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Editors' Introduction

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College of Liberal Arts

Department of Anthropology



Editors' Introduction

by Smita Lahiri and Robin Sheriff

May, 2017

The sixth issue of *Spectrum* comes to you in a new format, one designed for easier online reading as well as for the display of vivid illustrations—including photographs taken by our contributors as well as images licensed for re-use. The first two papers in this issue speak directly to prominent historical events that began unfolding in 2016. Jacqueline Gilbert's paper is the culmination of an IROP-supported research project on responses to water shortages among urban Cubans. Gilbert's travel to Havana and Santiago was made possible by a decision by the Obama administration to restore diplomatic relations with Cuba after a half-century's hiatus. Gilbert arrived for a nine-week stint of fieldwork only a few months after a historic presidential visit to the island the first since 1928. During her time in Cuba, Gilbert established friendships with several key scholars and blazed a path for future UNH students to follow. Her paper examines chronic water shortages from the perspective of ordinary residents in city settings. She sees both advantages and disadvantages to Cuba's centralized system of water management, and documents both creatively adaptive as well as inefficient responses to an unpredictable water supply. Gilbert's focus on water in Cuba follows an earlier research trip to Bolivia (under the auspices of the School for International Training), where she studied the "Water Wars" of Cochabamba. Gilbert's contribution to *Spectrum* thus demonstrates her developing expertise in what is sure to be a central global preoccupation in coming decades.

Grace Dietz's paper concerns another historic event related to water—Native resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline, an event much in the news through most of 2016. As she followed weekly developments via social media, Dietz, like most Americans, assumed that Native American "water protectors" (*not* "protestors") were enacting an unprecedented level of political resistance. As she dug deeper, she came to understand that the Lakota Sioux—the group at the center of the protest—had staged a number of markedly similar responses to state and corporate oppression dating back well over a century and a half. Dietz' *Spectrum* paper traces the outlines of this hidden history of resistance and raises the question of why her own generation remains largely in the dark about the political vitality of the Native peoples of the Americas.

Rachel Parr's paper emerges out of Robin Sheriff's course, "The Anthropology of Dreams and Dreaming." After noting the long-standing interest taken by anthropologists in not only the content of dreams among the people they study but also in dream-sharing practices, Parr wondered if the topic had even been studied in U.S. culture. After developing an IRB proposal, she interviewed members of her own network on the topic. "Dream talk," she discovered, has a fairly prominent place in college culture, a fact she attributes to the ongoing need for phatic communication on tight-knit, residential campuses. Along the way, we get a snapshot of contemporary college life, including the perspectives students hold about the relationships among gender identity, emotional intimacy, and dream-sharing practices.

The final two papers in this issue deal in very different ways with two of archaeology's perennial concerns: probing silences in historical and material records, and speaking up for the protection and preservation of the past. Emily Mierswa's paper is the culmination of her capstone course with Eleanor Harrison-Buck on "The Archaeology of Power and Identity." Here, Mierswa takes issue with the masculinist obsessions with raiding and warfare that continue to dominate the popular image of Vikings. Viking

women are thus doubly marginalized: not only are they overlooked, but their activities are wrongly presumed to be confined to the domestic realm and hence devalued. Thankfully, as Mierswa shows, this is less true in scholarly circles. In recent years, feminist-inspired scholars have discovered a class of intricately-worked, multifunctional “engendered female artifacts” unearthed from Viking women’s graves. These objects of adornment appear to have served as weights and measures in trade, indicating Viking women’s hitherto unrecognized economic roles. Mierswa ends with a call for more work in Viking gender archaeology, in the hope that future generations are exposed to a new version of the Viking mystique that more fully reflects female contribution to the culture.

This makes for a nice segue to Rebecca Philibert’s profile of Sarah Parcek, an archaeologist who has advanced the frontiers of the field through her embrace of cutting-edge technology. Parcek is renowned for successfully adapting advanced satellite imagery to the cost-effective identification of excavation sites, as well as for the study of areas rendered inaccessible by political turmoil in the Middle East. Philibert’s profile of the “space archaeologist” grew out of an assignment for Marieka Brouwer-Burg’s course, “Core Concepts in Anthropology.” Fittingly, her essay traces the evolution of Parcak’s scholarly agenda while also lucidly explicating the expanding range of uses to which Parcek has put satellite imaging. In particular, Philibert shows the convergence methodology and advocacy in Parcak’s most recent work, which employs satellite imaging to monitor a troubling and large-scale uptick in looting at Egypt’s archaeological sites.

While each paper stands on its own, they are connected by a number of cross-cutting themes in what is perhaps a testament to the nature of the Anthropology Department (and UNH more broadly) as a community in conversation. We’ve already noted the recurrence across some of these papers of the themes of water-related struggle, of visibility and invisibility, and of breaching the silence of the past. Another motif worth mentioning is the repurposing of objects for creative social uses: reading across these papers, we move from improvised water vessels to Viking women’s “work wear,” to students’ uses of cell phones to circulate their dream lives to social intimates, and to the scholarly appropriation of a technology first developed under military auspices. For sharing their work and making possible these and other conversations, we thank this issue’s contributors as well as the professor who nurtured and nominated their papers. We also want to extend our appreciation to Carolyn Stolzenburg and Susan Dumais for administrative assistance and Web publishing support. Finally, we close with the hope that our readers, particularly those who are students, will pick up these conversations and start new ones in the months ahead. It’s not too early to start thinking of *Spectrum*’s next issue!

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