks; everything leaks, from surveillance tapes, wire taps, nudity on a remote beach, books, music, medicinal drugs and lives. Secrets and leaks are no longer governed by the state; there is an egalitarianism of secrets. (Mohammed and Mohan 2011:13–15)

The late Friedrich Kittler (1999) began his classic Gramophone, Film, Typewriter with the sentence “Media determine our situation, which—in spite of, or because of it deserves an explanation” (xxxix). With this, Kittler sets up media as the infrastructural condition of all experience rather than a technological supplement to a human condition (Mitchell and Hansen 2010). Newer approaches have opened the way by seeing media as hybrids that have evolved alongside a larger process of mediation (Kember and Zylinska 2012); recent techniques suggest media archaeologies of sensory and object worlds (Elsaesser and Hagener 2010; Parrika 2012). Media objects materialize through differing cycles of inscription, transmission, and storage, in the process intervening in and performatively rearranging the social. This is dramatized by contemporary media events, which often seek to cut through and capture normal news cycles, albeit temporarily. Debates on media events have focused on their illusionism (Baudrillard 1993) and their disclosure of mediation by appearing anomalous (van Loon 2010).

In their widely circulated book *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History*, Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz (1992) have pointed to the disruptive nature of events, where media “actively create realities” rather than just report them. Beyond an event’s artifactuality, it would be useful to examine how events are part of a generative loop or movement, where practices, objects, and people attach themselves to changing assemblages. This assemblage is a dynamic media ecology, which is not a stable arrangement of technologies and environments but rather is productive, resulting in new interventions or “space-times” (Deleuze 1990:176). As Parrika (2011) also puts it, “Media are an action of folding time, space and agencies; media are not the substance, or the form through which mediated actions take place but an environment of relations in which time, space and agency emerge” (35). As we examine the changing environments of entrapment actions, we witness different combinations of people and technologies as the initial event gives way to a constant redistribution of forces. Igor Kopytoff (1986) had spoken of the many “lives” of commodities as they move in and out of circulation. Media objects such as audio and video also take on multiple lives as they move in diverse time-space configurations. In events linked to media entrapment, a premium is placed on the moment of liveness: the burst of affec-

3. The “sting” has slowly come to stand in for diverse forms of media entrapment: political, sexual, personal, and activist.
tive energy when the video or audio is released in the public domain, designed to multiply the political effects of the act. This is often not the end of the story, as video moves to other environments, including the long judicial review, with new protagonists.

Infrastructures are at the center of media circulation by way of entangling people, objects, knowledges, and technologies. Following the cassette boom in the 1980s, media infrastructures expanded rapidly in the postcolonial world in the context of a large informal economy (Larkin 2008; Sundaram 2009). Media platforms proliferated along with an endless profusion of personalized media gadgets, from expensive smartphones to low-cost models used by the poor. The transformation of postcolonial life into a dynamic technological culture is wide ranging, affecting all sections of the population. The majority of India’s citizens now have cellular phones where they have access to audio, video, and still images (Doron and Jeffrey 2013). After the cellular phone, a growing section of the population is now the source of new media output, linking them in turn to online social networks, mainstream television, and peer-to-peer exchanges of text, music, and video. More and more people access and circulate technological media (video, music, print, images) through new online and offline networks. Initially limited by affordability and indifferent technological infrastructures, media networks are now spread across the country, in both rural and urban areas, with mobile phones bringing connectivity and intermittent broadband services. In India and across the postcolonial world, the media experience is now an integral part of everyday life.

These expanding media infrastructures have come in the wake of fragile postcolonial sovereignties and informal economies of circulation. This process has linked up to new subaltern expansions of existing infrastructure, which are redeployed for creative uses (Simone 2004). Indifferent to property regimes that come with upscale technological culture, subaltern populations mobilize low-cost and mobile technologies for horizontal networks that bypass state and corporate power (Sundaram 2009). Simultaneously, we witness the expansion of informal networks of commodification and spatial transformation. This loop shapes much of contemporary media circulation, wherein media objects move in and out of infrastructures, attach themselves to new platforms of political-aesthetic action, and are drawn to or depart from the spectacular time of media events. This drive marks the turbulent, dynamic ecology of entrapment, with changing combinations of protagonists, technologies, and spaces: television newsrooms, online platforms, police stations, government offices, courts, enquiry commissions, demonstrations, and activist forums.

As state authority weakens either through economic crisis, neoliberal reforms, or war, infrastructures also perform a kind of “doubling” role. Two decades ago, an essay by Achille Mbembe and Janet Roitman intimated this churning.

Fraudulent identity cards; fake policemen dressed in official uniform; . . . forged enrollment for exams; illegal withdrawal of money orders; fake banknotes; the circulation and sale of falsified school reports, medical certificates and damaged commodities. . . . It is also a manifestation of the fact that, here, things no longer exist without their parallel. Every law enacted is submerged by an ensemble of techniques of avoidance, circumvention and envelopment which in the end, neutralize and invert the legislation. There is hardly a reality here without its double. (Mbembe and Roitman 1995:340)

This doubling of infrastructures may also produce a poetics (Larkin 2013) with aesthetic and political possibilities. These may range from sensorial-political strategies of NGOs, anti-government movements (Maclagan 2012), and transparency groups. This has been accompanied by thousands of everyday acts by a media-enabled population.4

Today the cellular phone has become a transmitter and media production device: activists capture police brutality and protests; media-enabled populations enter the world of mass photography and share images with their friends. The archive fever of digital modernity, where we capture, store, and recirculate images, inflects both states and populations. In a situation of media porosity, the information “leak” from the state is regular and widespread. Not unlike other governments around the world, the Indian government has re-sorted to digital storage systems to hold information, including audio surveillance and text documents. Once digitally stored, governmental information periodically emerges in the public domain or is deployed in political and business wars.5

Secrecy and Sovereignty

In his book Defacement, Michael Taussig (1999) suggests that secrecy is “an invention that comes out of the public secret” (7). Following Elias C annetti, Taussig (1999) suggests that the public secret is “that which is generally known, but cannot be articulated” (5). If the public secret is a “known-unknown,” almost demanding defacement, at some point all these public secrets erupt despite great strategies of concealment. In a re-

4. The Canadian scholar Steven Mann formulated the notion of sousveillance, or watching from below, to suggest that media-enabled populations could provide a critical counterforce to governmental surveillance systems (Mann and Ferenbok 2013). Technologically aided exposures of everyday life include citizen media, WikiLeaks-style disclosures of state documents, and a flood of bystander images and videos that make their way into newscasts and social media. While there may be a dangerous proximity of sousveillance to decentralized technologies of national security, there is little doubt the terms of the political are being shifted today.

5. Among the first of these was the audio recording of a conversation by Amar Singh, a North Indian politician who was variously heard fixing high court judges and managing sexual and financial favors for sections of the Indian elite. Though the Supreme Court initially stayed the circulation of the tapes, the contents are now accessible to all. See http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/amar-singh-tapes-deals-with-anil-ambani-105308 (accessed July 28, 2014).
cent case, audio surveillance tapes of Nira Radia, a Delhi-based lobbyist attempting to fix a multibillion-dollar telecom contract, made their way to local news magazines, exposing a stunning trail involving India’s major companies, the telecom minister, and local journalists. One hundred hours of audio are now available online, providing the public a dramatic entry into the corridors of political and social power. The movement of the Radia tapes is instructive of new modulations in power today. The tapes (containing 5,851 conversations) were from wiretaps ordered by the income tax department against Nira Radia in 2009 (Bal and Jha 2010). The tapes emerged as part of evidence in a court case, and a selection of their contents came out in news magazines in Delhi (Outlook 2010) and in an art project by the Mumbai collective Camp. This constant resignification of legal documents is indicative of the loop discussed earlier. The traffic involves the multiplying of networks, sharing practices, legal-paralegal circulation, and an affect-driven political culture.

What do these changes mean for older forms of cultural control? Nationalist anticolonial mobilizations in India had produced powerful affective settings through institutional combinations of politics and culture. Postcolonial India was an equally charged universe, accentuated by political mobilization, religious and cultural spectacle, and an expanding commodity culture. Cinema and media cultures also presented dangers to postcolonial sovereignty; the perceived public disorder of subaltern crowds was seen as susceptible to film’s sensuous, provocative pleasures. The great challenge for postcolonial governance was to try to regulate public passions in a media-saturated culture while preserving the affect intensity of democratic and cultural politics in postindependence India.

William Mazzarella (2013) argues that censorship in India was constitutive of the performance of postcolonial sovereignty. Given the difficulties involved in instituting standardized mechanisms for the regulation of “sensuous provocation” after widespread mediatization, the police function of sovereignty is to manage the world of public affect, notably, the “emergent potential that arises between the sensuous resonances of mass mediated images and the competing ways in which they get harnessed to social and cultural projects of value” (Mazzarella 2013:40). This was the gray zone between what Warner calls the “fruitful perversity” of all media forms and their potential for overflow into unknown, dangerous zones. Censorship’s “performative dispensation” was to play both police and patron in a chronic state of cultural emergency that is the condition of mass publicity. This was a foundational transaction between the unstable “open edge” of mass publicity and the assertion of sovereign power, whose authority was periodically evoked to filter authorized and unauthorized practices.

This model of postcolonial affect management has been thrown into turmoil after the rise of media-enabled practices, transforming relations between sovereignty and a population always seen as susceptible to the sensorial powers of celluloid. Media has become the infrastructural condition of life rather than enclosed in distinct, regulated sites such as the cinema. What we see is a new condition of affect-driven media modernity in most parts of the world today (Berlant 2011). The older police function of postcolonial government was to privilege particular (legal) sites of media exhibition and consumption. Today new forms of unauthorized publicity have actively destabilized this regime and fed into new loops of circulation. Blurring and confusing the distinctions between legal/nonlegal, private/public, fact/artifact, and governmental/nongovernmental, the new interventions span homes, governmental offices, political parties, individuals, industrialists, and just about all walks of life. At the center of this traffic is the media-enabled entrapment, or the “sting.”

The Ecology of Entrapment

During his brief, first tenure as the chief minister of Delhi, Arvind Kejriwal invited each citizen equipped with a mobile phone to “sting” corrupt public officials. “Each citizen of Delhi will be an anti-corruption inspector. Your phone will be your biggest weapon... Do the sting there and then, and let our anti-corruption department know. We will lay a trap and arrest them. You can use audio or video to perform a sting” (Kaushika 2014). Kejriwal’s cabinet colleague Manish Sisodia went even further, suggesting that for postcolonial Indians, the “right to sting” had an equal place along with the right to vote and RTI (Apurva 2014). Significantly, Sisodia and Kejriwal elevated the newer technologies of visibility into the domain of public policy. By 2013, sting or entrapment operations were increasingly routinized as the corporeal edge of public life. Sting operations became part of anticorruption exposés, political battles, domestic battles, sexual blackmail, small neighborhood conflicts, torture cases, the exposure of anti-Muslim rioters in Gujarat, and legal cover-ups. An unending, visceral stream of videos have now circulated in the public domain for over a decade, materializing

7. In Files: Law and Media Technology (2008), Cornelia Vismann subjects the legal archive to a media archeology; law is many ways an expression of a media condition of transmission, storage, and recall.
8. Rajadhyaksa (2009:7) suggests that "containment" was the marker of celluloid, along with the social stabilization of the cinema. Cinema’s instability had different public consequences from its successors.
9. There is little doubt that some of the older anxieties about media and public excitability described by Mazzarella (2013) continue in the digital era, with cellular phone images held as reasons for social disturbances in various parts of India.
10. Kejriwal and Sisodia were also activists, and the advocacy of sting operations by ordinary citizens for exposing corrupt state officials is a new shift in terms of political discourse.
in times of major political events, parliament debates, corruption scandals, law courts, and forensic labs.

For decades, media-enabled entrapment cases were the monopoly of the police. Audio technology was introduced in the 1950s. Early discussions in courts centered on the admissibility of secretly recorded audio in the body of evidence through its ability to maintain the integrity of recording and via comparisons with photography. “In principle no difference can be made between a tape recording and a photograph,” declared a judge in 1965. Later judgements also described the recorder as a storage and capture device similar to that of photography. From the 1980s, the state’s monopoly over media infrastructures started to recede, and low-cost recording devices became available in local markets for widespread use. But the turning point was the role of a news magazine appropriately called Tehelka (Sensational). The magazine pulled off a major video sting that entrapped military officials, bureaucrats, and politicians in an arms deal with a fictitious company in exchange for sums of money. Causing a national storm and debate in the press over journalistic techniques, operation Westend led to the resignation and conviction of various officials. Deploying a shorthand for transparencies, Tehelka’s editor Tarun Tejpal claimed that for many in rural India who “did not understand the medium,” the magazine functioned as an “X-ray machine,” exposing all who came in its way (Tejpal 2001).

Operation Westend set up a model for entrapment of hidden media devices and video technology. There was an effort to channel the burst of sensory acceleration toward particular ends, such as live media events, public debates, a court case, and an official inquiry. In more spectacular cases, the video attached itself to live television, a key player in whose outcomes and temporal cycles are often unknown. The process of tape-recording offers an accurate method of representation of a staged event; rather, it is a takeoff point of a relevant sound. Like a photograph of a relevant moment, a tape-recorded material.

Following Westend, established and upcoming television companies quickly added the sting to the prime feature of the nightly broadcast. A class of “investigators,” detectives, and public-interest lawyers emerged over the decade, as stings were mounted against political parties, individuals, and companies. The Tehelka team of journalists who carried out Westend went on to carry out a host of sensational stings, including exposures of right-wing groups involved in the anti-Muslim riots of 2002 in the state of Gujarat and the entrapment of members of Parliament (MPs) offering cash for votes.

Removed from the media glare of the live national event, local entrapment operations were playing out across India in area courts and in local political and ecological battles. Once initiated, entrapment joined expanded loops of circulation and sensory mobilization, with distinct political effects. Even government departments joined in. In India’s central state of Madhya Pradesh, health officials in 2008 offered rewards to ordinary citizens to carry out sting operations against illegal sex-determination clinics that helped parents wanting a male child abort female fetuses. An official circular stated blandly, “Before the operation is conducted, the female decoy will have to give a written declaration that she is doing it for humanity and in public interest, and helping the competent authority voluntarily, without any prejudice” (Ghatwai 2008, emphasis mine).

Media entrapment emerged as a major technique with which to initiate and inhabit an event within a larger culture of circulation after digital media. The sting video is not (simply) a representation of a staged event; rather, it is a takeoff point within an ongoing process of mediation involving many actors whose outcomes and temporal cycles are often unknown.

Public Interest, the Sting, and the Legal Event

In September 2010, Delhi High Court judge S. N. Dingra heard a petition by journalist Aniruddha Bahal, who had pioneered the sting in India, including the Westend operation for Tehelka. Bahal asked for the quashing of criminal cases against him, initiated when he had conducted a sting operation against MPs to expose the practice of asking questions in return for sums of money. Instead of investigating the MPs, the police filed criminal cases against the journalists. Bahal claimed the sting to be in the “public interest,” and the judge ruled that the journalists were only performing their “constitutional” duty: “I consider that the duties prescribed by the Constitution of India for the citizens of this country do permit citizens to act as agent provocateurs to bring out and expose and uproot the corruption” (Aniruddha Bahal v. State, September 24, 2010).

After 2000, a rapidly increasing number of audio and video documents from private sting operations began appearing in court cases. At every level, the admissibility of media material was contested under existing evidence law; all cases were filtered through the noise of the real: political struggles, forms of publicity, and civil rights battles. In one well-known case, a fabricated sting operation by a local media company accused a local Delhi schoolteacher of running a prostitution racket (Times of India 2007). This led to violent demonstrations by
parents. The legal ruling on the event captured confusions on the status of the video in the courtroom: "Sting operations showing acts and facts as they are truly and actually happening may be necessary in public interest and as a tool for justice, but a hidden camera cannot be allowed to depict something which is not true, correct and is not happening but has happened because of inducement by entrapping a person."15

All entrapment cases generated a forensic theater that stretched from the initial blur of the media event to the lab-based analysis of the court case. Forensics, says Eyal Weizman (2011), mobilizes rhetorical techniques where objects are translated in a forum by observers. This involves two interrelated relationships.

The first is the relation between an event and the object in which traces of that event are registered. The second is a relation between the object and the forum that assembles around it and to which its "speech" is addressed. Forensics is therefore as concerned with the materialization of the event as with the construction of a forum and the performance of objects and interpreters within it. (Weizman 2011:105)

As Weizman points out, in recent years an object-oriented juridical culture creates the space where divisions between material evidence in objects and the human testimony blur; objects take on an expanded, expressive role that was once attributed to human witnesses. In sting cases this problematic is starkly posed when courts decide on the consequences of an event that is over. Whose voice should the court hold as primary? The audio/video object or the accused person at the scene of the crime whose life and career is under review?

In high-profile entrapment cases, there is often an insistence in demonstrating the irreducible “true” core of the audio/video document by examining “raw” footage and original hardware. When the object is made to “speak” via the technical language of the lab, counterclaims and parallel forensic analyses are presented by lawyers, not unlike spoken witness testimony. However, lab-based forensic analysis is rare for most sting cases. The traces of the event are mobilized not through expertise but through placement of the sting media contents as a parallel rhetorical voice in the trial to be corroborated or contradicted in the courtroom.16

The arrival of privately supplied entrapment video in case law suggests a rearrangement of the police power of sovereignty in a user-saturated media environment. Control over the circulation of legal paper documents has defined this regime. Mathew Hull (2012) points to the stabilizing role of documents in postcolonial South Asia: within the office, corporate authority is produced not via indexicality but through circulation. Endless circulation disperses responsibility and collectivizes bureaucratic power. Governmental documentary power is often addressed by citizens through petitions that circulate within the governmental regime of documents. From the late 1970s, petitions for justice began to address courts through public-interest litigations, abbreviated in public discourse as PIL. Here the petition became a form of public address via the court rather than the state. By the 1990s, PIL had become highly publicized dramaturgies with live media coverage.

For many activists and ordinary people who carried out stings, the technology was a new petitioning strategy to disrupt the order of things and a way to opportunistically attach themselves to the viral flow of media culture.17 The outcomes were diverse: conviction of the accused in anti-Muslim riots, anticorruption campaigns in a local school, and domestic or office disputes. The sting’s petitioning form was primarily the visceral platform of mass publicity—a performative disruption premised on maximum effect. The judicial review emerged later as a productive surplus of this cycle. This could take the shape of a court case, a governmental enquiry, and suspension of officials caught in the sting. But in many of the smaller cases, there was no final conviction based on the sting.18

The Sensory Vortex

Operation Westend initiated a certain aesthetic of the entrapment video that was repeated endlessly on live television. The blurred, grainy images of the video became the established citation of the event as viewers adjusted their vision to make sense of the document. This was a moment of public forensics with less than audible sound, shoddy camera work, and barely visible individuals on screen (Tehelka TV 2012).

The artist and film theorist Hito Steyerl (2012) has analyzed a new culture of “poor images” that have emerged out in a conversation in March 2014 (L. Liang, "Of Hidden Cameras and Hidden Truths: Law and Visual Evidence in an Era of Digital Uncertainty," unpublished manuscript).

15. I am indebted to Lawrence Liang, who was the first to point this out in a conversation in March 2014 (L. Liang, "Of Hidden Cameras and Hidden Truths: Law and Visual Evidence in an Era of Digital Uncertainty," unpublished manuscript).

16. For larger media organizations, the judicial review was just a component in a larger repertoire of performative effects: in many cases judicial action finally collapsed because the reporters lost interest and never submitted forensic evidence. After the sting of sales tax and jail officials, reporters of the television channel Aaj Tak lost interest in the case and did not appear before the tribunal or submit credible evidence. The government officials whose jobs were terminated were put back on the rolls, though still subject to departmental due process. See the ruling of the Central Administrative Tribunal in A. K. Jain S/O P. R. Jain v. Government of National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi, August 31, 2009.
from the confluence of pirate culture, data compression, and network mobility. The poor image recalls the “compromised visuality” of earlier concepts of imperfect cinema—amateurish, blurred, and filled with artifacts. The contemporary traffic in poor images is more ambivalent and affect driven, and it operates within a contested zone of commercial and common interests. Artistic, pornographic, and “paranoid” material are all part of this constellation of poor images and present a combustible, almost moving snapshot of the contemporary crowd, “its neurosis, paranoia, and fear, as well as its craving for intensity, fun, and distraction” (Steyerl 2012:41). The sting video is similar to the economy of poor images, floating, as Steyerl says, on the surface of “temporary and dubious data pools” (Steyerl 2012:42). As these videos move along different platforms—prime-time television, inexpensive cellular phone screens in working-class areas, online archives, the space of the court room—they become players in changing environments, producing sensational, pornographic, and disruptive political effects.

The Recirculation of Paper and Transparency Activism

Video and audio documents were the preferred media of user-initiated sting operations. At the same time as the promotion of the video sting, a remarkable recirculation of paper documents originating from the Indian government was underway, initiated by transparency activists. As a media form, paper and its place in governmental authority was an important player in both neoliberal audit culture and populist transparency campaigns. If neoliberal transparency attacked paper-based governance as inefficient and opaque, populist movements deployed a new media politics to move government paper documents to a larger engine of circulation. In recent years scholars have been drawing attention to paper’s media materiality (Gitelman 2014; Kafka 2012; Krajewski 2011). Paper media and their materialities tend to be overlooked in the context of the growing hegemony of digital media.

From the days of the East India Company, colonial power in South Asia was based on the multiplication of writing genres as means of authentication. Constant authentication and verification through elaborate official procedure materialized colonial writing practices (Ogborn 2007). As Hull (2012) demonstrates, anxieties about noncorrespondence between words and things pervaded colonial and postcolonial bureaucracies, leading to multiple systems of authentication such as stamps, countersignatures, and paper genres. Document systems render bureaucratic authority distinct from the public, but this power can be diluted by constant circulation of files and overwriting by multiple officials (Gupta 2012; Hull 2012). Colonial power was based on an extensive deployment of these paper-based information systems for routine policing as well as managing migrants, epidemics, and cross-border movements. After independence, the postcolonial regime drew significantly from this system, although aligning it to republican democratic politics. Paper-based databases (electoral rolls, ration cards, land lists) produced by state functionaries intersected with political mobilizations at local and city levels, and these played a dual role: they allowed the regime to manage urban residents through systems of exclusion and inclusion while for political groups entry into the database constituted an important vector of everyday life (Sriraman 2013). Such political strategies could range from strategic entry into some databases (electoral rolls, ration cards) with fuzzy land ownership patterns and para-legal access to informal systems of electricity and water. In this constellation, an entry into one information system could coexist with tactical invisibility in another. Small traders, residents of squatter settlements, and internal migrants moved in this shifting information ecology. The porosity of the paper information system became perceived as a crippling problem for India’s globalization, condemned by neoliberal modernizers as opaque and leak prone (Nilekani 2009).

Scholars have explored the materiality of bureaucratic documents as they circulate and intersect with neoliberal doctrines, NGOs, and political claim making (Hetherington 2011; Riles 2006). From the late 1990s, transparency began to emerge as a significant component of regime modernization and infrastructural design in India. Transparency discourses sought to reform the paper-based documentation system of the regime, seen as corrupt and complicit with political elites. Contemporary documentary government became the target of transparency and audit cultures, which set in motion new hierarchies while delegitimizing existing practices (Strathern 2000). As neoliberal elites deployed audit cultures and models of e-governance, biometric identification drives sought to bypass postcolonial modes of embodiment that were seen as characteristic of paper-based enumeration systems. In the new technocratic update after neoliberalism, biometric enumeration and real-time visibility became a significant component of reinventing both infrastructural systems and urban populations without the problems of porosity. In this infrastructural design, populations are positioned in a clean, direct relationship to a transparent state, uncluttered by corrupt local intermediaries and the venalities of traditional politics. Transparency initiatives are aporetic: even as they seek to evacuate governance from the corporeal sites of the political/material, they are implicated in local conflicts and techno-material issues. Transparency documentary strategies may multiply authority and displace existing practices, producing a state of “documentary disorder” (McKay 2012).

Beyond the infrastructural turn, citations of transparency began to show up in urban populist movements from 2005. In that year a landmark RTI law was passed by Parliament following years of activist pressure. The act mandated a “time-bound” response to requests for government infor-

19. For a copy of the act, see http://righttoinformation.gov.in/ (accessed May 1, 2010).
mation, usually 30 days, beyond which responsible officials would face salary cuts. Although the original act had caveats on national security, an activist Central Information Commission expanded the scope of RTI requests. The entire governmental system has been deluged with RTI requests from every walk of life. RTI requests articulate a range of impulses—ordinary desires for justice, anticorruption activism, and rivalry amid the state bureaucracy and corporate classes. RTI movements in India draw from what Birchall (2011) calls the “transparency effect,” where unhindered access to information is held up as a positive value against the corruption of old-style politics. However, in contrast to the infrastructural turn that set up transparency as a technical solution to service delivery, social movements have sought to embed transparency in a new theory of populist sovereignty (Hetherington 2011). A good example is the book Swaraj (Kejriwal 2012), in which Arvind Kejriwal, drawing variously from Gandhi’s village government, citizen’s budgeting in Porto Alegre, and Swiss self-government, argues for a decentralized democracy of self-governing councils. In Swaraj, a failed, corrupt, postcolonial regime had to be replaced by a self-governing republic. In his work on populism, Ernesto Laclau (2005) speaks of how populist empty-floating signifiers generate an equivalent chain,20 which “has an anti-institutional character: it subverts the particularistic, differential character of the demands” (38). The “internal frontier” of populism reproduces an us-versus-them discourse, a model of constant extension. Populism’s strength (and vulnerability) lies in this political model of extension. Laclau’s model tends to have a broad explanatory sweep; contemporary populist mobilization in India embeds this extensive model in specific informational strategies.

These tactics include the aggressive petitioning of the state through RTI applications, of which thousands are periodically filed to expose corruption in land deals, contracts, and public/private infrastructure. In contrast to liberal technocratic models that see transparency as state modernization, populist campaigns seek to aggressively attack state and corporate information monopolies and to circulate documents in the public domain. “Paper” documents from information campaigns emerge as digital copies online, in court evidence, and in television shows. This model of publicity remediated paper within a larger infrastructural condition of media circulation common to audio and video documents. Documents that have emerged from RTI campaigns often attach themselves to the familiar loop of exposed culture: the public unveiling of the scandals of state secrecy, the live media event, the political storm, the judicial process, all components of entrapment ecology.

The elective affinity between the sting and the tactics of populist transparency are apparent. Both are driven by a relentless drive to technologically unmask authority and accelerate circulation through media networks. Once evacuated from the domain of state secrecy, the paper document gains speed and texture in the accelerated cycle of the media event, mapping the trajectory of the sting video. If the barely coherent audiovisuals of the video become the reference for the initial velocity of the sting, the paper documents unearthed by populist campaigns function within a regime of spectrality. As Gupta-Nigam (2013) suggests, this is a forensic moment that is affective rather than infrastructural: “Even as documents are leaked, exposed and held up in front of television screens, on no occasion can viewers actually identify the authorizing marks for themselves, they have to trust those relaying the information to them—news anchors or activists” (89). The document functions as an affirmation of a trace; the evidence is performative.21

Conclusion

In the past few years, sting videos have documented events that range from corruption to police atrocities. These videos are also an archive of destroyed lives, blackmail, and exploitation aesthetics. As a field, entrapment suggests a shifting set of forces, a world where we witness what the philosopher Keith Ansell Pearson refers to as “experience enlarged and gone beyond” (Pearson 2002:8). In this milieu, the sting becomes a vehicle to enter a larger forensic laboratory, be it the palpable, visceral mood of the media event or the minor theater of the courtroom. As I have argued, entrapment inhabits a range of dynamic connections, including the informal infrastructures of contemporary media and the rearrangement of the postcolonial sovereignty as new media-enabled actors produce new forms of publicity. The sting’s primal moment of publicity was the affect-intensive live media event when the secret was exposed. This was connected to a larger chain of circulation, which welcomed new protagonists as older ones faded away.

Michael Warner (2002) suggests that when public discourse abandons the security of given audiences, it also “puts at risk the concrete world that constitutes its condition of possibility” (109). The sting reflects this tension between acts of publicity and their possibility as media-enabled actors deploy police technologies for sensory-political acts, joining a larger engine of circulation. The movement between critical exposed and destabilizing the powerful by informal actors and large governmental surveillance infrastructures highlights the key challenge for an ethnographic understanding of the political increasingly challenged by media modernity. The provisional, always unfinished nature of contemporary

20. Laclau (2005) explains this in the following words: “This means that each individual demand is constitutively split; on the one hand it is its own particularised self; on the other it points, through equivalential links, to the totality of the other demands” (37).

21. In the more high-profile cases, the RTI document would function as evidence in judicial proceedings not unlike sting video.
media offers promise and danger to insurgent populations and institutional power at the same time and suggests urgent new questions for scholars of public life.

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Clandestine financial dealings are at the core of new forms of philanthropic venture capitalism in global health. Worldwide, organizing principles of state-centric pastoral and clinical health care have given way to speculative, market-driven approaches to health. Because global finance is a normatively secretized social space, the increasing use of private financial instruments in health spaces previously publicly funded raises important questions about the remaking of global welfare processes, global public health incentives, and abandonments. Anthropological research shows that market value does not always link up with improved health outcomes. This article explores a related point: what are the relationships between financial secrecy and care? When the stakes are life and death, how much secret knowledge and private action is tolerable? Increasingly in global health finance, new forms of exclusion are emerging; disenfranchised people and nation-states participate in world systems but as compromised financial subjects. Asking “Who knows what?” and “What benefits whom?” opens up all manner of difference and differential stakes in well-being—financial and corporeal—and provides analytical traction on both new systems of advantage and recent intensifications of old systemic global inequalities.

Many people feel put off or defeated by anything having to do with money and economics. It’s almost as if they didn’t have permission to understand it. (Lanchester 2014:31)

Global health financing operates like a secret; it creates human groups with varying degrees of knowledge and information. In the same way that secrets exclude people, the money talk I take up in this article excludes people who might be interested and whose very lives may be at stake. Finance talk is particular to groups, that is, people whose group member identity and cohesion depends on what they do not have to explain to each other because they are already in the know, speaking the same language. They share an understanding of what is concealed, of what is known and unknown. Individuals and nation-states unable to “do the money” in this way are at a serious disadvantage. Finance, as a growing part of global health activity throughout the world, depends on secret knowledge, expertise, and power, all of which are more challenging to acquire in out of the way places.1 Increasingly, in global health we see new forms of “exclusionary incorporation” (Partridge 2012:18); poor people and poor nation-states participate in world systems but as compromised financial subjects.2 Because finance is a normatively secretized social space, the increasing use of financial instruments in health spaces previously funded (the distinction between finance and funding is made below) raises important questions about democratic and civil health processes. How much needs to be known about money to care for people well? When the stakes are life and death, how much secret knowledge and private action is tolerable?

Clandestine financial dealings are at the core of new forms of philanthropic venture capitalism in global health, and they are the focus of this article. The secrets of “high-net-worth” individuals and institutions in global health finance have not been widely studied by anthropologists,3 although there is impressive work on high finance more generally (Ho 2009; Riles 2011; Zaloom 2006) and several excellent anthropological works taking up related themes, for instance, in relation to speculation (Peterson 2014), value (Dumit 2012; Maurer 2005; Rajan 2012), and geontology (Povinelli 2011). The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Finance (Knorr Cetina and

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1. This phrase is borrowed from Piot (1999).
2. In the last decade, “global health” has emerged as a significant driver of international affairs, specifically, humanitarian and international development efforts. It is a domain of social praxis aptly characterized by Fassin as obscure and variable. I join Fassin in noting that “the ‘idea’ of [global health] has generally been taken for granted as the best descriptor of contemporary issues in world health, as if we all knew what that was” (Fassin 2012:96). Brada (2011), Pigg (2013), Adams (forthcoming), and Crane (2013:154) also offer incisive anthropological insights into the construction of “global health” as a social field.
Crocs profits. At the IPO, the investor’s original $25,000 investment became stock worth over US$1 million, a sizable return if he had wanted to cash out. At IPO, though, there are perceived privacy disadvantages on the part of some investors: US government regulation, for example, requires the release of information about the product, customers, and members of the management team. Laws impose additional audit oversight and accountability controls. To retain freedom and control and to avoid the perceived disadvantages of disclosure regulation, some investors turn to “the secret garden of private equity” (Morgenson 2014) and, increasingly, to “dark pools” and “dark markets,” so named for their lack of transparency.

Private equity money is not regulated like publicly traded stocks. In the United States, although the Securities and Exchange Commission is tasked with private equity oversight, disclosure, transparency, and performance reporting standards are variable. Private equity is an industry that prides itself on self-regulation. Regulating the financial activity of non-banks, including private equity, “is an enormous challenge,” according to the head of the US Federal Reserve, Janet Yellen (Del Costa, Pedro Nicolaci, and Leubsdorf 2014).

My main interest, however, is in high finance, acts of economic exchange and arrangement involving large amounts of money. In brief, finance is monetary support for businesses, where people typically invest large amounts of money while knowing the money may be lost if the business product fails to sell at a profit, as many do. “Buy low, sell high” is the aim, with investors giving money to businesses with the hope that they will be able to sell out their stake in a business for considerable profit. High finance includes longer terms of investment, 5 to 10 years, as well as short-term speculation, which includes the manic money-making activities of high-frequency trading, where large amounts of money might be held for less than seconds (Lewis 2014). Activities of investors, bankers, financial analysts, speculators, and, increasingly, computer programmers are often undisclosed, secret in both appearance and in fact. High finance is different from funding. It is not a domain of permanence and continuity. Rather, it is generally understood by business people and government economists as a necessary social mechanism in late-liberal economies to support the start-up of enterprise, though rarely to sustain it.

Making money in this way largely depends on leveraging unknowns. Possessing information—sometimes undisclosed information, sometimes secrets, sometimes “insider information”—about the chances of new business success is highly advantageous. One investor told me,

When we put the money into a VC [venture capital] firm in health care, I would hear, I would be behind the scene, so I would know all that was going on. Because it’s my money, you know. I was looking to make sure that it wasn’t put into risky places, that the investment made sense, that the general partner wasn’t being corrupt and then I’d watch for the return.
Expertise in finance depends on access to high volumes of particular kinds of information. Investment mastery is in one’s ability to make meaning from numerous free-floating elements from multiple information networks, many of which are not public. One financial analyst said, “I’ve spent my life doing this job in order to have reasonable judgment of whether this or that clinical trial is suggestive of an ultimate market success.”

Among my research findings is a widespread general ignorance about global health finance among global public health practitioners and program officers. This is as true among global health experts in Geneva and Washington, DC, as it is in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Specialized financial knowledge is the social capital that gives purchase on capital, and not only some knowledge forms circulated only within elite financial circles, but some financial forms are secret by design (Morgenson 2014). Common financial terms—“dark pools,” “private equity,” “secret sauce,” “securities,” “liquidity”—speak not only to the specialized linguistics of finance but also to a “reversified” lexicon (Lanchester 2014:32) that hide meaning, even for the otherwise well educated.

The “global health industrial complex”—a term used during an interview of mine with a financial adviser to a major global health foundation—is part of a larger financial world that is financing even disastrous health events. As of February 2014, Ebola joined a multitude of diseases endemic in Sierra Leone. “Extreme mortality,” as it turns out, is a tradable commodity, one that is made into a financial instrument that has monetary value and is modeled as an investment (Krutov 2010). Extreme mortality insurance instruments, for example, are linked to disease, war, terrorism, or any event that may result in many people dying. Insurance companies have to pay out after such events, so in order to raise money for this, insurance companies sell shares to investors willing to buy and hold the risk on the chance that those monies will not be needed and they will share a profit (Hagstrom et al. 2013). “Cat bonds”—catastrophe bonds, in which a bond buyer from anywhere bets money on natural disasters anywhere not happening in a set time and place (see Lewis 2007)—are just one of many new financial instruments and attending actuaries that make the risk of devastating health crises and natural disasters profitable for some people.

International public health of the early twentieth century—global health’s precursor—bore the stamp and expectation of public transparency despite the strong influence of a private philanthropist, John D. Rockefeller. Committed to engaging in “public health activities according to a business model, [he] explicitly called for public health to be just that: in the public sphere” (Birn 2014:16). By mid-twentieth century, the predominant aid money was bilateral—government-to-government, typically taxpayer money. As a former US government employee in the late twentieth century spending some of the tax money, I witnessed firsthand a social order, however imperfect, that considered public accounting of money as obligation and measure of democratic process and civility. By the early twenty-first century, accounting and audit obligations for public funding agencies and aid recipients was well established.

With the recent rise of global health foundations and other private sources of global health funding, we have something else as well: private health financing that is by design hidden from public view and understanding. One of the new health problems of the twenty-first century for poor countries receiving aid is that global health financing is increasingly substituted for government funding and systems development. The shift to private money and its secret dealings makes public health finance harder for most people to see and understand.

For this article, I draw on data collected between 2013 and 2015 for research in which I examined how health data travel across humanitarian and commercial sectors in Sierra Leone, where I have worked intermittently since the mid-1980s. I also include data from recent interviews and conversations with people working in global finance and with global health foundations in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom and from research from cyber, digital sites where the machinations of global health finance are in evidence. These differently constituted sites, incommensurable in many ways, nonetheless enable analyses of global health as a worldwide social field within which health likelihoods are mutually constituted through relations of power (Erikson 2008).

The first-order findings from this research project are mostly in keeping with many fine ethnographic projects on quantification and enumeration (e.g., Adams, forthcoming; Biruk 2012; Briggs and Briggs 2004; Merry 2011), with some unique results on Sierra Leonean relations of power. In addition, an unexpected second-order of findings emerged from the research and lay the foundations for this article. Following the numbers led me to follow the money. The second-order research findings show that health data are used derivatively to make health value, as when plugged into mathematical equations, such as the Gordon Growth Model (Erikson, forthcoming).

In the global context of increasing enumeration and financialization, foreign investors “discovered” Sierra Leone as investment worthy before the 2014 Ebola outbreak. In 2012, Sierra Leone—51 years after independence from its colonizer, Britain; a decade after the end of an 11-year war; and 2 years before Ebola hit—was named the second “hottest” economy in the world. This meant that Sierra Leone was deemed the second most likely place for investors to make money, after Iraq (Bosslar 2012). This designation was based on World Bank economic growth projections of 19.5% (compared with the United States 2012 return and 2013 projection of 2.1% and 2.4%, respectively; World Bank 2012). Forbes ranked Sierra Leone 103rd on its 2013 Best Countries for Business list, ahead of 41 other countries including Argentina, Uganda, and Tanzania (Forbes 2013). I have been paying attention to Sierra Leone since the mid-1980s, and it was news that its economy

4. Thanks to Mark Davis for this language.

5. See Adams (forthcoming) for anthropological insights into the intensification of metrics and audit cultures in global health.
was drawing the attention of conventional business investors, not just bilateral development agencies, diamond magnates, and arms dealers.

Enthusiasm about new economic possibilities in Sierra Leone was not just in international circles. In 2013 and even as late as January 2014, 2 months before Ebola began to take hold, on the ground economic optimism in Freetown was palpable. In everyday conversation, I heard Sierra Leoneans quote their president: “Sierra Leone will be a middle-income country by 2035!” Some social sectors—telecommunications, water, electricity—were stabilizing. New wealth distinctions were obvious; late-model SUVs clogged Freetown streets. More people were spending less time on just surviving and more time, in Freetown at least, shopping. A new mall on Wilkinson Road carried designer furniture. In 2013, in the neighborhood where I lived, more regular electricity and well-stocked stores meant that many neighbors were beginning to buy more electrical appliances. Other sectors, such as health, though, were still fragmenting in the way described of Haiti (Schuller 2009). In a time of externally imposed government austerity, health services were proffered through a loose republic of NGOs, charities, and the government. Many Sierra Leoneans continued to look to the government to provide a stable health system of services, but that is not where the investment money and even bilateral aid was or is going. Today, a major health-sector focus is on “cash flow positive” returns.

Following the Money to Global Health Philanthropy

International health funding—that is, money for public health interventions not in one’s originating country of domestic residence—has a history that includes colonialism (Vaughan 1991), early twentieth-century philanthropy (Birn 2006), multi- and bilateral aid (Mosse 2013), intergovernmental organizations (Youde 2012), the rise of third-sector actors in health services (Schuller 2012), and, now, as taken up in this article, early twenty-first-century venture philanthropy. Philanthrocapitalism has arisen at a historical moment when faith in government systems is down in many places, and some nation-states and individuals have turned to private systems to get health needs met. In its most revered form, philanthrocapitalism has been characterized as private wealth advancing public good (Bishop and Green 2008). In its more reviled form, it is said to create an era of neocolonialism and a “charitable-industrial complex” (Buffett 2013). Birn (2014) takes issue with self-designated donors and their respective agendas: first, as with the Rockefeller Foundation’s promotion of international health for business advantage, and, now, as with the Gates Foundation’s promotion of global health as a series of investment opportunities. McGoey (2014) argues some middle ground, finding that the “new” philanthrocapitalism is not new, but notes that philanthrocapitalists are in denial about the myriad ways that governments are necessary and underwrite private financial gains.

At its core, philanthrocapitalism is a philosophy that advocates the use of business practices and metrics to solve problems. Following global government pullback and austerity strategies introduced in the 1970s and 1980s, health systems around the world have been significantly affected (Mills 2014; Pfeiffer and Chapman 2010), and some philanthropic organizations have moved to fill the void. One financial adviser told me, “Philanthropy has the potential to be cash flow positive, so we should be addressing global health with the machinery that allows positive cash flow, and therefore self-perpetuation and sustainability.” When I followed up to ask about what limits there might be to trickle-down economics in out of the way places like Sierra Leone, he said,

“If a space cannot be demonstrated to be sufficient cash flow positive [then] you are going to still need philanthropic maintenance over time. But no one wants philanthropists to have to step back in again every year to make decisions whether we go on and support it or not. If we make decisions that we won’t [continue to support health care], then we have done a terrible thing, so it’s about ongoing income generation.

“Philanthropic maintenance” in his mind is an improvement over foreign aid. It steps in for the government-to-government aid model in which “you give money and never see the money again,” he said. It provides funds for operational expenses until philanthropists no longer make it available.

Over the last two decades, there has been a significant rise in philanthropy, affecting investing and social entrepreneurialism along with promises about improved health, greater equity, significant social change, and remedying governments’ failings. Philanthrophic foundations are nonprofit entities with tax-free status. High-net-worth individuals set aside a part of their fortune (the principal endowment) from which they grow money to spend on foundation priorities. Money is usually “grown” (invested) in stocks, bonds, and other growth instruments, with the expectation that there will be a “return” (profit). A foundation, like the Clinton Foundation, and trusts, like the Wellcome Trust, usually aim to spend only the profit they make and keep the principal intact. In the case of Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (hereafter referred to as the Foundation or BMGF), the namesakes initially provided US$29 billion principal, which Warren Buffet has been “buffeting” with an additional several US$ billion a year. In 2013, the Foundation’s principal was just over US$41 billion (Foundation Center 2015), with about US$3–4 billion given away each year as grants, loans, and programming. The principal is held and invested for the Foundation by Michael Larson, the manager of Cascade Investment Company, and earns about 11% return a year (Das and Karmin 2014).6 “The endowment and the

6. Cascade’s investments for the Foundation have not been without controversy. The New York Times reported that the Foundation was giving money away to the American Cancer Society at the same time that it held bonds in the tobacco giant Philip Morris (Abelson 2000). The Los Angeles Times published an article, “Dark Cloud over Good Works of Gates
programmatic funds of almost every foundation I know are managed separately,” said a financial analyst working in New York City. “There is a firewall between foundation funds and foundation programs because there is always a risk that you would use [program] dollars in a way that served your improved return over in the [endowment], and that’s illegal, you can’t do that.”

Once the money is made from an endowment, foundations decide what they will do with the money. Historically, the emphasis has been on programming. The Rockefeller Foundation spent its money on program interventions to craft the institutionalization of international health and “create national public health departments” (Birn 2014:3; Manderson 2010). It used business philosophies to promote its geoeconomic agenda, which was decidedly pro-US business. In its very early years, the Gates Foundation operated similarly: the Foundation hired program staff to initiate and implement grant programs in keeping with Gates family priorities. It took several years before the Foundation introduced new instruments of philanthropic finance. In an interview, I was told that

five years ago, [the Foundation] wanted to see whether they could do investments in that space beyond development banks and program funding. . . . There is a whole big part of [global health] that has the potential to be cash flow positive. . . . Why haven’t investors been in this space already? Why aren’t they coming in? [The Foundation wondered] how are we going to get them in? Let’s get new investors with things like supersizing their return, taking on more risk for them, and everything else. . . . But the biggest thing was to provide investors the information about the space they didn’t know about. . . . Investors had not been investing in things like neglected diseases, or in the world’s poorest markets, markets where you assume you cannot get any good price because the people do not have enough money to pay for it. . . . This was the previous world of philanthropists and development banks, right? When you put money in you did not expect anything back.

“No expectation of financial return” has been—and is still—a prevailing sentiment for many health practitioners and health service professionals who tend to favor spending fixed amounts of money rather than continuously generating money. They are not thinking like investors.

Initially, the Foundation program side was not thinking like investors either. In its early years, programing was traditional, and money was given away to spend. This began to change after 2004 when the Foundation gave US$42.2 million to the University of California, Berkeley, a California biotechnology company, and to others to develop synthetic artemisinin, an antimalarial, using genetically modified yeast. The process to make the synthetic artemisinin also produced the biofuel ethanol (Grushkin 2012). About a year after going public, the company to which the Foundation gave grant money was valued at close to US$2 billion. Typically, investors celebrate when an initial US$42.2 million investment yields such a strong return on shares. People at the Foundation began to wonder, how might the Foundation create financial instruments that would generate return when companies they funded go public?

**Venture Capital in Global Health**

A primary argument driving the creation of new financial arrangements is that only money-making motivates people to “fix” global health problems. “Good investment” in global health has come to mean not only the European social welfare sense of a common good but also as a promising way to make money.7 In the last 10 years, there has been a growth in hybrid global health finance instruments that straddle the line between money given in full, as grants, and money given as loans, guarantees, or start-up financing. Incentives for investing in new and “risky” global health spaces include instruments like advance market commitments (AMCs), which pay after a company invests in, for example, a vaccine. It works like this. A company may calculate it needs to get US$200 million worth of sales to pay for vaccine research and development (R&D) expenses. A foundation makes a contractual AMC guarantee with the company: if vaccine sales are US$150 million but the company needs to make US$200 million to make R&D plus profit, the foundation buys up the remainder. Whatever is not purchased by the market the foundation tops up. Nation-states can use AMCs, too: a country such as Sierra Leone may agree to sell a vaccine at a percentage of cost, in keeping with what the majority of Sierra Leonians are able to pay. A foundation could write an AMC with Sierra Leone, agreeing to make up the difference. “The old way was that either the country or the foundation paid for the whole thing. Sometimes countries got the vaccines for free if the foundation paid! This way [a foundation] only takes a hit for the shortfall,” a former pharmaceutical manager explains.8


8. Critics argue that AMCs allow companies to inflate market prices and thwart the kind of competition that would lower prices (Scudellari 2011; Usher 2009).
The Foundation has moved much farther along the instrument spectrum in complexity—and obscurity—with investment instruments such as the Global Health Investment Fund (hereafter, the Fund or GHIF). On September 23, 2013, a press announcement from JPMorgan Chase appeared in the New York Times Business Day Markets section announcing that “a new investment fund structured by JPMorgan Chase & Co. (NYSE:JPM) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will, for the first time, allow individual and institutional investors the opportunity to finance late-stage global health technologies that have the potential to save millions of lives in low income countries” (JPMorgan Chase 2013).

The Global Health Investment Fund is an example of a new global form for financing to advance the development of drugs, vaccines, diagnostics and other interventions against diseases that disproportionately burden low-income countries. The Fund provides a novel opportunity to help bring about significant improvements in the treatment and prevention of disease, and in family planning, and the reduction of maternal and child mortality, along with the prospect of a net financial return for investors. (Global Health Investment Fund 2014b, italics mine)

GHIF has built-in an incentivizing bonus: the Foundation and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency guarantee up to 60% of any losses. Usually when an investor invests, they risk 100% loss. In this case, if the investment fails, they risk losing only 40% of what money they put up.

Described as the “first global health R&D investment fund,” it had initial investments of US$94 million from 11 partners,9 which included two foundations, two banks, three pharmaceutical companies, three government agencies, and a Norwegian insurance company, “the usual crowd,” one investor said. The Fund is managed not by Cascade but by Lion’s Head, a “specialized merchant bank based in London and Nairobi, focusing on emerging markets and Sub-Saharan Africa” (Global Health Investment Fund 2014b). A former pharmaceutical company manager told me,

The dirty little secret about the Fund is that it is really there to fund Phase III trials for a number of vaccines. You know in the past we had to do AMCs, but [the Fund] gets money for Phase III trials for companies that would not otherwise carry the product across to the finish line. [The Foundation] is hoping to bring people into it with the hopes of eventually not needing to be into it.

The Fund anticipates annual return on investments of 5%–7%, saving lives in the “developing world” while making money in the “developed world.” Chairman and CEO of JPMorgan Chase Jamie Dimon said, “The Global Health Investment Fund demonstrates the potential for innovative collaborations and thoughtful financial structures to mobilize new sources of capital for social challenges” (JPMorgan Chase 2013, italics mine).

The Fund is designed only for those who already have access to vast capital. Investor information is not available on the website (http://ghif.com/), and when I wrote an e-mail requesting it, I received the following reply (October 28 2013):

We have received guidance from the Fund’s lawyers with respect to admitting new investors into GHIF. At this point, the Fund is only allowed to admit accredited investors (under the SEC definitions: http://www.sec.gov/answers/accred.htm) and the minimum investment size is $250,000 USD. Before we can send out fund information, legislation asks that the Fund Managers verify accredited investors beforehand. If you would like to discuss the Fund, we would be happy to schedule a call with you.10

With neither the accreditation from the US Securities and Exchange Commission nor an extra $250,000, information about the Fund—both the Fund manager’s qualifications and what they were investing in—is obscured. Without the investor information, it remains difficult to know precisely what Lion’s Head’s track record is on investment and investment instruments. A recent video, however, features one of the Fund’s Lion’s Head managers advocating an “Ebola bond” following a February 2015 World Bank announcement about mechanisms to deal with future disease outbreaks (Bloomberg 2015).11

The existence of the Fund is not secret per se, though knowledge of the Fund is scant in humanitarian and global health circles.12 News of the Fund took a rather long time, 11 months, to make it to the Foundation website, which is a provocative trajectory relative to the Foundation’s otherwise typically prompt public relations announcements. The Fund information is buried in a small section of the website that explains that “program related investments” are “used as high impact tools to stimulate private-sector driven innovation, encourage market-driven efficiencies and attract external capital to priority initiatives” (BMGF 2014), thus signalling to high-


10. Accredited investors, according to US Security and Exchange Commission requirements, include banks, insurance companies, registered investment companies, business development companies, pension plans, a person with US$1 million net worth or annual income over US$200,000, and charitable organizations and corporations with assets exceeding US$5 million.


12. The September 2013 announcement I first saw is now hard to find in the New York Times archives. I printed the original story on November 2, 2013. See also Lepore (2015) for troubles with Internet archiving and information buried therein.
Logics at Odds: Tree-Hugging Program Officers and VC Investors

[I spent] years trying to understand the differences between the program officers’ mentality and the investor mentality. I was finding examples everywhere of how these are such separate cultures. (Financial adviser to global health foundations in 2014)

“Tree-hugging people who love bunnies” was how one investor caricatured program officers at the foundation where he was involved. Caricatures of VC (venture capital) investors emerged from program people as well: arrogant, impatient, cold hearted. Where individuals locate themselves and where they are located by others extends along a continuum; the end points are distinctly different ideological positions. At one end are redistributive economic types who tend to believe that the money that exists in the world should be more equitably shared and distributed. Wealthy people should give more and be taxed more to level the playing field. At the other extreme are accumulative economic types who tend to believe that goods and services are infinitely fungible and, with the right information and hutzpah, money can be generated virtually without end. The world is a level enough playing field already. Investors简单 harness a value creation machine whether it is in the pharmaceutical industry, medical technology industry or whatever,” as an investor wrote in an e-mail. These two loose confederations do not generally understand each other, and, according to one adviser, there are very few “hybrids,” that is, people able to see both “program grant” and “investor” worldviews. An investor said, “When a [program officer] gets a grant they celebrate... You know this by the oversize check they hold up. They sleep well that night, their job is done. They got the money. They don’t have to get the money. When I put my money on the line, I don’t sleep that night. That’s my money at risk!”

Brada’s (2011:292) description of global health practices as chronotopic—meaning that practices are indicative of particular temporalities and attendant moral claims—is prescient. How the social field of global health is made provides clues about what it is; global health finance practices provide additional clues about what it is becoming. Ideological tensions between investor types and program grant types point to significant demarcations in the social field of global health at this tenuous historical moment. An investor said, “I asked one of the program officers for an update. I wasn’t expecting a conventional quarterly report, but I also wasn’t prepared to just get a video of smiling kids. How do I get these people to understand that [a video] is not a progress report?”

Investor sensibilities of worthy global health investments are tied to ideas about how long health improvements versus health investments take, as in this interview.

**Financial Adviser.** In the start-up projects at the foundation I asked, “How often do you find the need to replace either the principal investigator or the CEOs or the CFOs? How often do you replace those people?” And they said, “Well, we don’t.” That is astounding to me because in [my other] start-ups within the first 5 years, we replaced the founder, the CEO, the CFO, and the CO.

**Susan Erikson.** On what grounds would you get rid of them?

**Financial Adviser.** Nonperformance.

**Susan Erikson.** So that means not making money?

**Financial Adviser.** Well, no, it just wasn’t moving quickly enough... it wasn’t getting through pre-clinicals [trials] quick enough.Program officers don’t know that they can remove someone if they are not happy. It sure as heck isn’t that they are 100% right, that they always have the right person in place, and that they kept the right people, and got rid of the wrong people.There are only a couple of concepts that the program folks are missing. You know, a VC investor has a portfolio, and you look for a portfolio effect, diversification. You are assuming that everything isn’t going to work. Some part of it is going to fail. If you succeed in three out of five VC investments, if three out of five of your companies survive and are able to give you a return, you are a hero. For a program officer to say I expect two out of five of my programs to survive... well, it’s upside down. If it is not going well, you cut your losses, you stop the bleeding.

Investors have the right to “cash out” their investment by transferring (selling) ownership and converting their investment to cash. Investors can decide to leave a place, program, project, or health initiative when they feel like it, taking their money and (health) goods with them. There are many reasons why investors pull out: they are not getting enough return, there are economic downturns, or they need to sell to buy another company, a house, or pay a large alimony settlement. Poor people and governments cannot leave, though, and poor governments are sometimes left more beleaguered than they were before private health initiatives withdraw than before they arrived (Mahajan 2014). Governments, hollowed out and impoverished after decades of market-driven health governance, remain to manage epidemics and everyday health challenges of malaria, tuberculosis, cholera, and HIV/AIDS. Old-style, tax-
Taking Stock in/of Global Health

Global health people, anthropologists, biologists and that sort of thing, they are not investors. They don’t have the perspective of investors. (Financial analyst in 2014)

Trading stocks remains an important mechanism for funding businesses and making money, but trade now operates with significant changes from the recent past. The floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) is no longer the international center of finance, as it has been for over a century. Caitlin Zaloom’s ethnography Out of the Pits (2006) chronicles the transition of global finance from the physical trading floors in London, Tokyo, and New York to decentralized, computerized networks throughout the world. In the United States, over 70% of the trading volume has moved from Wall Street to more than 80 alternative trading systems across the country. Along with the geographical transition away from New York City is the transition from face-to-face encounters in NYSE’s open pit to traders sitting in front of computer screens using digital data or overseeing the algorithms written to do the trading for them. Traders have been forced to remake themselves, and over 50% of the trades they used to make in person on the floor of the exchange are now made by computers. About 50% of the world’s financial trading is now conducted by computers rather than on old-style trading floors (Goldstein, Kumar, and Graves 2014).

Increasingly, financial instruments bypass regulatory oversight and operate at speeds “too fast to save” (Lin 2013:711). Computerized financial models with names such as Ambush and Nighthawk (Lewis 2014:114) instruct buy/sell transactions at a rate of thousands per second, which makes it difficult to track the commodities bought and sold. Black-boxed algorithms run on computers that trade at volumes of thousands of trades per second; the secrets and anonymity of what people make money on—even from themselves—has increased. “Cyborg finance” characterizes a “sea change” in how people make money (Lin 2013) when they are not engaged in wage labor. Old-style stock exchange temporality has been reconfigured by new “un[h]manned” instruments, enabling investors to speed and hide in cyberspace.

Unprecedented anonymity characterizes new financial instruments. “Dark pools”—closed, private trading exchanges, forums, or groups—now make up about 30% of the US trading volume, and “private equity funds”—money from individuals and institutions pooled privately for large stakes investments—are designed for money making hidden from the public. Reporting standards for these kinds of investments oblige investors in particular ways, but legally required reports are often legally due so long after the transaction as to be largely useless to interested others. Global health investors can claim financial “immunity” (Esposito 2011) by justifying any manner of money making in global health because it is for the public good. New forms of financing have brought new vulnerabilities and risks—health-sector fragmentation, market instability, and unsustainability—that beg for public debate.

Financing Exclusions: Producing Both Sovereign and Compromised Subjectivities

At a rural Sierra Leonean rest house in a northern district mining area, as I sat eating my breakfast on a hillside overlooking a river, the caretaker approached. He offered to be my secret familiar man (fall down man) for any gold mining investments I might want to make on the river below. He had already done this once for a Scottish woman, a nun volunteering at a nearby hospital, he said. She put up the money, so that would be my job, too, he proposed. “Just buy the shovels,” he said. “I will organize all your workers, I will be your fall down man, so if anything bad happens, it comes to me, not you. You get all the profit, just that you pay us.”

This proposed-to-be-secret division of labor, his and mine, is what Mbembe (1992) intimates in his commentary about how people are embedded by “postcolonial entanglements” that shape and are shaped by remappings of “modern state spaces and subject places” (Crichlow 2009:110). People may not be able to completely undo contemporary entanglements, but they are also not completely undone by them.

In Sierra Leone, postcolony secrets are not only over futures but also about entangled pasts. On a public bus I took from Kenema to Freetown in 2013, a middle-aged man stood up at the front of the bus and commandeered a vociferous debate about the advantages “white people” had taken in Sierra Leone. With an audience of about 30 people, the man—he was an excellent storyteller—recounted stories of postcolonial oppression in Sierra Leone: a dam built in the eastern district that only the expatriate Chinese engineers knew how to run; a hydroelectric turbine with a crack only Europeans know how to fix; mines that hold metals that “make computers,” about which white people will not tell Sierra Leoneans, keeping this knowledge to themselves, he said, so that they can make money. “Get all the white people out of Sierra Leone,” he argued. The debate continued, some villagers arguing in favor of the advantages outsiders brought to Sierra Leone, until the bus driver turned off the air conditioning and turned up the volume of the bus speakers so loudly that no one could hear anything save Nigerian pop music.

There was a time when secrets in Sierra Leone, as reported by anthropologists (Bellman 1981; Little 1949), applied only to indigenous secret making, secret keeping, and secret forsaking, not the secrets kept from Sierra Leoneans. Sierra Leone is home to secret societies and various forms of secret knowledge production and transmission that often concurrently fortified and diminished ethnic, colonial, and postcolonial democratic governance structures. Studies of secrecy are relevant still (Ferme 1999, 2001), and secrets were stra-
tically deployed during and after the 1991–2002 war (Bolten 2012; Hoffman 2011; Shepler 2014). Sophisticated levels and nuances to secret making and secret knowing in Sierra Leone continue, often at great odds with “right to know on demand” entitlements prevailing in other parts of the world. One young Sierra Leone health professional explained to me that some secrets are better not to know. She was brought up to believe that there are social domains that are dangerous to know, that one needs specialized knowledge and training to be able to comprehend and to manage them. One does not stay in social stages of “not knowing” the whole of one’s life, but with training and maturity social secrets are revealed. Social “knowing” is one of the perceived advantages of being an elder. Exclusion is produced through secrets, but the exclusion is temporary, a usual part of becoming agentive over time.

In Sierra Leone today, financial secrets are taken up by a global class (Darkly 1994:350–351) of high-net-worth investors. Finance is not the sole purview of any one national group; wealthy Sierra Leoneans use fidom men and women for investments as well. Wealthy Sierra Leonean investors know secrets of investing. Subject places relative to secret knowledge are remapped by degrees; differential positionalties, temporalities, and geographies of secrets on the ground are revealed to be in relation to global networks of class position, social locations, and hierarchies of social control, their residualities and vicissitudes. It is an incomplete untethering of colonial class positions. In postconflict Sierra Leone, access to the literal and figurative codes that signify information, machines, and money-making potential is marked and guarded through audit and account.13 Differently positioned people are called to account in different ways. Obligations to reveal, and to whom, have become widespread markers of social difference, mostly maintaining but also sometimes challenging colonial divides along nationalistic lines. Figuring out “Secrets from whom?” is important precisely because stakes are incommensurable. There are global investment and speculation instruments in which particular bodies do not matter and are invisible, serving as backdrops to making money.

Financial instruments are not secret from everyone, just most people most of the time. In this way, they operate in the world like secrets, creating insiders able to cultivate particular advantage and outsiders excluded from influence. Because global financial knowledge and specialized expertise are more challenging to acquire in out of the way places, there are patterns to being the excluded outsider; many poor people and poor nation-states are participating in world systems but as compromised financial subjects. Even the simplest financial instruments—bank checks—are only available to people with checking accounts, about 50% of adults worldwide (Demirguc-Kunt and Klapper 2012:2). Here and there, there may be appearances of fair access, until one bumps up against eligibility requirements such as minimum investments of US$250,000.

If health futures look at all like the present, new financial instruments will bring new drugs and technologies to market, not always because they work to improve health outcomes better than other available means but rather because they can make money. With them, new risks emerge (Dumit 2012; Peterson 2014; Rajan 2012). Investments produce expectations of return. Big investments produce expectations of big return. Financial instruments produce shareholders with legal rights that are likely to supersede some health needs of the less well endowed.

“Intervening at the sites of exclusionary production” (Partridge 2012:133) would require, at the very least, new forms of public and civil democratic processes of disclosure. Around the world, there have been some strides toward greater transparency and democratizing access to information. Britain’s 2010 Open Data policy (Ruppert 2011) and India’s 2005 Right to Information Act (Sundaram 2009), while imperfect, have had some far-reaching populist implications and have been championed as new democratic forms of public information sharing. But “sunshine” policies focus on government transparency, not private moneys. Private money still operates with impunity in secret. Ethically questionable clandestine financial dealings, especially like those of cat bonds and the financialization of extreme mortality, make money off the lives of people largely unable to see, take measure of, or contest new financial practices. Other investment instruments may operate ethically under the same shroud, but how would one even know?

In global health finance, we can see new stakes and new excesses of capitalism as the investment sector strengthens its claims on global health “good(s).” Five decades into an era of government pullback, an increasing number of private financial machinations, including those of philanthropic foundations, affect the health and welfare of millions of people. New notions of investment and return are claimed by people “in the know,” excluding billions of people who know little or nothing about the new forms of global health finance. Newly created social orders maintain the upper hand through multiple layers of exclusion. In contemporary world systems, secrets keep people in their places. What a missed opportunity for global health philanthropists, who, with the weight of both financial and social capital, could disrupt rather than collude with investment instruments that relegate a large percentage of the world’s people to compromised subject positions.

Postscript

As this article goes to press, some of the financing mechanisms presented here are being “scaled” and actively promoted by the World Bank as the means for attending to global health funding shortfalls.” In a turn further away

from redistributive, tax-based health funding, financial instruments such as Ebola bonds look increasingly likely to finance future pandemic response. Global health futures, it appears, are poised to become even more deeply shaped by private instruments of high finance.

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S316

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Secrecy’s Softwares
by Sarah Nuttall and Achille Mbembe

In this paper, we reflect on the many deaths as well as the new lives of secrecy in our political and cultural age. We consider through five rubrics (statehood, security, finance, urbanity, and selfhood) the complicated and constantly shifting scales of relation between secrecy, transparency, conspiracy, and intimacy. We explore the paradox of publics and states asking for both transparency and security in an age of heightened suspicion. Moreover, financial processes, often referred to as “offshoring,” give new forms and content to particular sets of secret relations. Secrets, it seems, have become more open and more motile than we have understood them to be. We briefly consider, in the fourth part of this paper, how aspects of the offshore play out in relation to urban landscapes, drawing on examples from Johannesburg. Finally, we consider the shifting vocabularies of intimacy in relation to the death of the secret as we know it. New struggles over the means and meanings of secrecy and transparency as the lines between these terms shift in substantial ways are the central subject of this essay.

There was a time when secrecy was understood to be, if not an essential basis for society and a common good worth protecting, at least a legitimate dimension of government. The intentional concealment of information by actors in officially defined, established, and recorded ways was a rational instrument for achieving laudable goals. Just as with deception, opacity, cunning, and dissimulation, so, too, restricting politically relevant knowledge to the smallest possible group was a widely accepted technique of sustaining and expanding power. Secrecy was particularly crucial when making decisions that affected the security and defense of the state, the enforcement of economic advantages against potential competitors, the protection of internal peace, and the repression of sedition, rebellion, or treason.

Gathering, processing, and exploiting secret information was particularly essential in running bureaucracies or in carrying out wars and diplomacy. Converting raw information into specialized knowledge to be integrated into the decision-making process in turn required complex administrative and control structures. A set of rules and regulations governed what was to be kept secret and how, who could be entrusted with secrets, and what sanctions applied to secrecy breaches (see Bonilla 2012:283–301). Secret communication being at the heart of keeping secrets, cryptography (the science of codes and ciphers) and steganography (hidden writing or invisible ink) became an integral dimension of the science of “reading between the lines” (see Kahn 1996; Wilmore 2002:89–96).

And yet, the assumption that whatever is not public is a priori suspicious has been a consistent dimension of modern theories of the political. In this context, secrecy was understood to open a discretionary space of exception from the rule of law. Because the secrets of the state cannot easily be bound by law, official secrecy has been associated with the modern bureaucratic state’s attempts at covering up the misdeeds and infamies of power. Furthermore, too much secrecy in the structure of rule and the exercise of power could easily lead, the argument has been, to political paranoia rather than public debate (see Dean 2002). In fact, the risk of such slippage was almost inevitable. From the moment it was understood that the ultimate moment of power is the moment of survival, power as survival necessarily consisted in interpreting threats correctly and in forestalling death and creating it through the slaying of enemies, rivals, and troublemakers—all of which required secrecy and the enforcement of silence (Canetti 1981).

Paranoia, suspicion, and mistrust notwithstanding, various doctrines of raison d’état argued that secrecy skirted the law or ignored it entirely, precisely so as to allow it to be effective (see Horn 2011). It was merely a technique through which sovereignty was exercised, morality bracketed, and the state strengthened (Schmitt 2014). Leo Strauss in particular once thought that secrecy protected the vulgar public from harsh truths that would endanger them, leading to a loss of faith in the simple beliefs on which society rested and in the laws that enforced its coherence and stability. He recognized that from a conventional security point of view, secrecy potentially served to protect and stabilize the state. A state was not a state without an entire realm of mystery and secrecy;

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without the possibility, if necessary, of some kind of crime; without skeletons in a closet (see Kantorowicz 1965; Koselleck 1988). Its very survival hinged on the existence of intelligence services, classified information, diplomatic discretion, espionage, covert operations, and surveillance.

In this sense secrecy was not necessarily the opposite of transparency and publicity but its supplement—both its condition and its threat. Disclosure either as a result of infiltration, double agency, or espionage constituted ipso facto an irresponsible breach of security or, worse, a betrayal. The history of political or official secrecy, especially in modern democracies, has therefore been closely associated with that of power and mistrust. If the secrets of the state have very often been dealt with in the form of the scandal, this is partly because they have been usually understood to be tantamount to crimes of the state. They could hardly be legitimized were they to be subjected to public scrutiny (see Meineke 1957).

And yet, there is another tradition that does not necessarily equate the laws of secrecy and those of power, lawlessness, and exception. For Simmel (1906), secrecy was a social form with rules and limits. For secrets to exist, people needed to engage in practices of concealment and of resistance (Simmel was alert to the fact that secret societies, for example, were a response to authoritarian regimes). Such practices involved a rich array of symbolic and ritualistic work. Peculiar bonds with others could be produced by shared secrets (Simmel 1906:441–498). Indeed, full knowledge being unattainable and complete ignorance undesirable, secrecy consisted not in a lie but in a kind of knowledge that, having been set apart, could be concealed, shared among a restricted public, or simply withheld or preserved. The secret could be known at the cost of whatever bonds or oaths that concealed it in the first place being broken. Contrary to other kinds of knowledge or information, the secret lent itself to restrictions. In this sense, secrecy intimated silence, the refusal to answer questions.

But even when, to use Canetti’s formulation, the most profound secret was that which was “enacted within the body,” this hardly meant that such a secret was absolute. A secret was never a secret as such before it had been told. It was only the act of disclosure or confession that constituted any particular piece of the continuum of experience as a “secret” (see Gibert 2007). In effect, what would be the point of a secret that no one knew or that no one shared? As Dave Boothroyd (2011) argues, “If no one knows it, it is not really a secret at all, and for this thing to be regarded as a secret in the first place, I must have already shared it with someone, or be able to share it—at the very least with myself” (47).

Secrecy, Security, and Transparency

Such considerations of the value of secrets and the conditions of their disclosure might still have some purchase in the world we live in. And yet, the manner in which secrecy and disclosure are coded in the political and technoculture of our times has been shifting significantly. Key to this shift has been the democratization of the means of publicity. This has meant an increasing attachment to and political call for transparency—an emphasis, that is, on the right to know. Democratic politics has been constructed “through a primary opposition between what is hidden and what is revealed” (Dean 2002:16). It has been long assumed that as a prerequisite for his or her participation in the public sphere, the citizen must enjoy a right to personal privacy and a right to know (Florini 2002:15–28). Now, more than ever, because the secret designates that which has been deliberately withheld or has not yet been disclosed, it has been taken to breed a system of distrust.

On the other hand, the last decade and a half has witnessed a considerable expansion of state secrecy and surveillance. Moreover, the interplay between secrecy, surveillance, and self-surveillance is increasingly ubiquitous. Digital technologies in particular have made possible the worldwide adoption of pervasive government surveillance measures while the conduct of a new generation of wars and countless counterinsurrectionary operations have paved the way for an increasing demand for secrecy in matters of detention, imprisonment, trials, or extralegal killing (see Asaro 2013; Vukov and Sheller 2013). To this should be added the monitoring of e-mail and financial transactions, the extensive invocation of executive privilege, the recording and storage of private bodily information in databases, and the demand for access to commercial databanks such as telephone companies, airlines, or libraries (Rosen 2001:14).

Although the equation of the secret and privacy can only be partial, the contemporary extension of the public eye into private life is unparalleled. Governments’ capacity to intervene into the bodies and personal spheres of their citizens has increased. Body imaging at airports, searching computer records and consumption patterns, and face recognition have all become usual. In line with this new form of governmentality, the self is increasingly disaggregated into data components (DNA, facial structure, fingerprint records, retina scans) and dissolved into systems of inscription and information transfer (Kittler 1990). For purposes of extensive surveillance, the body is reduced to its biological and social traces (Bach 2010:287–302). Further on, we consider what these interventions into the bodily and the personal mean for our understanding of the conditions of intimacy itself. Whether in the process, digital technologies have made the subjects to be governed by the state more legible remains to be seen. Whether states have been able to close the gap between code and body through new legal and technological developments in the realm of identification is doubtful. If anything, the interplay of secrecy, transparency, and conspiracy is far from complete, and ambiguity remains the rule (see Marcus 1999).

The expansion of state secrecy and surveillance has, as we said, gone hand in hand with the rise of a culture of transparency and a reconfiguration of the symbiotic relation be-
between secrecy, transparency, and conspiracy (see West and Sanders 2003). The ascent of the rhetoric of transparency has in turn led to an increase in the leaking of classified documents in a broader cultural climate that still accords much faith to various practices of revelation (of concealed realities). Furthermore, there has been a proliferation of the forms of media through which social, political, and commercial secrets are transacted. Secrets travel across different media or coexist simultaneously in various mediated states as never before. Contemporary practices of concealment, whether formal or informal, are by nature fragmented. They include secrets that are to remain secret, those that are hidden but in plain sight, and those that are meant to be spectacularly revealed only to be denied (Bratich 2006; Costa and Grey 2014). Today’s public is increasingly, some scholars suggest, “unified in and constituted by its bid to uncover secrets” (Birschall 2011:143).

Such reconfigurations of the secret suggest a changing set of relations between the private and the public, the known and the unknown, the visible and the occult, and the verbal and the horizontal (see Bystrom and Nuttall 2013; Comaroff and Comaroff 1999). Consider that surveillance and tracking today are as much about looking across in a horizontal manner as they are about cutting through, by means of a vertical, top-down aerial and, if necessary, subterranean gaze. Google Earth, a mass media assemblage with strictly military origins, “‘mashes up’ global satellite imagery, geo-positioning coordinates, digital cartography, geolocated data, three-dimensional GIS, architectural drawings, street-level imagery, and other social media, data, and software. These are configured together as an ‘always-on,’ interactive datascape—a flexible and multiscaled portal through which urban life can be enacted, mediated and experienced” (see Graham and Hewitt 2012:130).

Information technologies have narrowed down the space of the secret and reduced it to its bare minimum, prompting some observers to declare “the death of the secret” as such. As financial collapse hit the Greek state in 2009, Graham and Hewitt (2012) observe, “the Government tried to locate wealthy Athenians guilty of tax avoidance by using GE to find their swimming pools. . . . Meanwhile, many social and political movements have mobilized GE and satellite imagery in their efforts to expose war crimes and state violence in places as diverse as Darfur, Zimbabwe, Burma and Sri Lanka” (135).

The shift to a vertical, top-down aerial gaze has not only been mobilized for purposes of surveillance and of unveiling secrets. It has also become central to aerial targeting strategies aimed at neutralizing secret or public threats (see Adey, Whitehead, and Williams 2011). In the future, new technoscientific complexes made up of microdrones; swarms of half-manufactured, half-organic cyborgian insects; and myriads of robotic devices will permanently permeate and systematically unveil human and nonhuman environments and the secrets associated with them. In the new calculus of secrecy—enmity and security, systematic exposure (rather than transparency) and vertical destruction—will become the familiar (see Dillow 2010).

Secrecy and Offshoring

These ways of seeing secrets and of rendering the earth transparent must inform any discussion of secrecy, its deaths and present lives. Here, though, we turn to what questions of seeing, unveiling, rendering opaque or transparent might look like in relation to the contemporary life of money. Money, the financial life of the planet, is being propelled by complex new instruments with considerable power to enhance opacity and amplify risk. This propulsion is giving form and content to particular sets of secret relations, opening new trails into new spaces, suggesting that secrets have become more versatile than we once thought them to be (see Easterling 2014). A set of unstable, shifting, and eminently fragile tangles, secrets and “information” have become the mutating substance of financial life, perhaps even secrecy’s most potent infrastructure.

As Randy Martin argues, today finance is “more deeply integrated into everyday life and more expansively global than ever before. Striking is the interplay between computerized technology, digital and institutional innovations and software coding” (Martin 2013:85; see also Cliff et al. 2010). What used to be containable in its effect because it was known is increasingly less knowable because it is highly volatile and dispersed. The proliferation of new forms of automated trading technologies is perhaps one of the hallmarks of financialization. But so has been the use of executing algorithms in high-frequency trading—a form of trading that relies to a great extent on high-speed order processing (MacKenzie 2011). Indeed, the dynamics of financial markets have been fundamentally changed by the fact that “algorithms are being coded as software whereby the algorithms’ operations can be executed by computers” (Arnoldi 2015:4). In the process, intellectual labor may not have shifted entirely from humans to information processing technologies. Yet what counts as “information,” the terms of access to “information,” human engagement with “information,” and the interplay between “information” and secrets has taken an entirely new form. When powerful computers can mine, frame, and process information in higher quantities and at a higher frequency and speed than the human brain can, then what counts as secret is calculated in centiseconds and a few ticks and tricks. The opposite of transparency in this context is no longer secrecy but manipulation. But what is manipulation when humans can trick algorithms and computerized algorithms can outsmart humans (Introna 2011)?

The call for transparency is a call to disclose what is hidden—to dissolve the difference between known and unknown. A secret, by contrast, is always devised in the language of future disclosure. According to the logic of the secret, nothing is final. Opacity, and therefore uncertainty, is the rule. And yet opacity is not an obstacle to controlled action. It might generate risks, but it is also a harbinger of possibility. In this sense, the contemporary logic of secrecy...
mirrors the social logics of the derivative. Secrets nowadays are hidden in plain sight. On the screen as well as offshore, they are mostly about speed and liquidity and human engagement with prolific technologies. One such technology is “the offshore,” and one key locus for understanding the offshore is the movement of finance capital around the globe, “out to sea” and back again (Urry 2014). Another technology is “the zone.” Yet another is the “exurban enclave.”

In its variety of forms, the offshore is the result of states using their sovereignty, or their right to write the law, “often deliberately, to create special territorial or juridical enclaves characterized by a reduction in regulations, including taxation” (Palan 1998:626). In their nature and function, the zone, the exurban enclave, and the offshore constitute different assemblages. Common to these, nevertheless, is their designation of special regulatory spaces. These spaces are visible, juridical, intangible, or merely fictional. They mark off territories in which the state’s regulation and taxation are fully or partially withheld. As environments of legalized secrecy, the offshore in particular does not require disclosure of ownership information for corporations, trusts, and other legal entities. A secrecy jurisdiction, it constitutes an attractive conduit for illicit cross-border financial flows or the harboring of “shadow” or dirty money (see Christensen 2012). Thanks to its opaque structures, it reroutes global flows through the use of artificial persons and transactions (Picciotto 1999). Such transactions cover areas as diverse as banking, insurance and other financial activities, gambling, pornography, telecommunications, ship registration, aircraft leasing, multicurrency dealings, or online merchandising (see Picciotto 1999). These activities—and the movement of money on which they depend—have produced what John Urry (2014) calls a “rich global class” made up of high-net-worth individuals and families, the owners/managers of major corporations and professional service companies. They use, he shows, “covert companies, bank accounts and complex structures not only to own mansions, yachts, art masterpieces and various assets, but also to gain tax advantages and anonymity not available to average citizens” (Urry 2014:2).

Most corporations and wealthy people locate their income and wealth offshore in secrecy jurisdictions. Secrecy jurisdictions are not necessarily countries or states, although some are in their own right. Others are dependencies of nation-states. Yet others are protectorates. All can nevertheless create laws that can have effect outside their own territories. Such laws and regulations are primarily for the benefit and use of those individuals or entities not resident in their geographical domain. The deliberate veil of secrecy thus created is legally backed in such a way as to ensure that those from outside using that jurisdiction and these regulations cannot be identified to be doing so (see Murphy 2009).

Although registered in such places, such companies are in fact elsewhere for their operational purposes. They float over and around the locations that are used to facilitate their existence (Murphy 2009). These companies, writes Urry (2014), are “built like Russian dolls, incorporating multiple layers of secrecy and concealment” (2). But offshoring “is not limited to issues of money and taxation—many other processes are offshore and rendered wholly or partly secret—manufacturing, pleasure, energy, waste, carbon dioxide emissions, and security. All of these are to some degree offshored and situated in secret locations. As they go offshore they are linked together in various chains of concealment” (Urry 2014:4). As Shaxson (2011) more generally argues, “offshore is how the world of power now works” (7). An offshore class and an offshore world are produced in the process by which regulations are avoided and secrets kept. The offshore, just like the zone (the export zone), has become a key location for understanding the effect of economic globalization insofar as the latter is buttressed by a new topography of concealment and secrecy. “Secrecy is re-scaled so as to enable the full deployment of the contemporary logics of financialization and abstraction” (Urry 2014:7).

In order to account for the articulation of these logics with those of secrecy, we might need to return, Urry suggests, to Georg Simmel, who a century ago argued that all social relationships between people rested “upon the precondition that they know something about each other” (Simmel 1906:441). It is especially the money economy that generated new levels of secrecy, or “consciously willed concealment.” The money economy, for Simmel, escalates the scale and effect of transactions that can be made and kept secret. Also, the power of money makes it possible to buy the silence of others so as to keep secrets.

Simmel (1906) presciently emphasized that these concealments are more likely and significant in “dealings with foreign money” and provisions “to conceal the financial operations of corporations” (440). Secret transactions are central to a money economy, especially in the case of dealings involving foreign money and corporations. So for Simmel, writes Urry (2014), “secrecy combines concealment and revelation. It sets boundaries and offers temptation to break through those barriers with gossip or confessions. The development of the money economy escalates new forms of concealment and invisibility” (17).

Secrecy and Urban Encapsulation

A result of the new connections between money, law, and power, space-time segregation between the very wealthy (most of whom have always lived in their own spaces) and the rest has intensified (see Parenti 2000; Pow 2011). As Bauman emphasizes, one element of contemporary stratification is the power to “exit.” Power involves, he says, “scape, slippage, elision and avoidance, the effective rejection of any territorial confinement and the possibility of escape from potential regulation and scandal into ’sheer inaccessibility’” (Bauman 2000:11). There are many examples of such “exitability” for elites through outsourcing or offshoring activities of corporations.

Affluence has not only produced novel forms of urban spatial partitioning (see Graham and Mavin 2001). Social
disaffiliation, splitting, and secession have become the lingua franca of affluent life (see Atkinson and Blandy 2009). This new metageography has gone hand in hand with the increasing fascination with the lifestyles of the rich and famous and with celebrity culture in general. Celebrities in particular straddle the public and the private (see Drake and Miah 2010). The more the upper social fractions and the most famous have retreated into roaming enclaves, island residences, gated compounds, and floating spaces, the more their private lives and secrets have become the object of fascination (Hay and Muller 2012). Physical disconnection has not necessarily led to privacy. If anything, the rise of enclaves of the very wealthy and their self-imposed isolation and sequestration has only led to a further blurring of the lines between secrecy, publicity, and transparency.

Typical of the global era of disentanglement is the fantasy of the offshore—the offshore economy, but also its double, the offshore city. Contemporary global capital is haunted by the fantasy of the offshore in two ways: first, in the sense that profit must be able to move easily from place to place; and second, in the sense that in moving constantly and easily from place to place, profit must be able to free itself from the entanglements required in each place. It must stay as far as possible from communities who might make claims on it. The “offshore” is therefore an evocative metaphor of secrecy as placelessness. It is a geographic location for sure. But more importantly, it is a set of sociomaterial practices that brings into being or connects spaces where the production of profit can evade or minimize scrutiny and contestation. The offshore city is therefore a boundary-making city as well as a city of secrets. It is not simply a city with its own infrastructures—its own labor regimes, its own forms of expertise, its own rules, its own technologies—it is a city that requires massive logistical and infrastructural investment. It is a city that aims at distancing itself from local conditions. More importantly, it is the architectural manifestation of an economy in which profit is disentangled from the place in which extraction happens. Offshore cities are created in such a way as to not seep into the crevices of their environment. They are meant to operate on the basis of internal self-containment.

An early manifestation of the offshore, and one that is growing space in African cities, is the gated community. Johannesburg’s gated complexes, for example, are being exported to Luanda, Lagos, and other African cities, replicating forms of middle-class life that become exchangeable between these cities, modular reproductions of postsuburban living. Johannesburg’s townhouse complexes or gated communities do not operate as suburbs; there is no municipal relationship or relation with the state; they are a landscape, as Ivor Chipkin (2013) has observed, “more uncanny than neo-liberal” (245). If these urban constellations preview a postsuburban landscape both here and elsewhere, in the South African context they are also, Chipkin (2013) points out, sites of postapartheid community—even when these forms of community are not “easily recognizable from the promise of non-racialism” (245).

While the strict set of rules and the lack of social interaction in these complexes would seem to make them unhappy and bleak places to live, interviews done by Public Affairs Research Institute researchers in Johannesburg show that when black residents compare them with their convivial places of origin, the distinction they draw is not between community and alienation or between warmth and coldness. The strict, regulatory environment makes the estate a peaceful, quiet, safe place to live. The comparison drawn again and again, Chipkin and others show, is between community and privacy: “Unlike apartheid law, which often lacked the character of law, the body corporate creates spaces of legality—people subject themselves to a regime of rules that are seen to have coherence and logic” (Chipkin 2013:240). In a context of high unemployment in which those with a regular income face constant financial demands for support, black and white middle-class South Africans enter into what Chipkin (2013) calls “a common world in which racial and ethnic solidarities have not weakened but which are associated with new patterns of sociability” (244).

In their work on security parks as heterotopic extremities of the gated community or offshore city, Derek Hook and Michele Vrdoljak (2001) write that such places typically combine the luxury amenities of a high-class hotel with paramilitary surveillance and protection technology in an effort to separate off exclusive and desirable living areas from the city at large. They draw on Lindsay Brenner’s (1999) work to show that such security parks in Johannesburg are in many ways the outcome of the postapartheid transformation of local government, a transformation that resulted in a lacuna in bureaucratic procedures of planning, leaving the control of development to the entrepreneur who quickly identified the security park as an important growth market for the building industry. As Hook and Vrdoljak (2001) write, “virtually impenetrable to the outsider, highly stylized and effectively cut off from the rest of the socio-economic and geographical reality of Johannesburg, the security park represents an increasing privatization of potentially public activity, and an increasing independence and autonomy from the general civic life of the city” (67). A privatized form of “separate development,” they suggest, such living spaces make for security-riddled fortresses of luxury and detachment. Despite this, they argue, security parks appear to have been successful in consolidating a sense of safety, security, and commonality within their confines, drawing again on Brenner’s (1999) intimation when she speaks of the fact that security-park dwellers now “leave their gates open” and let their children “play in the streets” (25). The new politics of space are predicated not so much on categorical racial prohibitions as on highly individualized and specified rights of admission (Hook and Vrdoljak 2001:68).

Intimacy and Its Publics

In the final section of this essay, we consider in more detail the question of intimacy and how we might read it in a contemporary vein. What, in short, has happened to intimacy
under the kinds of conditions we have explained above? We turn here to brief examples from South African art to consider a complexly patterned movement between exposure and concealment in postapartheid culture. For many artists, this has meant drawing on racial and gendered identities and histories without sacrificing opacity or promising full access to the self. It has meant, too, the drawing of erotic life into the public, making sex ordinary, and tracing occluded routes of desire.

In recent work by South African artist Mary Sibande (2013), purple roots, tentacles, snakes, and suspended nonhuman entities emerge from the inside of a woman’s body onto the exterior. In the process of spilling, they draw a complex landscape of incoherence, multiplicity, and anguish. The interior exteriorizes itself. Yet the dream of Sibande’s semiautobiographical figure, wrestling with transfiguration, is to exit herself, and finally not to be like—to not resemble—her mother and grandmother, both domestic servants under racial rule. This involves loss, but more particularly, the giving birth to a person who is not known. Says Sibande (2013), “I wanted to make something else that I had never seen before. . . . I could change her story. . . . the characters are trying to move away from themselves. . . . I want to move away from the past” (42). She recalls the complex sense of connection she has between her huge spilling female sculptural figures and a story told to her by her grandfather: “When he was young he was seriously injured and had to walk for kilometers with his intestines hanging out . . . holding his insides” (Sibande 2013:42). In several recent works, Sibande’s figure of self can be seen cupping her hands across her stomach attempting to hold in what is pouring out.

Then, commenting recently on exhibiting her early, now famous, work Melancholia for the first time, Penny Siopis has said, “It was like crying in public” (2008:10). It is a redolent phrase that speaks also to her Shame series: in over a hundred very small paintings, body parts and fleshy part-object pool, stain, and congeal into personal, transpersonal, and/or erotic connections between the girl body and a stranger. Shame and fear spill out; liquids fall down the surface of the body. Shame, says Siopis, is “a state of disgrace—a feeling of losing one’s self in full view of others” (2008:47). A girl’s body lies flat on a surface, unmodulated by depth or weight. She has given everything, yet something more is being taken. A hand does things to her. She is being closed off. Her head is bruised by a palette of unevenness. An outline in red deliberately cutting things to her. She is being closed off. Her head is bruised by a surface, unmodulated by depth or weight. She has given ev-

Writers and critics Njabulo Ndebele (1996) associates intimacy with having a home in the first place. In his essay “A Home for Intimacy,” he invokes the demolition of homes, forced removals to strange places, forms of temporary, makeshift living shaped by loss and a desperate need to regain something in the lives of black South Africans. Can there be any society without private lives, “without homes where individuals can flourish through histories of intimacy?” he asks, and he concludes, “Public intimacies do need private intimacies” (Ndebele 1996:34).

South Africa after Apartheid has been characterized by the pouring out of what used to be concealed or repressed: autobiographies, blogs, documentaries, radio talk shows, lurid exposés, love dramas and sex scandals, dramas of the body in public. What formerly remained confined to the bedroom and the kitchen has exploded into public culture (Bystrom and Nuttall 2013). At the same time, though, there is, as we have seen, a privatization of what was previously a state project. Gated communities, secured shopping districts, and security walls, for example, attest to the paradoxes of segregation and racialization. Johannesburg architect Sarah Calburn (Calburn and Mbembe 2010) writes that “it is clear that we still cannot see each other. We still do not know each other fifteen years after liberation . . . [we are] both hiding and hidden from each other in the franchised car-bound landscape, where the ‘public’ is characterized as criminal simply because access is denied to everything except the leftover space.” “We move continually,” she suggests, “between interior spaces, eyes wide shut. These are the spaces into which we usher, unctuously, our visitors” (15). Under these conditions, why not conceive of our cities as large interiors in which we are all welcome, she asks: “An urban space previously composed of impenetrable surfaces would become instead a string of openings or lounges. An affective substrate for an alternative urban vision, yielding or forcing the closed city open” (Calburn and Mbembe 2010:16).

Twenty years after apartheid, lives in South Africa are lived pragmatically in ways both intimate and radically divided. Through a process of singularization, new publics are created out of necessity as out of shared tastes, desires, and objects. Visions of the now that open into a democratic project can well be found in the productive possibilities of intimate exposure as against the secrecy, repression, and segregation of
apartheid and its new manifestations. Intimacy is necessary for anchoring public life, connecting people across social rifts, and sustaining a democratic nationhood. Public intimacies do need private intimacies, even with those whom one does not necessarily feel comfortable.

Yet to evoke intimacy as a public act, one needs to pay attention to major shifts in the conditions of our age. What was once considered shameful or indecent is no longer so. The self, including its modes of secrecy, is increasingly enmeshed with things as a kind of prosthetics. We live increasingly, as this essay has shown, under conditions of almost total visibility: it is not simply that there are more apparatuses of surveillance and tracking but also an increase in willing self-exposure. More and more, too, one enters the realm of the intimate as a prescribed figure, with the image as a surrogate. Surrogate intimacies emerge everywhere. If intimacy has been indexed via two broad questions—of embodiment and of desire—we now live inside an era increasingly characterized by disembodiment. Visual images no longer seem to need any reference; technologies of the image are said to have eviscerated the real and to have liquidated reference. The technologies constituting subjectivity and intimacy shift radically, and in the shift to digitality, the embodied human being is gradually displaced by more abstract regimes of code and different standards of subjectivity and vision.

Conclusion

In this essay, we have pursued five contemporary rubrics of secrecy in order to try to trace an emerging logic of the secret as it both disappears and reemerges. What has for a long time been shaped as a debate across disciplines in relation to the public and the private needs to be refined and reconsidered in relation to emerging logics of secrecy, transparency, conspiracy, and intimacy. This needs to be done by considering new forms of state secrecy and surveillance alongside calls for transparency as a form of democratic politics in a twenty-first-century culture shaped by conspiratorial politics, offshoring financial circuits, and urban enclaving in the face of growing inequality and climate change as well as newly mediated and digitalized cultures and political practices that index the conditions of intimacy, privacy, masking, frailty, closeness, and fusion of selves as increasingly “prescribed,” disembodied, and coded even as they appear to place selfhood increasingly in public.

The secret dies in its older manifestations in conditions of greater visibility, and at the same time new visibilities produce new paradoxes around (in)visibility and open new routes to invisibility, secret places and lives, and forms of hiding. How we read the terrains of the intimate, of the private and its publics, must be placed in close conversations and analysis with state formations, technologies of the urban, capitalist, and military logics, or we will miss their contemporary purchase and political implication—and imbrication. Disclosure, exposure, and display, as they take shape as ideas and politics in humanities work, speak to, riff off, and are shaped by some of the discourse and practices explored above in ways that are themselves just becoming visible, yielding their secrets to us, as they shape who we are becoming. Secrecy is not dead. The paradox is that this new age of secrecy is unfolding at a time when the world has the means to know more than ever before: the means for openness, for transparency. And yet opacity seems to be expanding even as the invocation and metaphors of secrecy’s death proliferate. If anything, secrecy’s software is what is changing.

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