

REMEMBERING DR. FIONA LARKAN, IRISH JOURNAL OF ANTHROPOLOGY GENERAL EDITOR- 2011-2014.

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Dr. Fiona Larkan was our much beloved friend, colleague, mentor to many, and the editor of the Irish Journal of Anthropology (IJA) from 2011-2014. In 2017, Fiona left us after battling a long illness for over 18 months. She continues to be missed by so many of us. Her family and closest friends will always feel an indefinable sorrow for what was her too soon departure from this life. Fiona had much more to do, more love to give, more friendship and advice to offer, more students to teach and undoubtedly, more words left to write. As a committed female journal editor, she left an important legacy in print and memory. She played a strong role in shaping the ever-complex form of anthropology on the island of Ireland in the years she edited the IJA (and of course with her own personal research and writing). Fiona's own anthropological journey was

both international (South Africa based) and local thus allowing her to forge new networks, collaborations and forms for the journal under her keen editorial eye.

When Fiona assumed the role of editor, she was a relatively new PhD graduate starting out on a new career path in global health in Trinity College Dublin. It was a juggle and Fiona was busy like never before. Those of us closer to her saw her pull off a balancing act of being mother, wife, daughter, sister, friend, new employee in a busy graduate centre in a prestigious University as well as journal editor for the IJA. The labour she did for both the Anthropological Association of Ireland and the Irish Journal of Anthropology was voluntary (like much in academia). It was a mix of intellectual, emotional and indeed, physical labour (driving to the printers, packing boxes, distributing the journal- the hidden labours of academic journal work before online became the norm). Fiona did all of this without complaint. In fact, she conducted her editorial work with enthusiasm, conviction, dedication and some of us would have said, courage. It was exhausting but Fiona with her characteristic humility, honesty and energy embraced it. Indeed, she captured and evoked the frequencies of new and dynamic anthropologies of Ireland in her editorship as she dived deep into this busy life.

Her vision for the journal unfolded in multiple and diverse directions-shining a spotlight on the shifting terrain of anthropology on the island of Ireland. Fiona's dedication to this sat deep in her bones. One of her first editions was the 2011 special edition in conjunction with Keith Egan and myself (Fiona Murphy) entitled 'The value of ethnographic writing' (Vol 14: 1) in which we set out to reflect some of the emerging work being conducted by doctoral students and early career researchers trained on the island of Ireland. This special edition was indeed a deeply personal endeavour for all three of us, emerging as it had from an idyllic week-long writing retreat in the beautiful Co. Wicklow led by Professor Michael Jackson, an anthropologist famed for his writing and creativity. So too, it was an endeavour of intersections for Fiona, an invitation at the beginning of her editorship for others to consider the IJA as an emerging space for more creative practices of anthropological writing and a new point of departure for the journal's first female general editor. With that she chose for the cover of her first journal edition, a drawing by one of our fellow anthropologists Monika Weissensteiner, of the Celtic figure Ogma, the God of speech and writing endowed with the power of poetic vision. The perfect framing, it must be said, for Fiona's journey as new IJA editor.

Subsequent editions would reflect the depth of Fiona's anthropological curiosity, her willingness for cross-disciplinary collaboration and her personal intuitions and inspirations. Her ability to navigate with sensitivity and care the complex webs of academic personalities always struck those of us who worked closely with her, no personality was too big, no scholar was too junior and the pages she edited echo just this. Her own academic interests grounded in medical anthropology and global health also found new footing in the pages

of the IJA thereby creating new intellectual spaces for this discussion on the island of Ireland (as did her work with the Irish Medical Anthropology Network (IMAN)). A wonderful example of this being a co-edited special section on suicide in Ireland drawn from the conference Ethnographic Approaches to Suicide Conference held at NUI Maynooth in March 2012 (cited by President Higgins in his World Suicide Day address in 2013) in Volume 15(2) published in 2012.

Fiona strived to show the world (and indeed other disciplines in the academy) why anthropology is so valuable. She was a wonderful ambassador for the discipline in its many forms and believed passionately in a public and applied anthropology. In “Anthropologists in the public sphere” Volume 16(2) 2013 with Keith Egan, Fiona’s commitment to encouraging the public voice/s of anthropologists on the island of Ireland resounds with enthusiasm and hope. Her belief in an attentive anthropology mapped onto this issue of the IJA but also in her work generally as a brilliant ethnographer and anthropologist.

In Fiona’s time as general editor, she also worked on two issues which reflected the conference work of the Anthropological Association of Ireland. The 2013 issue emerged from the significant 25th anniversary conference ‘Ethnography from Margin to Centre: Celebrating 25 years of the Anthropological Association of Ireland’. This was a special issue of celebration and commemoration illuminating the evolution of anthropology on the island of Ireland and reflecting some of the key discussions from that conference. Fiona’s final IJA issue in 2014 before she passed the editorial mantle to James Cuffe of UCC “Memory and Recovery” emerged from the AAI conference of the same name held in Sligo in 2014. It is in many ways fitting that this final journal issue would later evolve into an edited collection entitled *Memory and Recovery in Times of Crisis* (2017) published only a few months before Fiona’s passing in December 2017. She would only get to hold the book in her hands for a short while, but was immensely proud of it. It, alongside the journals she edited, remain a strong testament to her care, attentiveness, and love for her scholarly work in its various forms. They also stand strong as documents of collaboration, collegiality and aspiration.

Fiona showed up to life in a certain way, always kind, deeply passionate, beloved as a mentor and a teacher, admired for her dedication and conviction. She loved a good giggle and always saw the humour in life even on difficult days. The Irish Journal of Anthropology and the Anthropological Association of Ireland are forever richer for having had her at the helm and we will all continue to miss her. We only wish she could be here with us all as we raise a glass to 25 years of the Irish Journal of Anthropology.

If you would like to read any of Fiona’s work, you can search for her name on ResearchGate where a number of her publications have been uploaded.

References

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