Tübingen — Vienna — Münster

Introducing Elisabeth Timm

The email with which Ullrich Kockel informed me of being chosen to join first him and then Patrick Laviolette in the editorship of *AJEC* was one of very good news in the last weeks of the summer semester here. I really feel honoured by this decision and I am looking forward very much to being part of this outstanding journal team.

Following Ullrich's invitation, I would like to give some brief information on my background: I completed an MA in Empirical Cultural Studies and Social Anthropology at Tübingen University in 1995. In my MA thesis, which has been published in the series of the Tübingen Ludwig-Uhland-Institut für Empirische Kulturwissenschaft, I documented and analysed the local and regional cultures of remembrance concerning a shooting of hostages in a German town in April 1945 and its relation to the Nazi past. I also received my PhD in 2001 from Tübingen University. For this doctoral thesis, I did an ethnographic study on behaviour training (etiquette training) in Germany, including a comparison of public and commercial seminars in this field. This research was inspired by the Tübingen school of Empirische Kulturwissenschaft, which first enlarged traditional Volkskunde with sociological perspectives from the Frankfurt School and later developed this further with insights from Gramscian Marxism, from Bourdieu's critique of structuralist approaches and from feminist gender studies. Additionally, since 1992, I worked as an archivist and in local museums, curated exhibitions and carried out several projects on contentious cultural heritage concerning the local history of the Nazi period in Germany, among them projects that combined research on the basis of archival sources and oral history data with compensation payments for former foreign forced labourers that several German municipalities paid in the early 2000s.

In 2004, I went to the University of Vienna where I worked until 2008 as a university assistant and until 2011 as an assistant professor at the Institute of European Ethnology. There I took up approaches from the new kinship studies from social anthropology and from the new history of kinship and began my research on popular genealogy in Austria as it emerged there since the nineteenth century. For this project I received a research fellowship at the Internationales

Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften (winter term 2009/2019). Additionally, I continued projects on public history and public anthropology, among them as principal investigator of a WWTF-funded project in the art(s)&sciences-programme (*Doing kinship with pictures and objects: A laboratory for private and public practices of art*) with an experimental exhibition in the Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art in Vienna in 2011/2012 (*Familienmacher: Vom Festhalten, Verbinden und Loswerden*).

In 2011 I was appointed as a full professor at Westfälische Wilhelms-University Münster and became the successor to Prof. Dr Ruth-Elisabeth Mohrmann at the Seminar for Folklore Studies/European Ethnology. Here I am continuing my research on historical and contemporary forms of family and kinship, recently as the principal investigator of the research association 'The flow of things or private property? A house and its objects between family life, resource management, and museum' (funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), in the programme 'Die Sprache der Objekte: Materielle Kultur im Kontext gesellschaftlicher Entwicklungen'). This research association combines several projects on the materiality, the everyday culture and the political economy of the single-family home in West Germany (www.hausfragen.net).

In Münster I also began research concerning the history of German Volkskunde. This research is inspired by approaches from the history and philosophy of science, as well as by the effort to re-situate classical folklore collections from the broad history of the anthropological disciplines between museums, universities and amateur enthusiasm since the late nineteenth century.

This research has so far included, for example, a case study on the foundation of the Chair for Volkskunde at the University of Münster in 1952/1954 (with its complex history between *völkisch* ideologies and regionalism since the interwar period), and a case study on the scientific history of a uterus votive offering, one of the iconic things around which the discipline of *Volkskunde* in Austria and Germany emerged. In my view, a reconsideration of classical subjects and collections of the huge activities of folklorists since the nineteenth century is not only part of the mixed legacy of anthropology but one of the most fascinating and promising potentials of our discipline. In Münster we are in the fortunate situation of having a productive neighbourhood with the *Volkskundliche Kommission für Westfalen*, a scientific association attached to a non-university research institute run by the Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe (an association of municipalities),

which was founded in 1928 and which has huge folklore collections, including the Westphalian data of the surveys for the German 'Atlas der Volkskunde'. Concerning interdisciplinary horizons, since 2013 I have been following the vivid field of Kulturwissenschaften as a joint editor (together with Karin Harrasser from Kunstuniversität Linz, Austria) of the *Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften*.

Concerning Ina-Maria Greverus's statement in the first issue of the then *Anthropological Journal on European Cultures* in 1990, I think the overall goal of re-situating anthropological disciplines – which have emerged within the academic split between philosophy, (natural) sciences, social sciences and humanities from the nineteenth century – remains pertinent. Moreover, the complex relationship between ethnographic research and political power – whether it is more directly from the state or from supranational actors, within the participatory turn of knowledge production that has challenged the claim of 'action anthropology' – also needs critical attention. I would like to develop these issues with an approach that sees the existing fields of anthropology at universities, in archives and museums, and in other new formats of public anthropology, not as rational, unchanging areas of knowledge and practice, but rather as a structure whose limits and potentials have to be analysed continuously. With a new strategy that involves social media and a blog, *AJEC* has already made promising adjustments for the future. My aim for the editorial work therefore concentrates on three aspects: (1) keeping up with the vivid interdisciplinary field of anthropology across the disciplines and across the nature–culture division; (2) resituating classical themes, archives and collections of the foundational decades of anthropological disciplines and making them more visible as a specific achievement and potential of this branch; (3) maintaining an understanding of the ethnographic study of culture in Europe as a practice that always was and is connected to political power, whether it is in accordance with or against legitimate political institutions.

Thankfully, I have support for my *AJEC* work here in Münster from Michael Geuenich, who is doing his PhD on home movies in the FRG from the 1950s to the 1980s, and who has great publishing experience. Since editors are enablers, I am always open to hear suggestions, critiques and comments from the most important people in a journal: its authors and readers.

Elisabeth Timm, Münster, September 2017