

Andrew Causey, *Drawn to See: Drawing as an Ethnographic Method*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017, 176 pages.

Reviewer: *Kim Tondeur*
Expeditions, Research in Applied Anthropology

Anthropologists' interest in drawing as a research method has grown extensively in the past 15 years, and much has now been discussed about drawing as a mode of inscription and ethnographic representation. Yet few have taken up the responsibility of showing others how to integrate drawing into their ethnographic work. It is therefore a refreshing change to discover a book on drawing that offers hands-on exercises aimed at guiding others in "how to draw ethnographically" (16). Rooted in visual anthropology and located at the confluents of anthropology and the arts, Andrew Causey's book invites us to explore the process of line drawing as an inroad into seeing with utmost attention, engaging with our visual environment and better documenting cultural worlds. The author refers to this kind of active concentration as "seeing-drawing" (11). While the questions Causey raises could productively challenge any anthropologist willing to approach this medium with an open mind, *Drawn to See* is of special interest for ethnographers in search of guidance in their nascent drawing practice, as it is likely to inspire more established artist-anthropologists with ways on how to pass on their graphic know-how to their peers.

The book includes a clever mix of drawing exercises (what Causey calls "Etudes"), theoretical discussions, drawing advice, and ethnographic vignettes from the author's fieldwork in North Sumatra. The backbone of the book, the Etudes, grow in difficulty from start to finish. They aim to help readers to find joyful confidence in drawing and to explore the pros and cons of graphic anthropology (18). Some are supplemented with suggestions for "ethnographic applications," while the appendix links most of them to common ethnographic methods. Importantly, the Etudes prompt one to develop a personal drawing style and to make conscious selections about what will be drawn in or left out of the frame.

The question Causey raises in the second chapter is simple: If observation is acknowledged as one of the two founding pillars of ethnographic fieldwork, why would anthropologists mostly stick to a verbal system for encoding their visual experiences? Visual documentation, contends Causey, eliminates part of the translation act and might therefore be able to render more "accurate" representations (31). After a quick look at the discipline's (post)colonial history of suspicion toward imagery and handmade pictures, Causey develops a series of comparative benefits of drawing and forcefully makes the case for it as a legitimate ethnographic method alongside text, film and photography. The first Etudes in this chapter lead the reader to get familiar with making lines on paper and are an opportune invitation "to see without words" (28), but rather with forms and shapes.

Chapter 3 deals with the questions of subjectivity, reflexivity and ethics as they relate to drawing. Causey urges readers to embrace a personal visual code to facilitate the seeing-drawing process and stimulate the mnemonic dimension of drawing, but also to gain awareness of how one perceives the world and builds visual depictions of it. Particularly exciting are the Etudes 12 and 13, which invite the reader to invent and collect "comic glyphs," or "visual shortcuts," to start building a library

of ready-to-use and meaningful symbols "that will assist you in creating your ethnographic visual documentation" (68–71).

Chapter 4 discusses the existence of a variety of both tangible and imagined lines, the assumptions that "contour lines" – and their authors – create about the nature of things (cutting them apart from both their inside and outside worlds), the possibility of encapsulating the spirit of a subject in the character of a line (curvy, shaky, et cetera), and the consequent necessity for anthropologists to nurture a "vocabulary" of lines (86). Inviting readers to see an object by drawing its surroundings, Etude 18 confronts the reader with what it means to "see edges as lines."

Chapter 5 centres on what can be perceived within edges. Causey reminds us that surfaces are not only loaded with important cultural meanings, but can serve as windows from where to grasp the deeper essence of things. Through surfaces, this chapter engages the reader with an added layer of drawing complexity and touches on a more difficult aspect of drawing: learning how to render the grain of life and spirit of drawn subjects with simple pencil strokes. Even though it appeared to me as slightly disconnected from the rest of the chapter, I found special interest in the section on the existence of different systems of visual depictions around the world and their respective ways of treating perspective (107–110).

If life is movement and drawing an activity that requires one to slow down and fix lines on paper (which points to ethical issues rightly highlighted by the author), how can rigidifying the world be avoided and sketches produced that preserve some sense of dynamism? To overcome this question, in chapter 6 Causey mobilises Tim Ingold's reflections on graphic anthropology that present drawing as a performative act of making. He concludes: "By recognizing our own aliveness in these thinking acts, by feeling it from within, we may be able to successfully merge the 'participation' with the 'observation' as well as better understand the vitality of those things around us; in this way, we will be better positioned to transmit some of that vigor into our performative line making" (123). Therefore, if specific techniques such as "gesture drawings" or motion drawings can help us make lines that feel alive, capturing and understanding movement ultimately starts for Causey with "the 'sensing' ('seeing') of our bodies from within" (125).

Building on the author's own experience of losing sketches from the field, the last chapter explores the utility of drawing to depict what is absent, to both deal with loss and stimulate memory. While redrawing lost sketches from memory led the author to both reconstruct his bygone pictures and relive the initial ethnographic scene, the conjunction of these "mental snapshots" not only felt authentic to his original field experience but also brought forth information about the scene itself that had not been recorded at first.

Among important obstacles within the dissemination of drawing as a method is the lack of training anthropologists receive in both the making and understanding of visuals. It thus appears crucial that researchers in this subfield engage themselves and others in training "how to draw" for research. For this, even though the suggestions for "ethnographic applications" and the links made in the appendix feel forced at times, *Drawn to See* constitutes a milestone addition to a well-needed didactic approach to graphic anthropology. Causey finds the appropriate tone and pace to be convincing about drawing, and the book greatly benefits from his experience. I especially enjoyed his clear position on drawing not as a stand-alone complement to the anthropologist's toolkit of

writing, photographing and filming, but rather as a flexible, combinable medium: a method able to not only integrate other coding systems but to uphold one's ability to write more vibrant ethnographies (8, 16) or even to support the analysis of photographs (43).

Nonetheless, the book could have benefitted from more attention to the history of drawing in anthropology. While it is clear that Causey aims to show others ways of implementing drawing in ethnographic research, my own experience in taking visual field notes and teaching graphic anthropology convinces me that this very goal would be more easily reached with more consideration to the circumvolutions of drawing in the discipline. That is, I would welcome not only a history of the rejection of drawing by anthropologists, but a reflexive work that integrates the evolution of the uses, tools and techniques of drawing and other modes of inscription with the unfolding of anthropological theories and paradigms. Such a perspective would better inform the reader on the (un)conscious ideas that sustain specific drawing styles and practices. While palpable in Causey's words, this important perspective on the non-neutrality of graphic styles deserved a more direct focus. On top of this, such a discussion could help us expand our imagination about drawing exercises that are pertinent to the anthropological project.

I also wonder if the main advantages of drawing lie in the drawing process as a way of "seeing" or rather in the social performance of drawing as ethnographic participation in the field. Getting confident with taking the notebook out of the pocket and making its contents public, having a reason to be somewhere for an extended period, fighting boredom, getting people curious about the ethnographer's interests and supporting collaboration with informants are just a few reasons to encourage ethnographers to use drawing not only as an introspective process of "seeing" but as social practice in the field. As I have learned by leading graphic anthropology workshops in an ethnographic field school, this practice requires training and deserves calibrated etudes as well (think about graphic interviews and the challenge of speaking and listening as you draw). For this reason, I think more incentives to draw in situ to facilitate interactions between ethnographers and informants could be valuable additions to consider.

But these are minor critiques of what stands out as an original and considerable contribution to making drawing a sound medium of ethnographic research, written in an accessible style and likely to encourage ethnographers to not only develop but share graphic experiences.

Sherine Hamdy, Coleman Nye, Sarula Bao and Caroline Brewer, *Lissa: A Story about Medical Promise, Friendship, and Revolution*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017, 302 pages.

*Reviewer: Martha Radice
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Full disclosure: I had already decided to teach this book before I volunteered to review it for *Anthropologica* (in response to a call for reviewers). *Lissa* is, as the title says, a story about medical promise, friendship and revolution, but more importantly, it is a story told in graphic narrative (comic book)

form. It is the launching title of University of Toronto Press's new series ethnoGRAPHIC, the brainchild of Executive Editor Anne Brackenbury. I thought the graphic format would appeal to students in our second-year core ethnography course, the goal of which is to investigate the principles, processes and products of doing ethnography, thereby – we hope – converting students intrigued by our introductory courses into committed anthropologists. At the time of writing, I won't be teaching the book for another three months, but I am confident that it is going to be a hit.

Lissa is a fictional account, based on Sherine Hamdy's and Coleman Nye's separate anthropological research studies, which intertwines three storylines: two medical and one political. The shuttle weaving these stories together is the friendship between Anna, an American girl based in Cairo because of her father's oil company job, and Layla, the daughter of the *bawab*, or doorman, of their apartment building. Early in the book, when Anna and Layla are children, Anna's mother – like her aunt – dies of breast cancer; once she is 18, Anna discovers that she carries a BRCA genetic mutation that greatly increases her own chances of sharing the same fate. We follow Anna's research and soul-searching in the United States as she makes the tough decision to have a preventive double mastectomy. Meanwhile, Layla's father is diagnosed with end-stage kidney failure, and although Layla, now a medical student in Cairo, tries as much as she can to learn about and obtain treatment of the disease, it becomes clear that a kidney transplant is beyond what the family can afford or indeed accept. Anna and her father return to Cairo to support Layla's family in her father's last days, and both young women get involved in the Egyptian revolution of 2011. Layla joins the medics giving first aid to wounded protesters near Tahrir Square, while Anna joins efforts to identify missing persons (injured, killed, or disappeared activists). The book ends on a note of hope, as Layla and Anna resolve a major misunderstanding in their friendship and express anew their commitment to Egypt's struggle against its oppressive regime. *Lissa* means "not yet," but also "there is still time," for the revolution and for these young women's lives entangled in it. The storylines are reflected in the graphics: Anna's experience is drawn by Sarula Bao and Layla's by Caroline Brewer, with the styles merging toward the end. The pacing and placing of the panels make the book a page-turner: I read it in one sitting, and for once I don't anticipate any difficulties in getting students to "do the reading."

The stories thus woven together, however, need unpicking again anthropologically. *Lissa* includes many resources to help elucidate the substantive research insights so viscerally evoked by the graphic narrative. (A supplementary website, lissagraphicnovel.com, is still under construction as I write.) In one of the three interviews that make up appendix 2, Hamdy explains to Marc Parenteau (who receives credit for the lettering and helped manage the final stages of the book project) the paradox that both medical storylines explore, which is that patients and doctors may disagree about appropriate medical intervention because they have different views of the patient's personhood. Doctors tend to see patients as individuals, while patients know they are enmeshed in social relations of care. Thus, patients might refuse a kidney transplant in Egypt or request a preventive mastectomy in the United States for the same reason: to avoid burdening the people they love. Each of these examples is, of course, embedded in a particular sociopolitical context of oversupply or