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This book gives a detailed account of the ‘communal riots’ between Hindus and Muslims in Mumbai in 1992-93. It departs from the historiography of the riot, which assumes that Hindu-Muslim conflict is independent of the participants of the violence. Speaking to and interacting with the residents of Dharavi, the largest shanty town in the city, the authors collected a wide range of narrative accounts of the violence and the procedures of rehabilitation that accompanied the violence. The authors juxtapose these narrative accounts with public documents exploring the role language, work, housing and rehabilitation have on the day-to-day life of people who live with violence.

The essays in this book explore the critical possibilities that have been opened by Veena Das’s work. Taking off from her writing on pain as a call for acknowledgment, several essays explore how social sciences render pain, suffering, and the claims of the other as part of an ethics of responsibility. They search for disciplinary resources to contest the implicit division between those whose pain receives attention and those whose pain is seen as out of sync with the times and hence written out of the historical record. Another theme is the co-constitution of the event and the everyday, especially in the context of violence. Das’s groundbreaking formulation of the everyday provides a frame for understanding how both violence and healing might grow out of it. Drawing on notions of life and voice and the struggle to write one’s own narrative, the contributors provide rich ethnographies of what it is to inhabit a devastated world. Ethics as a form of attentiveness to the other, especially in the context of poverty, deprivation, and the corrosion of everyday life, appears in several of the essays. They take up the classic themes of kinship and obligation but give them entirely new meaning. Finally, anthropology’s affinities with the literary are reflected in a final set of essays that show how forms of knowing in art and in anthropology are related through work with painters, performance artists, and writers.

How might we speak of human life amid violence, deprivation, or disease so intrusive as to put the idea of the human into question? How can scholarship and advocacy address new forms of war or the slow, corrosive violence that belie democracy's promise to mitigate human suffering? To Veena Das, the answers to these questions lie not in foundational ideas about human nature but in a close attention to the diverse ways in which the natural and the social mutually absorb each other on a daily basis. Textures of the Ordinary shows how anthropology finds a companionship with philosophy in the exploration of everyday life. Based on two decades of ethnographic work among low-income urban families in India, Das shows how the notion of texture aligns ethnography with the anthropological tone in Wittgenstein and Cavell, as well as in literary texts. Das shows that doing anthropology after Wittgenstein does not consist in taking over a new set of terms such as forms of life, language games, or private language from Wittgenstein’s philosophy. Instead, we must learn to see what eludes us in the everyday precisely because it is before our eyes. The book shows different routes of return to the everyday as it is corroded not only by catastrophic events but also by repetitive and routine violence within everyday life itself. As an alternative to normative ethics, this book develops ordinary ethics as attentiveness to the other and as the ability of small acts of care to stand up to horrific violence. Textures of the Ordinary offers a model of thinking in which concepts and experience are shown to be mutually vulnerable. With questions returned to repeatedly throughout the text and over a lifetime, this book is an intellectually intimate invitation into the ordinary, that which is most simple yet most difficult to perceive in our lives.

Taking a novel approach to the contradictory impulses of violence and care, illness and healing, this book radically shifts the way we think of the interrelations of institutions and experiences in a globalizing world. Living and Dying in the Contemporary World is not just another reader in medical anthropology but a true tour de force—a deep exploration of all that makes life unbearable and yet livable through the labor of ordinary people. This book comprises forty-four chapters by scholars whose ethnographic and historical work is conducted around the globe, including South Asia, East Asia, Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and the United States. Bringing together the work of established scholars with the vibrant voices of younger scholars, Living and Dying in the Contemporary World will appeal to anthropologists, sociologists, health scientists, scholars of religion, and all who are curious about how to relate to the rapidly changing institutions and experiences in an ever more connected world.

"Lives in Transit chronicles the dangerous journeys of Central American migrants in transit through Mexico. Drawing on fieldwork in humanitarian aid shelters and other key sites, the book examines the multiple forms of violence that migrants experience as their bodies, labor, and lives become implicated in global and local economies that profit from their mobility as racialized and gendered others. At the same time, it reveals new forms of intimacy, solidarity and activism that have emerged along transit routes over the past decade. Through the stories of migrants, shelter workers and local residents, Vogt encourages us to reimagine transit as both a site of violence and precarity as well as social struggle and resistance"--Provided by publisher.

Intense media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict does not necessarily enhance one's knowledge or understanding of the Palestinians; on the contrary they are more often than not reduced to either victims or perpetrators. Similarly, while many academic studies devote considerable effort to analyzing the political situation in the occupied territories, there have been few sophisticated case studies of Palestinian refugees living under Israeli rule. An ethnographic study of Palestinian refugees in Dheisheh refugee camp, just south of Bethlehem, Occupied Lives looks closely at the attempts of the camp inhabitants to survive and bounce back from the profound effects of political violence and Israeli military occupation on their daily lives. Based on the author's extensive fieldwork conducted inside the camp, including a year during 2003-2004 when she lived in Dheisheh, this study examines the daily efforts of camp inhabitants to secure survival and meaning during the period of the al-Aqsa Intifada. It argues that the political developments and experiences of extensive violence at the time, which left most refugees outside of direct activism, caused many camp inhabitants to disengage from traditional forms of politics. Instead, they became involved in alternative practices aimed at maintaining their sense of social worth and integrity, by focusing on processes to establish a 'normal' order, social continuity, and morality. Nina Gren explores these processes and the ambiguities and dilemmas that necessarily arose from them and the ways in which the political and the existential are often intertwined in Dheisheh. Combining theoretical readings with field-based case study, this book will be invaluable to scholars and students of social anthropology, sociology, international relations, refugee studies, religious studies, and Middle East studies, as well as to anyone with an interest in the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

Weaving anthropological and philosophical reflections on the ordinary into her analysis, Das points toward a new way of interpreting violence in societies and cultures around the globe.

Sarajevo Under Siege offers a richly detailed account of the lived experiences of ordinary people in this multicultural city between 1992 and 1996, during the war in the former Yugoslavia. Moving beyond the shelling, snipers, and shortages, it documents the coping strategies people adopted and the creativity with which they responded to desperate circumstances. Ivana Maček, an anthropologist who grew up in the former Yugoslavia, argues that the division of Bosnians into antagonistic ethnonational groups was the result rather than the cause of the war, a view that was not only generally assumed by Americans and Western Europeans but also deliberately promoted by Serb, Croat, and Muslim nationalist politicians. Nationalist political leaders appealed to ethnoreligious loyalties and sowed mistrust between people who had previously coexisted peacefully in Sarajevo. Normality dissolved and relationships were reconstructed as individuals tried to ascertain who could be trusted. Over time, this ethnography shows, Sarajevans shifted from the shock they felt as civilians in a city under siege into a "soldier" way of thinking, siding with one group and blaming others for the war. Eventually, they became disillusioned with these simple rationales for suffering and adopted a "deserter" stance, trying to take moral responsibility for their own choices in spite of their powerless position. The coexistence of these contradictory views reflects the confusion Sarajevans felt in the midst of a chaotic war. Maček respects the subjectivity of her informants and gives Sarajevans' own words a dignity that is not always accorded the viewpoints of ordinary citizens. Combining scholarship on political violence with firsthand observation and telling insights, this book is of vital importance to people who seek to understand the dynamics of armed conflict along ethnonational lines both within and beyond Europe.

In his gripping and provocative debut, anthropologist Jason De Leñ sheds light on one of the most pressing political issues of our timeñthe human consequences of US immigration policy.É The Land of Open Graves reveals the suffering and deaths that occur daily in the Sonoran Desert of Arizona as thousands of undocumented migrants attempt to cross the border from Mexico into the United States. Drawing on the four major fields of anthropology, De Leñ uses an innovative combination of ethnography, archaeology, linguistics, and forensic science to produce a scathing critique of 0Prevention through Deterrence,0 the federal border enforcement policy that encourages migrants to cross in areas characterized by extreme environmental conditions and high risk of death. For two decades, this policy has failed to deter border crossers while successfully turning the rugged terrain of southern Arizona into a killing field. In harrowing detail, De Leñ chronicles the journeys of people who have made dozens of attempts to cross the border and uncovers the stories of the objects and bodies left behind in the desert. The Land of Open Graves will spark debate and controversy.

Whether looking at divided cities or working with populations on the margins of society, a growing number of engaged academics have reached out to communities around the world to address the practical problems of living with difference. This book explores the challenges and necessities of accommodating difference, however difficult and uncomfortable such accommodation may be. Drawing on fourteen years of theoretical insights and unique pedagogy, CEDAR–Communities Engaging with Difference and Religion–has worked internationally with community leaders, activists, and other partners to take the insights of anthropology out of the classroom and into the world. Rather than addressing conflict by emphasizing what is shared, Living with Difference argues for the centrality of difference in creating community, seeking ways not to overcome or deny differences but to live with and within them in a self-reflective space and practice. This volume also includes a manual for organizers to implement CEDAR’s strategies in their own communities.