

Editors' Note

Timothy Mitchell and Anupama Rao

Our previous issue foregrounded the genealogies of politics, thought, and concept formation in non-Western locales through questions of Eastern Marxism, caste and untouchability, and the political and ethical imagination of subaltern thinker-activists.

With volume 34, number 2, we shift to questions of law and history. In “Postcolonial Legalism” we explore postcolonial transformations of legal practice in four countries—India, Sri Lanka, Lebanon, and South Africa—from the perspective of legal discourse and the new normative grounds it opened up for the articulation of rights and interests by various social actors. As the contributors acknowledge, these new normative grounds also closed off other possible futures and imaginings of just societies.

The subsequent photographic essay by Rajkamal Kahlon continues with an exposition of how medico-legal practices—the autopsy reports of Iraqi and Afghan detainees and the subsequent work of creating an archive of torture—erase the excesses of power that produced these dead bodies from our shared cultural memory. Kahlon elaborates on the role of artistic production in highlighting and bridging this gap between the rational medico-legal entity of the corpse and the spectrality of the absent body.

We close with a series of critical reflections on the framing and configuration of the Mediterranean as a privileged site for imagining Europe, whether its past or its future. The contributions to “Mediterranean Departures” forego the familiar singularity of the Mediterranean as a geographic fact and instead lay bare its centrality to projects of knowledge production, subject formation, and colonial violence. ■■■■