Editorial

European Ethnology, Europeanist Anthropology and Beyond

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As I settle down to put together this issue, it occurs to me that the development of *AJEC* in its various phases displays an uncanny correspondence with my personal professional trajectory so far. Its inception and first volume happened during my postdoctoral fellowship when I was happy to place one of my first (coauthored) academic articles in its inaugural issue. The remainder of *AJEC*'s first approximate decade coincides with my time as a lecturer. At the time I took up my first chair, the format of *AJEC* changed, eventually turning it, for a while, into a Yearbook rather than a journal. And in the year I moved to my second chair, I was invited to take on the editorship of *AJEC*, which would now be published by Berghahn and returning to the format of two issues per year. This correspondence raises a curious question: What significant turning point for the journal will correspond with my own as I am becoming an emeritus professor?

Taking Stock

While I will continue as editor, it is appropriate at this juncture to reflect briefly on the past six years or so, on what has worked and what has not. A major innovation was the introduction of a General Articles section in addition to the traditional Thematic Focus of each issue. This was accompanied with a radical change in the peer review process. When *AJEC* was originally established, it followed the practice of peer review common in much of Continental Europe at that time, where reviewing was undertaken mainly by the editors, who would draw on an international board for support as appropriate. Under the new regime, all contributions are first assessed for their suitability and 'fit' with the journal's aims. This can be a tricky matter, as *AJEC* is committed to crossing disciplinary boundaries. Manuscripts that pass this test are then scrutinised by at least two referees, one of whom is usually a member of the editorial board, the other is drawn from a growing pool of

external assessors with specific expertise on the subject. As increasing work pressures become a universal feature in a postliberalist, over-administered academia, it has proved a major challenge to bring the turnaround time for that initial assessment of manuscripts down to about three months while relying on the voluntary labour of reviewers who already have their hands full with the day job, but thanks to understanding colleagues (and a tight regime of reminders) manuscripts rarely take longer than that now. The review process was explained in detail in the previous editorial. For unsolicited manuscripts, the rejection rate at the moment stands at about 65 per cent, although we endeavour to refer essays to alternative outlets wherever reasonably possible; for thematic issues, the rate is much lower, reflecting the fact that contributions are usually invited following a prior review process. Most thematic issues are overseen by a guest editor drawn from among the membership of the editorial board, in collaboration with an external guest editor. On balance, the peer review process has been working smoothly, and with a growing pool of experts it is likely to improve further.

One practice that worked well for *AJEC* at an earlier stage – the annual meetings of the board at which new issues were discussed face-to-face – we have not been able to maintain; although some of us have been attending the same conferences, it has rarely been the same few, and even when most of us happened to be in one place, as at last year’s congress of the American Anthropological Association in Montreal, it proved difficult to arrange a meeting. Electronic communications have worked well for us, but the idea of restructuring the board into a smaller ‘executive board’ supported by a larger ‘advisory board’ has also been aired once or twice; it certainly deserves further consideration: watch this space!

In my first editorial, for the 2008 volume, I announced that *AJEC* would now carry book reviews and short progress reports on major research programmes. The latter have not quite materialised, probably because electronic media, such as internet mailing and discussion lists, have largely taken over that function from journals, as anyone keeping an eye on the lively discussions on, for example, the History & Theory list will confirm. The book reviews have fared much better, and requests for review copies are received frequently; this suggests, at least, that colleagues still appreciate receiving free copies of the printed word, even if the frequency of such requests for books has not yet been matched by the frequency of returned reviews. *AJEC* will continue to carry book reviews, and an updated list of available titles can be

found at the back of this issue. The programme reports will be replaced in future by short discussion pieces; the idea is not to highlight – as many other journals usefully do – currently topical issues, but to develop a longer-term thread debating matters that go to the very heart of European ethnology and Europeanist anthropology.

Cues to some of these may be found in the contributions to the Thematic Focus of the present issue, which look at and beyond the disciplinary nexus addressed by *AJEC*. The opening sequence comprises brief reflections on *AJEC*, offered by the presidents of the major scholarly associations concerned with anthropological studies of, on and in Europe: the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA), the Society for the Anthropology of Europe (SAE), and the Société Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore (SIEF). As the president of the latter, I offer some perspectives on *AJEC* @ 21 as a crossroads of disciplinary and geographical concerns. Susana Narotzky and Deborah Reed-Danahay pick up on some of these points in their reflections, noting especially the journal's foci on post-communist transformation, research from Central and Eastern Europe, and methodology – the latter being very much a correlate of *AJEC*'s frontier position, at once in-between and beyond disciplines.

The brief opening sequence is followed by contributions from *AJEC*'s founding editors, Ina-Maria Greverus and Christian Giordano. Greverus reflects on the initial motivation for and subsequent trajectory of the journal, while Giordano, drawing on his personal experience, considers the academic fertility of the peculiar love-hate relationship between anthropology and history. George Marcus, associated with *AJEC* in various capacities from very early on, discusses the *Writing Culture* debate, which had an indelible impact on the ethos of *AJEC*, and raises questions about the ethnographic foundations of our pursuits. In my own essay, I examine some of the boundaries and frontiers of key termini in ethno-anthropological studies of Europe (and beyond) as they – and their meanings – are shifting in the twenty-first century. Concluding the thematic section is an obituary for Elisabeth Katschnig-Fasch, who over many years played a leading role in shaping the ethnographic endeavour that motivates *AJEC*.

The essays in the General Articles section reflect the disciplinary connections on which the anthropological study of cultural expressions in and of Europe is based: they range from geography to sociology, to political science – and beyond. Disciplinary 'silos', once a key means of securing funding,

posts and career paths in academia, are increasingly crumbling, but nobody is quite sure (however loudly they might protest the opposite) what the ‘silos’ might be replaced by. Whatever it may turn out to be, it is likely to be far less durable than those late eighteenth century inventions called academic disciplines appeared to be. Babies and bath water come to mind – as do pipers and tunes – when those who delight in smashing up the Ivory Towers wield the broad brushes of privatisation to sweep away the debris. Here is one big issue, not just but especially from an anthropological perspective: How do we maintain the integrity of inquiry in the face of a growing fashion for flux that inevitably will bring about the disintegration of all structure and function – and whose interests will be served if we fail to do so? This is not a question of resistance to change, but of the pace and direction of change – of who will control these, and to what end. Arguably, this is a political and not an academic issue. But it is without doubt an anthropological one; our answer(s) will have a significant bearing for European cultures of the future – however we may define ‘culture’ and its grammatical derivatives – and therefore should be of concern for readers of *AJEC*.