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Editorial Foreword

MIXED FEELINGS Humans are blessed and cursed with the ability to read each other's minds. The predictability of our social lives depends on the fact that we know what our friends are thinking, why our enemies hate us, and how even perfect strangers might feel about what we do. Our guesses can be fantastically wrong at times, but the more serious problem is that our capacity for empathy, so highly developed compared to other primates, does not inevitably bring us closer to each other. Just as often, it is used to manipulate, abuse, and deceive. This malign potential was probably vital to the evolution of human cooperative behaviors, a claim that (if it is correct) is bound to strike you as obvious and disturbing. The essays that fill this issue are caught up in the rough blend of mistreatment and fellow feeling that, everywhere it seems, is the stuff of human history.

Nils Bubandt and **Rane Willerslev** take us straight to the dark side of empathy, which they explore in contexts that, because they are geographically remote from each other, suggest a deep uniformity in how humans use identification to exploit difference. Moving between the tricky camouflage of Siberian moose hunters and the sly forgeries and misinformation that animate Muslim/Christian violence in Indonesia, Bubandt and Willerslev show how the best predators must think like their prey. Mimicry is at the heart of empathy, of magic, and, the authors conclude, of human sociality itself.

LAW IN THE LOOKING GLASS Mimesis also lies at the heart of law. We must be consistent with the law, in keeping with it, lest we provoke its predatory character. To the extent that people conform to the law, it is a crucial tool for distinguishing those who belong from those who are legally alien, and this is why law is central to any discussion of nation-states, colonial systems, or expansive imperial hierarchies. Those who rule must justify their elevated status, and they do so by looking into the mirror of the law, which they have sized and polished. Reflected on its surface is not only their own governing power, but also evidence that others can imitate it, and that some refuse to. Each variant provokes a judgmental response: admiration for the talented protégé, preference for one's own image, disgust at the sight of the non-compliant. The mirror reflects the challenge of mimesis. More troubling is the realization that rival polities and subject populations have their own legal mirrors. What happens when opponents resemble each other closely in these alternative reflections, or when differences are so exaggerated that legal pluralism necessitates judicial disguise?

Rebecca Gould and **Ricardo Roque** consider cases in which proper interpretations of the law stand or fall on a careful assessment of law's mimetic qualities. Working with modern Daghestani and Russian materials, Gould argues that both Muslim jurists and Russian colonial administrators privileged rational forms of legal reasoning and sought to undermine tribal custom and traditional religious authority. This odd likeness between a modern Christian imperial power and a Caucasus Muslim legal culture that drew heavily on the teachings of early modern Yemeni scholars, Gould claims, should prompt us to rethink what modernity can mean if we see it only as a concept that separates Western from Muslim societies. For Roque, who analyzes colonial East Timor in the years between 1860 and 1910, legal mimesis required the adoption of local customary law by Portuguese administrators. More than British-style indirect rule, the Portuguese hold on East Timor was secured by accommodation to the protocols and expectations of the island's indigenous elites, whose "backwardness" demanded tactical conversion to their legal norms. Yet, as Roque suggests, the Portuguese courts in this remote colony had been pursuing their tactical mimesis for centuries by the time late nineteenth-century administrators officially renovated the policy. Whether the local customs being mimicked were Timorese, Portuguese, or an opportunistic merger of the two, was hard to determine. Perhaps this mimetic ambiguity is the best evidence that the new policy was successful.

THE IM/MORAL FRONTIER It is not a coincidence that Daghestan and East Timor are portrayed here as remote areas, as frontiers of Russian and Portuguese expansion. Because they mark the outer reaches of law and order, frontiers everywhere are moralized as zones in which mimesis and empathy (with the political center) are most likely to fail. Strange things happen on the frontier: massacres, displacements, resource theft, insurgencies, counterinsurgencies, and cultural innovations and deviations of all kinds. At the same time, the frontier is essential to metropolitan society, which defines itself through its ability to incorporate marginal populations, domesticate them, and impose on them its languages and identities. Failed communication between frontier and heartland produces, with regularity, im/moral spaces and events.

Carwil Bjork-James and **James Slotta** escort us to the Columbian and Canadian margins, where im/morality slips in and out of view. For Bjork-James, this process is global, though it materializes in the Columbian Llanos, where indigenous people were massacred by settlers in 1967 and by the military in 1970. These killings were typical of frontier-making projects around the world, in which indigenous people are brutalized, hunted down, and murdered. Possessing the frontier, Bjork-James contends, requires that a special form of im/morality and exploitation prevail there. In Slotta's essay, by contrast, the state seeks to normalize its relations with marginal populations, and it does so by attempting to establish communications with them in the idiom of recognition and democratic ideals. Slotta examines how the Canadian government used a truth and reconciliation format to acknowledge its unjust displacement of Inuit populations in Arctic Quebec. This encounter, he argues, opens up new lines of communication between indigenous communities and other citizens of the state, a project that cultivates empathy by including Inuit in a multicultural forum where, at least in theory, all Canadian voices can be heard.

THE UNQUIET DEAD Although the frontier is a space associated with danger and death, it would be wrong to say that humans consider death itself a margin beyond which all attempts at communication with the living will fail. The dead and the living converse in diverse ways—in dreams, memories, spiritual visitations, and funeral rites—and these interactions can be amplified by incomplete or flawed transitions between life and death. The body that is not properly buried; the person who is missing but not proven to be dead; the mutilated or exposed corpse: each might refuse to go quietly, lingering instead among the living, haunting them, calling out to them, or dabbling in their affairs. Again, problems of empathy emerge. How does one deal with the unquiet dead?

Sarah Wagner addresses this question in relation to physical remains, while **Martha Lincoln** and **Bruce Lincoln** focus more directly on spirits. Following the often complex routes traveled by the bodies, and the body parts, of U.S. military personnel who are Missing In Action (MIA) in Vietnam, Wagner examines the immense obligations and powers these bodies activate among the living. Not only do the bodies of MIAs become gifts, debts, and commodities, they also provide a material medium in which the Vietnamese and U.S. governments can interact on behalf of the dead, their kin, and the communities and individuals in Vietnam who help U.S. delegations retrieve the remains of MIAs. For Lincoln and Lincoln, the unquiet dead are ghosts that trouble the living. Moving away from motifs of figurative haunting that predominate in the social sciences and humanities, where ghosts are rife but seldom real, Lincoln and Lincoln diagnose the aftermath of a massacre in a Vietnamese village, where Khmer Rouge soldiers killed three thousand people in 1978. The ghosts of these victims haunt the village in ways immediate and intensely felt by the living. Figurative and actual haunting, the authors argue, are different but related processes, and each has unique effects on memory, place-making, and our practical attachments to the dead and their demands.

SUBALTERN AS A SECOND LANGUAGE If contemporary theorists are prepared to admit that the dead can speak, it has been much harder for them to decide if subalterns (even the living ones) have the same capacity. The best question was never “can subalterns speak?”—yes, they can—but what do subalterns want to say, and can they say it in formats of their own choosing?

Often, people marked as subaltern communicate in media they do not control, or as representatives of institutions they did not create. In this respect, subalterns are like most people, but for those keen to hear subaltern voices, these placements can produce odd accents. The subaltern seems always to be speaking a second language, but is this a case of mimicry, or is it yet another case of failed empathy, a refusal to imagine subaltern voices as anything other than oppositional, muted, or as inverted idioms of privilege?

Harri Englund and **Sarah A. Radcliffe** and **Andrew J. Webb** come at these questions in different ways. Englund explores vernacular, government-sponsored newspapers in colonial Zambia, while Radcliffe and Webb interview state employees of Chile's multicultural educational programs. For Englund, the vernacular press represented a Zambian world that was not dominated by nationalist, anti-colonial sentiments. Here, subalterns (if they indeed saw themselves as such) could develop and express their own provincial identities, despite the fact that the newspapers they read and wrote for were ultimately controlled by colonial authorities. In fact, the vernacular press was arguably less prone to mimicry than the anti-colonial vanguard, whose intellectual firepower was rooted in European models of nationalism and Third World development. Likewise, Radcliffe and Webb deal with indigenous actors who have been completely incorporated by the state as technocrats, a status commonly associated with co-optation and the defanging of subaltern political agendas. Yet in their conversations with state employees, Radcliffe and Webb find that individuals categorized as subalterns, who are mostly Mapuche, retain a distinctively skeptical, critical stance in relation to the official pluralism of the Chilean state, and their views are shared by many co-workers who are not Mapuche. If they speak subaltern as a second language, they are teaching it to others, and no accent is decidedly foreign. Mimesis is everywhere; mimicry is in the eye of the beholder.