

Editors' note, or An open-ended collective discussion (or digression)

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EDITORIAL COLLECTIVE Parinaz Adib, Julien Cossette, Kathe Gray, Andrea Vitopoulos

COVER PHOTOGRAPHY Parinaz Adib of works by unknown graffiti artists



PHOTO COURTESY: JULIEN COSSETTE

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The writing tries not only to accept the risk of sprouting deviant, but also to invite it. Take joy in your digressions. Because that is where the unexpected arises. That is the experimental aspect. If you know where you will end up when you begin, nothing has happened in the meantime.

— Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual* (2002)

JULIEN When I reflect back on the past year, Michael Hardt's (2011) treatment of a political concept of love comes to mind. Love, he says, must be transformative. If you are actively in love, you are in the process of becoming something else with someone, with something. It is, no doubt, an act of risk. You drop some of your attachments and points of references, and you enter an experiment in difference. No one knows where it will lead you. Things drag you in one direction or another. Somehow, this notion of an impromptu love resonates with me. So much has happened since last summer. Through unexpected turns and twists, and without a concrete plan or finalized idea, a thought materialized into something tangible, for a moment.

ANDREA To disaggregate—to deconstruct multiple layers of what has characterized a year of weaving between thoughts, desires, daydreams (some might even say delusions) of what we experienced and envisioned for this journal is something I cannot do. I can, however, speak in instances, in (as you say) sometimes tangible moments, fleeting glimmers of something that both eluded and illuminated the hours spent behind computer screens, in a small conference room, or thinking to myself “what will come of this?” Throughout this process I have felt spurts of love, the comforts of trust, and belly-aching, boot-shaking moments of fear, all of which have harmonized, collided, and colluded with one another to shape what we imagined was attainable. However, I believe that underlying this (mis)adventure is a commitment to unearthing new possibilities within anthropology, to encourage students and devout academics alike to see beyond the boundaries that we seek to subvert but so often end up reinforcing.

PARINAZ In every step taken towards growth, whether it is brought by time, by coincidence, by will and effort, or the sheer necessity of livelihood, we are engaged in constant moments of fear and panic—if we are blessed. We have spoken of love, and trust and of dreamlike thoughts ... A child perhaps feels the tingling sensation of power and will within its growing and meek muscles to push and try to stand even if the ground promises a painful fall. The grasping fingers, the tottering core, the trying feet reach for an assurance, for an arm mirroring the same hope. It is in trust, belief, and encouragement that we, as ever-growing children, might begin to think of ourselves as gifted with the unimaginable potential and capacity. While we seek to be the host of those moments of fear and growth for students through this collective process, my own experience of involvement with this journal began, and was shaped by the same nature: fear, trust, and growth.

JULIEN I like that you mention trust, it speaks to me. Not as a hard concept, but as this potentializing thing that resonates with intensity in your stomach. Sometimes, even the best ideas cannot flourish without the ‘right’ ingredients. Long ago, the seeds of a dream were planted in the messy field of my imagination. These things do not grow in a vacuum, though. Through the warm and worldly exposures to experiences and encounters (the heat of Athens, as much as a love for anthropology and sense of hope in its creative potential), they slowly germinated. But the sprouts were not yet ready to crack the surface and contend with the vagaries of this open world. So years passed, until this feeling arose, when it finally felt like they had found something, someone they could become with, love with, growing into and onto the unknown with the moderate confidence of a thing suddenly made possible. Perhaps what I am trying to say is that I had this indescribable sensation, this long-awaited, long dreamt about, smooth yet uncanny feeling that you would be interested by this project, that we could make it work, and more importantly that we could all dive, blindfolded, into the unknown with this actualizing sensation, loaded yet still so open and undefined, we can maybe call, trust. But just for a moment, because it is so much more than that.

ANDREA As I flow back and forth between these moments, between love, trust, and fear, I remember the moment you dared to invite us to dream with you. At first, I felt an unruly

rush of excitement as a new opportunity exposed itself to me, naked and unashamed of guiding my thoughts towards potentialities. Then came apprehension, a sister, a brother of fear that slowly seeps into uncontrolled moments of excitement. I could imagine myself trying to create, to build something but did not want that something to be expected or familiar. However, looking into the face of the unknown I noticed it was fractured, flawed, and dependent upon how I decided to perceive of the possible. "Alright," I thought, "let's speak and live in hypotheticals. Let's take each other's hands and drift towards something unique or something that is perfectly ordinary. At least we're deciding to drift at all."

JULIEN Uncertainty can be frightening, can't it? But also empowering. Letting yourself drift, as you say. Drifting towards the unknown, staying in the present and the potentialities as you transition to the next step. That's where you can find hope, Massumi (2003) says. Not in the optimism or pessimism that derive from a foreseen future, sometimes so discouraging and nerve-wrecking as we experienced it, but in the "margin of manoeuvrability" (2003:211) that opens up an immanent space for experimentation and potentialities.

We had no referents, only a naive idea: "let's make a student journal." We did not know any better than the next step. What it would be like, what would be required to get there, we had no idea. Or maybe, on the contrary, we were paddling (or struggling not to drown) into an overwhelming sea of possibilities reflecting our desires and hopes for the future(s) of anthropology in this world, and also what we thought as pressing challenges. The corporatization of universities. Wild rumors, seeping in through the cracks of everyday talk at the university, that some academic programs are facing precarious and contingent futures. Disciplinary rites of passages, pre-determined textual forms of representation, and the revealing running gag that "one must secure tenure first" (a real joke, isn't it?).

PARINAZ Uncertainty, the unknown, sat next to us in every meeting. Occupying a seat, its murmurs both excited and terrified us at times. But it was the disposed, the 'given' which, with its tired mask, stared at us and demanded us to challenge it: that, was what had brought us together.

The persisting hierarchy in academia, the commodification of not only knowledge but also students, faculty and university members, the absence of green thoughts and papers created by students, the disengaged routines of academic practices are perhaps in some ways, as Taussig suggests, a public secret: "that which is generally known, but cannot be articulated" (1999:5). However, this journal, us, and all included in the process of its creation still persist behind that mask, and use its secrets to exist, and pursue our dreams. The secret then, must remain in order to facilitate our beliefs and anthropological aspirations, as well as the destructive, yet creative opportunities. I would like to think that this creation, *Contingent Horizons*, is a single match lit towards the burning "funeral pyre" (Taussig 1999:2), in unmasking and deconstructing part of what exists, to unveil the beauty. The beauty—the intellect of students, as well as the eagerness of all for an engaged education—that is being nurtured behind the very mask that hides it.

Students, professors, experiences, and places have been inspirations for the creation of this journal. For me, the inspiration was characterized by the momentary eye glimmers in excited supports, in feeling the joys and discomforts of anthropological fieldwork, and

finally in glimpses into my peer's imaginations. Minds that were informed by guidances, as well as subjective and contingent points of view, that created wondrous landscapes and horizons in its aspirational distance. I wanted that landscape to have visitors, and I hoped for that beauty to shed its format of a saved file, or a graded and forgotten paper. Every scape—whether sea, land, or else—is living and in need of breath. Even if it is still gardened with budded branches.

ANDREA Grappling with the desire to embrace deviations within anthropology and the politics of enacting these transformations has, at times, morphed me into a severe and cynical critic. However, over the course of this long and often exacting journey with *Contingent Horizons* I have realized that being critical also means being open and willing to see things differently no matter how intoxicated we are with our own ideals, beliefs, and passions. I see the contributors to this journal as composed of those who, each to their own extent, remind us of where we are situated in anthropology today and simultaneously, invite us to disentangle ourselves from the rigidities of the discipline. Most importantly, I see this volume as a dialogue, an ebb and flow between the ideas of our colleagues and the complexities of the design of academia. As we move back and forth between the often overwhelming pull of the tide and the comforts of the loyal and sturdy shores, the feeling of uncertainty permeates every movement, every thought, and every sigh. The risk of losing control of this precarious synchronicity, these sanctioned checks and balances that compose the everyday negotiations of thought in the classroom and on paper can be terrifying. However, what I have found is that there is also value in willing yourself to bite back the fear and push yourself to move beyond what is comfortable and assured.

I welcome the deluge and I hope you do too.

Andrea Vitopoulos

Julien Cossette

Parinaz Adib

TORONTO, APRIL 19, 2014

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