

Encounters with Difference

Introduction

This special issue is concerned with how people connect with each other ‘over differences’ without flattening, familiarizing, erasing, or necessarily overcoming those differences. The articles in this collection center ethnographic accounts of religious encounters which, we argue, offer a particularly fruitful site from which to interrogate liberal modes of governance of difference, and to open up ‘alternative’ modes of engaging with and theorizing difference. In what follows, we are inspired by Lilith Mahmud’s (2016, 2018) treatment of liberalism as a cosmology or worldview, a native category among Europeans, with its own origin story produced through histories of colonialism, modernity and capitalism. While our attention is specifically on engagements with difference, the articles enable us to observe how this cosmology shapes social life in a range of settings, giving rise to specific modes of governance, influencing sets of values, ideals, and assumptions about coexistence, as well as anthropological theorizing about difference. We unravel and draw out these assumptions through a focus on religious differences, exploring how relations across these differences are shaped by liberalism, but also take alternative forms in non-liberal settings. While in each site, liberalism has a different history and significance – and some articles engage with the features of it in that context – our challenge is not aimed at a specific form of liberalism. Rather, we critique liberalism as a larger cosmology, aspects of which might be reflected in how liberalism operates in specific places or sites. And, we interrogate its ideological pervasiveness in modes of thinking at different scales, including in public and political discourse as well as in academic debates.

Our thinking about the non-liberal as a site to speak back to the universalizing claims of liberalism, and liberal tolerance in particular, grows out of our ethnographic fieldwork over the last five years. Funded by the ERC grant *Multi-Religious Encounters in Urban Settings*, we have been studying forms, modes, and textures of living with difference at multiple scales – intimate, spatial, institutional – in Karachi, Nairobi and Palermo. That is to say, we have focused on places and sites within these contexts where people of different religious backgrounds interact with one another, not so much out of a sense that you see in liberal multicultural contexts where there is value in diversity and mixing is seen as a liberal ‘good’, but because they have no choice. Difference is very physically present in their surroundings – where they live, pray, and/or work – and engaging with it does not arise from ideological commitment but necessity and pragmatism. To think about how such engagements differ from liberal models and what they tell us about the latter, we expanded, through a series of workshops and a conference panel, to collaboratively reflect with anthropologists working on similar kinds of interactions in other sites and regions. The collection here is a result of these endeavours, and of our collective desire not only to interrogate the limitations of liberal conceptions of difference but to open ourselves to other modes of engagement. It does not offer a unified, singular voice or perspective, much less a model, of encountering and managing and difference. To do so would go against the motivation for studying such encounters and bringing them into conversation here.

The special issue focuses on ‘encounters’ not as events but as nodes at which difference and sameness are made, contested and transformed (Soares 2006; Faier and Rofel 2014). The articles share a focus on everyday encounters and on intimate/close relationships: between friends (Maqsood) and co-workers (Everett), among spouses and extended families of mixed religions (Neveu-Kringelbach), female co-religionists (Liberatore), and (un)neighbourly exchanges (Balthazar; Fesenmyer; Weiss). At the same time, each case is deeply entangled with longer histories and broader national and global political contexts, particularly histories of coloniality (Fesenmyer; Neveu-Kringelbach) and of European internal ‘Orientalism’ (Liberatore; Doughan). What emerges is how scales of encounter – from the intimate to the national and global – are not contiguous, and how the lack of contiguity reveals difference as multi-spectral and unfolding over time.

The articles feature encounters between a range of major religious traditions, namely, Christianity (Catholicism), Islam (Sunni), Judaism, and Hinduism. They also span several regions, including Europe (Germany, France, Italy, and the United Kingdom), South Asia (Pakistan), and Africa (Kenya and Senegal). As we have previously argued, it is productive to look across contexts because it requires us to (re-)consider the ‘natural’ theoretical frames and conceptual debates, which tend to characterize the anthropological study of different ethnographic regions (Fesenmyer, Liberatore, and Maqsood 2020).

Beyond liberal hegemony

We write this introduction in late-2025 following twenty-one months of Israel’s genocidal campaign in Gaza which has exacerbated decades of settler-colonial violence and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. As we write, over 64,000 Palestinians have been killed while the remaining population of Gaza is being forcibly starved by the Israeli state, a military campaign funded, enabled and supported by the liberal democracies of Europe and North America. In many of these liberal public spheres, peaceful anti-genocide protests are actively clamped down through the disproportionate use of police force, intimidation, and legal action. The contradictions of liberalism need no unmasking at this juncture – they have never been so starkly apparent.

The complicity of liberal democracies in this genocide has come at a time when political liberalism is already in crisis, as reflected in the rise of populist leaders, the success of the far right in electoral politics and the surge in ethnonationalist movements. The rise in ultra nationalist and far right movements and its relations with liberal politics has been a focus of recent anthropological work (e.g. Shoshan 2016, Mahmud 2016; Boyer 2016). But anthropology has a much longer and expansive tradition of exposing the inherent blind spots in liberalism, especially in the ways it intersects with the secular and including an interrogation of the discipline’s own secular underpinnings. While both liberal and secular ideologies are mutually entangled in longer histories of racialization and colonialism, there is, to a certain extent, a bifurcation in the literature in that political anthropology has addressed the contradictions in the liberal state, its legal regimes and governance models (Li 2020; Rana 2011; Puar 2007), whereas ethnographies within the anthropology of religion have drawn

attention to the violence and exclusion inherent in secularism, the dominant ideology through which religion is managed in liberal states (Mahmood 2016; Fernando 2014; Asad 2003). Particularly in the European context, religious difference is seen through the universalizing yet Christian-Euro-centric ideology of religious pluralism (Masuzawa 2005) and attention directed at modes and models for managing it.

Much of this work has been crucial in unpacking the exclusionary power of secularism and in demonstrating how regimes of liberal recognition, while offered as solutions to problems of diversity, end up translating differences in ways that reproduce sameness (Giordano 2014; Strathern 2020). Regarding differences deemed ‘religious’ in particular, the liberal state and its logics often attempt to privatize, aestheticize, or depoliticize (Povinelli 2002; Weiss, this volume). The processes through which these differences are (re)made and managed reveal some of the deepest contradictions in liberal theory in relation to its commitment to separate ‘church’ and state. As Saba Mahmood powerfully notes, the liberal state claims to ‘maintain a separation by relegating religion to the private sphere’ (2016: 4), yet it does so not only by policing that boundary but also by defining what constitutes the ‘religious’ and, thus, belongs in the private sphere in the first place (2016: 3,4).

The ways in which the liberal state attempts to ‘reorganize substantive features of religious life’ (Mahmood 2016: 3) and which differences it allows and which it suppresses is the focus of one contribution in this special issue. Centering on the presence of Palestinian women in low-skilled civic education and community-building initiatives in Germany, Sultan Doughan shows how Muslim difference is carefully controlled and managed in public spaces (this volume). Palestinian women, as symbolic of Muslim difference (and as an object of and starting point for reform), are given space in public sector positions, such as, museum guides or civic educators, but their presence becomes dangerous and needs to be erased if they betray any signs of their Palestinian-ness. For the German liberal state, a Muslim woman working to educate her community has a (limited) place in society, but a Palestinian has none. The inability of the German liberal state to reckon with the public presence of Palestinian-ness comes, of course, from a particular history. The same has been said for religious difference in Europe and within liberal political theory more broadly. As Humeira Iqtidar has noted, the preoccupation with managing religious difference in liberal theory, noticeable in conceptions of tolerance for instance, comes from a history where these differences ‘emerged as a fundamental threat to the sovereignty of the state’ (2021: 459).

Liberal modes of governance produce the very categories of what counts as different - often based on bounded notions of culture (Phillips 2004) – thereby making all differences familiar and, often, the same (Giordano 2014). At the same time, they also shape what counts as the same or shared, (tacitly) suggesting a kind of universalism, which in turn forms the basis of ‘connecting over difference’. Erica Weiss’s contribution here illustrates how an idea of ‘shared humanity’ underlies European and US-funded peace and coexistence initiatives in Israel in which participants are encouraged to deemphasize difference, and ‘find things in common’. Through this denial of difference, liberal tolerance – and its intersection with Israeli Zionism

– trivializes, aestheticizes, and depoliticizes differences. Similar to liberal anti-racism efforts in Palestine, these initiatives normalize and dehistoricize difference, unmooring it from processes of racialization rooted in colonial and imperial forms of power (Vadasaria 2025).

In this special issue, we take stock of how liberalism operates as a ‘regulatory ethics that sets the terms of engagement for the entirety of legitimate political discourse’ (Mahmud 2018: 281-282). As a result, it has taken on a universality – in other words, it has become a kind of ‘common sense’ – in how religious difference, and difference and sameness more broadly, is viewed and gauged and the ways in which it informs political sensibilities about how it should (ideally) be managed. Liberalism’s taken-for-grantedness means that it has infiltrated everyday modes of thinking and relating, as well as scholarly thinking and theorising, including in anthropology, which we return to below. Our aim here is not limited to exposing the parochiality of liberalism or the contradictions in its claims of universality. Nor is it only to suggest that there are other histories and ways of managing difference, a point that has already been illustrated through the wide-ranging anthropological research on conviviality in non-western contexts (e.g. Marsden and Reeves 2019; Nyamnjoh 2015; Overing and Passes 2000) as well as in political theory focused on the non-west (El Amine forthcoming). Rather, our focus is more squarely on the consequences of the hegemony of liberal ideas and ideals around difference. We argue that liberal grammars and vocabularies around difference are often limiting in that they force our attention to specific areas and ways of engagement when it comes to difference. Their inattentiveness to other spaces and forms erases and makes invisible processes, ideas, and modes of being that are deeply consequential for how people encounter and live with difference. Our theoretical vantage of the non-liberal as a site to speak back, then, is not anti-liberal nor necessarily in opposition to liberalism but more to focus on what it has ignored, dismissed as inconsequential or not encompassed in its thinking.

The papers in this special issue highlight four key ways in which this occurs. First, in its embrace of universalizing models, liberal perspectives on overcoming religious differences are dismissive of what appear as ‘parochial’ or particularistic sentiments and commitments. In his contribution to this issue, Sami Everett details how notions of strength and honour, deriving from medieval Jewish philosophical traditions centred around the teaching of Maimonides, guide ethical action focused on communal life in impoverished quarters of Marseille. The inter-communal encounter here, between working class Jewish and Muslim groups, involves, as Everett puts it, neither a fallback on ‘privatization or universalization’ (this issue). Instead, it is dependent on ‘particularistic forms of public reason’ (ibid). The conceptual limitations of liberal theory and perspectives in grasping these particularistic forms of engagement with others as significant come from its own particularities and history. Political theorists, such as Loubna El-Amine, have argued that many of the ‘normative mainstays of liberal multiculturalism follow from the institutional features of the modern (European) state’ (forthcoming: 8). Centred on majority-minority logics where justice is viewed as a form of equality and symmetry between groups, there is deep emphasis on relations between state and citizen as equal and uniform (ibid, 6-8). It is precisely this kind of preoccupation with both the state as the arbiter of difference, and on equality and uniformity, within liberal perspectives

that makes it inattentive to or dismissive of forms of engagement with difference, which have histories and philosophical bases beyond the state.

This collection thus de-centres the state as the primary frame of reference. The papers do so temporally by highlighting the long *durée* and focusing on traditions that pre-date the creation of particular nation-states. Most contributions also do so spatially by centring urban spaces or neighbourhoods, rather than the nation-state. For example, they explore encounters that unfold in spaces that are socially marginal (e.g. Everett's use of the 'ghetto' in Marseille, Liberatore's marginal Palermo neighbourhood, Fesenmyer's informal settlement in Nairobi, and Weiss' poor, religiously mixed Israeli town), where people and communities live together out of necessity and where difference is a 'social fact', rather than being discursively produced (Fesenmyer; Weiss). Within these spaces, which the nation-state deems inconsequential, we uncover many of these particularist traditions.

Second, Ammara Maqsood's article in this issue draws out a related inattentiveness in liberal theories towards ephemerality, which, she suggests, is often central to how people navigate relations with potentially hostile others and survive in the present. There is a propensity in liberal ideologies not only to focus on ways of managing difference that involve the state (and ignore the ways in which people manage relations with one another) but also to prioritise forms that are predictable and consistent. In other words, there is focus on what can become modular, to be replicated and applied (again, uniform and unmarked by difference even though difference is the focus) in different contexts and spaces. Maqsood's ethnography of young Hindus navigating the uncertain urban context of Karachi illustrates the value of ephemeral Hindu-Muslim friendships and relations in a present marked by majoritarian nationalism and the ever-present threat of religious violence. She argues that such relations forge a 'situational peace' in the present precisely through their ephemerality.

Third, Maqsood's ethnography also provides a sense of another way in which liberal theories are often conceptually constrained when it comes to the place and potential of difference. Predominant in liberal theories is a notion of the political, defined by Carl Schmitt, as the ability to draw decisive lines between friends and enemies (Schmitt 2007; see also Tambar 2019: 252; Singh 2011). This orientation has meant a lack of attention to contexts, such as the one Maqsood describes, where there are structural and historical uncertainties and a continuing lack of trust in the present – the lines around 'friend' and 'enemy' are continually shifting and being remade. Here, difference and *difference-ing*, as she puts it, are generative – reflecting both violent majoritarian nationalism, as well as a capacity to exceed it and to offer alternate political prospects.

Our aim is not, as we noted earlier, to offer these alternative contexts as models, but rather to use them as sites to speak back to and draw out the conceptual limitations in liberalism when it comes to alternate understandings of difference. Here, we build on literature that theorizes coexistence and encounters as unresolved and uncertain (Ben-Yehoyada 2017; Dharamsi & Liberatore 2024; Fesenmyer 2020; Fesenmyer, Liberatore, & Maqsood 2020; Janson 2021; Janson et al. 2024). In different ways, the ethnographies in this special issue (Fesenmyer, Liberatore, Weiss) accentuate the contrast between the liberal assumption that religious

differences need to be overcome and resolved – undergirded by a sense that difference is dangerous for ‘peace’ – and the more complex place and potentiality of difference in other contexts. Several of the research settings (Fesenmyer, Neveu Kringelbach) might be characterised as convivial, marked by intimacy and conflict, respect and mistrust, cooperation and disagreement, by ambivalence (Gilroy 2004; Marsden and Reeves 2019; Nyamnjoh 2015). Conceptualisations of conviviality overcome many of the problems of cosmopolitanism, especially its core tenet of being ‘open to difference’, which carries a fixed notion of difference (Glick Schiller et al. 2011: 403; Marsden and Reeves 2019: 762). They also challenge cosmopolitanism’s normative tendencies and elitist connotations, which make it unavailable to people and settings where such plurality is ordinary and long-standing (e.g. Das 2013; Heil 2014; Janson et al. 2024). Yet, conviviality research does not engage explicitly with liberalism and how it conceives of and structures encounters with difference. Consequently, its potential to challenge the taken-for-grantedness of liberal logics of difference remains unfulfilled. Instead, such research stays tied to specific settings, rather than being abstracted to problematise the universality of liberal models.

Fourth, in drawing attention to the conceptual limitations of a liberal lens, and to think through and write about difference beyond such constraints, our work parallels and builds on an existing thrust within anthropology concerned with overcoming the discipline’s own secularity (Furani 2018; Furani and Robbins 2021; Mittermaier 2021). The anthropology of Christianity has helped to unearth the ways in which a particular model of Christianity, which Cannell (2005) argues comes from a specific, ascetic understanding of Christianity, shaped anthropological enquiry. By revealing how it prioritised a model of religion based on transcendence and the inferiority of the body, Cannell’s critique unsettled numerous anthropological ‘givens’, including anthropology’s insistence on its own secularity (2005: 338, 341, see also Furani 2019). More recent work challenging anthropology’s purported secularism has exposed the centrality of the human and humanism in our orientation, urging us to ‘expand beyond this horizon’ (Mittermaier 2021). In her ethnography of God, Mittermaier (2021: 22) joins scholars of post-humanism and multi-species philosophies in decentring the human by making space in ethnographic writing for alterity, which includes the ‘invisible, immaterial and other-worldly’. In this special issue, we respond to this call by not only thinking beyond the human when it comes to difference but also in expanding our temporal horizon and registers. Rather than limiting themselves to linear framings or to focus on flashpoints where difference erupts into violence or causes rupture, as studies on peace and conflict often do, our contributors privilege a broader horizon, thinking in terms of inter-generational memory and change (Fesenmyer, Maqsood) and across life-courses and family histories (Neveu-Kringelbach).

In urging us to think about the secular underpinnings of anthropology, Mittermaier asks us to reflect on what we register as mattering and what we do not. Similarly, we show how horizons around difference have been shaped by liberal paradigms – difference as dangerous, but also what matters is only what resolves and contains difference. Consequently, we have paid insufficient attention to how rational thought is not inevitably central to how difference is encountered, much less resolved. Mahmud has similarly commented on the abstractness of liberalism whereby the human is understood as a generic and universal category by ‘de-

materializing embodied differences' (Mahmud 2018: 283; Kotef 2009; Mahmud 2014). In her article on weeping on Good Friday among female Catholic devotees in Palermo, Sicily, Liberatore explores how relations between these women are mediated by an embodied experience of the divine, which is felt rather than spoken. As female devotees 'represent' holy figures, such as, Our Lady of Sorrows (the *Addolorata*) during a dramatization event, they embody divine presence, resulting in their relations with other devotees becoming more fluid and porous. The article explores further how crying *as* Our Lady of Sorrows and as other holy figures, alongside Our Lady, enables many of these women to enact more horizontal modes of relating to others outside the nuclear family and confraternal forms of brotherhood. These modes of relating through the divine have a long history that dates to the Medieval period but that has long been marginalized and curtailed by the modernizing efforts of the Catholic Church and the nation-state. Yet these Catholic traditions of devotion, which flourish in these marginal neighbourhoods, hold the potential to push against hierarchical notions of hospitality and exclusive forms of liberal cosmopolitanism that dominate contemporary representations of the city (Liberatore, this issue).

Non-liberal approaches to difference

How to write about alterity 'on its own terms', without reducing it to social construction (Kohn 2015; Chua and Mathur 2018) or to alternate views of a shared reality, is a central concern of the 'ontological turn' in anthropology (Latour 2013; Viveiros de Castro 1998). Anthropologists aim to capture a world of different, multiple, incommensurable worlds, which may or may not relate with one another (de la Cadena 2010: 360 cited in Chua 2022). Although it is beyond the scope of this introduction to engage in depth with this diverse field, we note how much of the work on ontology tends to juxtapose indigenous concepts and realities with those of the dominant political actor (usually the state) and/or with Western knowledge production.

While the articles in this volume share a concern with writing about incommensurable realities 'on their own terms', our focus is on moments or encounters in diverse urban settings in which these realities inevitably come into contact with, or relate to, one another (see also Hage 2018: 91). We also focus on areas where there are long, if troubled, histories of living beside one another long before the onslaught of modern state-making and boundaries. Relating can entail, as mentioned above, the processual dynamism of difference-ing and same-ing. Taking a cue from Liana Chua, our articles call for analysing difference-ing and same-ing together, taking seriously the 'ontological depth and immediacy of commoning projects', as well as alterity and divergence (2022: 724). What is revealed are the ways in which differences and forms of commoning or same-ing are not bounded or fixed, but always in the making in moments of encounter, making it harder to juxtapose one reality vis-à-vis another (e.g. West vs. non-West, or indigenous vs. state). In her article on Pumwani Majengo, the first residential estate in Nairobi for Africans built during the colonial era, for this collection, Leslie Fesenmyer explores how long-time residents of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds have come to see themselves as a 'we', tracing the history of community-making practices from the colonial era to post-colonial Kenya where such distinctions are popularly and politically understood as immutable and religious tension has been on the rise since the late 1990s. She highlights how

the most salient difference for Majengo sociality is in fact between long-time residents, on one hand, and newcomers or ‘outsiders’, on the other. However, the lines between these social categories continue to shift, incorporating some and excluding others, especially now that the estate is undergoing rapid (re)development and long-time residents are (often reluctantly) moving elsewhere. Fesenmyer’s article underscores the paradoxical connection between sameness and difference, and how each is reliant on the other. Sameness and difference are thus better understood as relational, situational, and contingent, and, as she puts it, ‘perpetually reproduced and reconfigured in light of their respective genealogies and vis-a-vis the current context’ (this issue).

Same-ing is also a focus of Ana Carolina Baltazar’s contribution, which explores how street parties in a post-Brexit British seaside town foster belonging among older white British residents, allowing them to engage with some differences while ignoring others. In this context, identifying with particular national symbols and a selective national past provides a sense of connectedness that allows, for example, one of Baltazar’s interlocutors, an Irish woman married to a local Englishman, to partially and temporally overcome the felt memory of historical tensions between England and Ireland. However, a sense of ‘otherness’ lingers for her, reminding us of what Freud termed the ‘narcissism of minor differences’ against a backdrop of increasing far-right protests against migrants and the invisibilizing (both consciously and unconsciously) of racial difference in multi-racial and -cultural Britain more generally.

Furthermore, some articles (Maqsood; Neveu-Kringelbach) point less to the radical incommensurability of different realities, and more to a partial ‘acknowledgement’ of difference whereby encounters make no attempt to resolve difference, instead accepting the ‘possibility of not knowing, not understanding, and, thus, embracing uncertainty’ (Giordano 2014: 9). As Graeber (2015) has pointed out, underlying the work on ontology is not only a relativist position – of different incommensurable realities that may or may not interact – but also a tacit universal ontology in the form of philosophical idealism, in which ideas and concepts are assumed to generate realities. Anthropological theory (and ontological approaches in particular) here parallels liberal hegemonic approaches described above, highlighting the need for the discipline to reconsider its relationship to liberalism (as it has done for secularism) and to refine its own methods and models of difference in order to engage with the limits of liberal approaches to difference in the real world. Accordingly, Graeber suggests adopting a ‘critical realist’ approach, which accepts that realities can never be fully known. In a similar vein, Mittermaier (2021) proposes refusing ‘stable accounts or closed arguments’ and instead opening up texts and ‘making space for not-knowing.’

In her contribution on interfaith Senegalese-European couples and their Senegalese families, Hélène Neveu-Kringelbach (this issue) considers how Muslim Senegalese navigate relations with non-Muslim spouses and sons- and daughters-in-law. In the case of non-Muslim European husbands, families seek to transform these ‘strangers’ into kin through conversion to Islam. However, this process of same-ing is ongoing and includes tension, which may ebb and flow over the life-course. In fact, what emerges is that these couples and families learn to live with

and accommodate what they experience as an unresolvable form of difference, relying on tactics of concealment and silence to do so. Similar to Fesenmyer (this issue), Neveu-Kringelbach highlights how the potential for conflict is entwined with intimate social bonds.

Scholars like Graeber, Mittermaier, and Giordano also alert us to the ways in which anthropologists infuse their analyses and ethnographic writings with their own arguably liberal and often secular models of difference and sameness. In their discussion of who constitutes the ‘we’ of anthropology, Liana Chua and Nayanika Mathur draw attention to the (Anglophone) anthropological identity as ‘the relational product of that complex triangle between “our” own society, “us” anthropologists, and “them” others, with non-western alterity remaining the most productive ‘other’ for anthropological theorizing (2018: 9). The focus on everyday encounters and often intimate relations across the contributions to this special issue disallowed each of us, during fieldwork, recourse to a more detached position vis-a-vis our interlocutors and the encounters in which we were inevitably implicated. As noted earlier, the encounters over difference we describe were pragmatic, part of everyday life, rather than a choice, which could be opted out of or avoided, nor were they orchestrated and managed by the state or another third-party. Moreover, they involved relations between couples, extended families, friends, neighbours, and co-believers, all affective and intimate bonds that defy easy stereotyping and demonizing of the ‘other’. In several cases, we identify and are identified as members of the society we are studying (Neveu-Kringelbach; Liberatore; Maqsood; Weiss), underscoring not only the intimate relationality, but also the instability and permeability, of ‘us’, ‘them’ and ‘other’ to which Chua and Mathur refer.

Collectively, the articles encourage us to reconsider that ‘we’ in light of a non-liberal approach to difference, not as a model or concept but rather as an anthropological attitude to each other, to ‘them’ and to ‘others’ (which may also constitute the ‘we’). This might entail a deep ‘acknowledging’ (Giordano 2014) of how difference-ing and same-ing are shaped by histories and socio-economic and political processes (including, for example, colonial and racialized violence), both in the long *durée* and shorter term. It would demand that we recognize particularistic traditions and modes of being; ephemerality, contingency and unpredictability; and the shifting nature of categories and boundaries. Doing so would also necessitate making space for embodied and immaterial modes of relating among humans and non-humans. At its core, the kind of deep ‘acknowledging’ we are talking about here relies on accepting that different realities might be experienced but never be fully known. At this particular historical juncture, where liberalism is under attack by the far-right, while liberal democratic states are implicated in genocide and violent exclusions, this special issue urges us to look beyond the liberal and make more space for, and learn from, non-liberal approaches to difference.

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