

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

KAYLA RUSH

GENERAL EDITOR, *IRISH JOURNAL OF ANTHROPOLOGY*

This special issue is a labour of love.

Creative ethnography is a unique category in many ways, but in particular because it is something that no one *has* to write. While certain other types of writing are more or less expected in our field – the dissertation, the monograph, the journal article – creative ethnography carries no such compulsoriness: we write it because we *want* to write it. In many cases, we write creatively because we can't *not* do so. The extraordinarily high number of contributions to this special issue (thirty-two in total) is testament to the number of scholars who feel this motivation, this urgency, to carry out and/or communicate their work in experimental and non-traditional forms.

The result is a wide-ranging, exuberant offering that showcases the diversity of approaches to creativity in ethnography – in practice, in writing, and in pedagogy. It also demonstrates, I believe, the diversity of scholars for whom creative ethnography resonates with their own practice. The contributors are truly international, hailing from thirteen different countries on four continents, and come from all stages of academic life, from students to senior faculty. For an open call for contributions from a small, regional journal to garner such enthusiastic international response is rare, and it reflects far more the timeliness of the special issue theme than it does my own paltry skills as a new editor. It is my hope that you too will find it a timely and thought-provoking contribution to our discipline.

Genesis of the Special Issue

This special issue emerged from a short course called 'Creative Ethnographic Writing' that I had the very great honour of facilitating at Queen's University Belfast in May 2018. The thirteen participants in that course – MA and PhD students, postdocs, and lecturers from a surprisingly wide range of subject areas – were enthusiastic, and many were eager to find routes for publishing the type of writing with which they were experimenting during the course. The three Assistant Guest Editors for this special issue were all participants who stepped forward to assist with the special issue after the course's end. Three of the contributions to the special issue began their lives during that week, and at least two more participants have gone on to publish their creative works from the short course elsewhere.

From its conception, the editorial team and I had the *Irish Journal of Anthropology* in mind as a particularly suitable outlet for this work. The *IJA* has a long history of supporting anthropology in Ireland, of publishing works by postgraduate students and early-career researchers (including my own first-ever academic publication in 2014), and of interrogating norms of academic writing – as evidenced by the journal's previous special issue on ethnographic writing, published in 2011 and edited by Keith Egan and Fiona Murphy (Volume 14(1), *The Value of Ethnographic Writing*).

When we brought the idea to the *IJA*, then-General Editor James Cuffe approved it, and he has supported it throughout the publication process, even after his tenure ended and it was no longer his responsibility. I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to James for his gracious support and assistance.

New Elements of the Journal

Any change in editorship brings with it certain changes in practices and approaches. Long-time readers of the journal will likely notice right away a key formatting change, in that after many years, the standard article layout has shifted from two columns per page to just one. This has been done to reflect the change in modes by which readers access and encounter the journal. Particularly since the Anthropological Association of Ireland voted to make the *IJA* open access, readers are increasingly accessing and reading the journal online, rather than in its print form. For digital reading, whether online or in PDF form, a single column is simply easier to navigate, as it necessitates less back-and-forth scrolling.

Looking ahead to the future, this special issue also inaugurates an exciting new addition to the journal's offerings. Going forward, the *Irish Journal of Anthropology* will have a dedicated section for creative ethnographic writing. The enthusiastic, diverse response to this special issue has demonstrated that our discipline is in need of more spaces for publishing creative and less-traditional work, and I am delighted that we can offer such a space within the *IJA*.

Thanks

When I first proposed the idea of a special issue on creative ethnography in the summer of 2018, I had no idea that, several months later, I would be asked if I wanted to take the helm as the *IJA*'s general editor. Juggling the simultaneous roles of journal editor and special issue editor, both of which are new to me, has not been easy, but it has been incredibly rewarding. As this project has developed over the past year, I have been enormously grateful to the authors whose works are published herein, as they have been endlessly patient with me as I have taken on the project in the midst of changing jobs and continents.

I am also grateful to the small army of peer reviewers and copyeditors who stepped in to assist at various stages along the way, ensuring that the special issue was not only completed, but was of the highest possible quality as well. The *IJA*'s editorial team have also been amazing, assisting with the various stages of the special issue publication while also managing the review and publication process for the 2020 issue (which is due very soon).

As mentioned above – but worth mentioning again – I am very grateful to previous General Editor James Cuffe for initially greenlighting the special issue, and for continuing to support its publication. He has been a vital mentor, guide, and friend as I have taken on this role.

Finally, I am incredibly grateful to the three Assistant Guest Editors who have been part of this project from its beginning, and who helped to shape this issue in important ways: Federica Banfi, Karin Reenie Elliott, and Anna Skoura. Thanks are due as well to Sinéad Lynch; while circumstances forced her to step down from her editorial role early in the process, she played an important part in supporting and shaping this project.

Last but not least, thank you to you, the readers, whether you have been with the *IJA* from the beginning or are encountering it for the first time. I hope that you enjoy your encounter with this newest offering.