

01 December 2017

Dear Professor [REDACTED],

Near the conclusion of my time with HAU Books and the *Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, I would like to voice my objections the management practices and employment terms to which I, and the team members I have supervised, have been subject while working for HAU during the leadership of Giovanni da Col. It is out of a concern shared by all parties for the preservation and sustainability of HAU that I hope, in making these issues known, HAU might be able to correct its course in order to fulfill the hopes that all of its team members have worked so tirelessly to achieve.

I would like to preface the comments below by noting that many of the concerns that I list here I have previously voiced to Giovanni, nearly verbatim. I've outlined my concerns for you below, and concluded this letter with a brief note as to how this has affected me personally.

I. LACK OF PROPER FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, TRANSPARENCY, AND ADHERENCE TO STATED PRINCIPLES

Lack of records. I cannot claim to have a full understanding of HAU's finances as I have no access to banking records or internal records of income and costs (moreover, I have been told that there are none of the latter). Given its status as a non-profit, I am very concerned about the lack of transparent bookkeeping.

- Giovanni has previously stated in emails that he “doesn’t even check the account anymore” and therefore he doesn’t notify or verify that fulfilled invoices have actually come in, just that we have verification from the sources of the funds that they are on their way.
- Since September, I have been in charge of HAU NET invoices. I had asked for a current file of all members and their membership agreements – I still have yet to receive one despite the clear hurdle to requesting funds when the amount and parties are unknown. This leads me to believe there is no master file or compiled list of our current agreements with HAU NET members – meaning there is not only no standardized means of soliciting member funds each year, but there is also no running total of how much money is taken from member universities or documentation of where that funding goes.
- I was asked back in July to create a business plan for the books – primarily an internal cost sheet per book and per season, as well as estimations of income. Given the gaps in information provided me, this was an exercise in futility, but it was also clear that such basic

financial information about the press was not only not available to me, but not documented in a transparent manner at all.

False representation of costs associated with production. Of course, I acknowledge that given my position, I am not privy to larger, infrastructural costs associated with keeping the press afloat, but I am aware of the direct costs (copyediting, typesetting, our graphic designer's invoices, and my own compensation) and I believe that we have been asking for author subventions far larger than what is required, particularly since HAU NET is supposed to ease the burden on each manuscript.

- Book authors are solicited for funds for the publication of their books, without which the book will be dropped from our front list. The amount of this subvention is altered according to the project, ranging from \$5,000.00 to \$11,000.00, to which Giovanni may also add special printing costs, etc.
- Giovanni has also inflated estimates of production costs in order to be awarded larger amounts from subvention funds at universities, most recently in the application to the Hull Fund for the subvention of Terence Turner's *Fire of the jaguar*.

Practices that undermine or directly contradict stated principles and policies. Most concerning is the extent to which the APCs for articles are manipulated. As noted by the previous managing editor, there is a clear pattern in privileging articles written by authors with funding.

- If asked, I can provide the names of
 - a series of authors that have been awaiting a final editorial decision since October, some since September.
 - a series of authors that were pushed through the review process with the explicit intent of having them published in the 7(3) issue, including soliciting the quick opinions of friends, and pushing the author through quick revisions. These authors notably have been able to solicit funds for APCs.
 - in one case, Giovanni tried to cut one article from the 7(2) issue after the author completed all due diligence to solicit funds and provided us with the documentation proving rejection (as our policy requires). It was only the logistical difficulty in repagination and reregistration of DOI that made him reconsider.
- Though membership in HAU NET should waive the APC policy for authors at certain member institutions (though levels of membership have been implied, it has never been explicitly outlined), Giovanni has directed me on several occasions to solicit funds from authors in member institutions and we have accepted funds from those institutions.
- Invoices regularly quote different amounts dependent upon the institution or author – not tethered to any actual production costs.
- Giovanni has directed permissions fees to be invoiced for the use of articles published in the Journal, despite the OA status of the Journal and the fact that all articles are licensed as CC BY (attribution only).

Other legal grey areas or calculated risks.

- On more than one occasion Giovanni has intentionally not pursued use permissions or paid invoiced permissions fees because he believes the publishers are “crooks.” More often, payments are delayed until invoices are long past due, and the book has long since been published. The payment of permissions fees nearly a year after the Benveniste dictionary was published is likely the clearest example.

- Many of our cover images in the past have been used without obtaining permissions, likely images within volumes as well.
- It appears that our mailing lists have been compiled without express consent of those listed. It may sound trivial, but the auditing of non-profit mailing lists (particularly since half of the documentation done for such audits is already completed by the platform we use, MailChimp) is a real legal issue related to anti-spamming laws in the US.

II. IRRESPONSIBLE STAFFING AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

I would like to preface the following by noting that, at this point in the professionalization and institutionalization of HAU, I would hope there would be greater inroads in increasing the compensation and formalizing the terms of employment of HAU team members. The following concerns listed deal with the current structure of using on “freelance contracts” for all team members, which I believe is wholly unsustainable.

Affidavits and responsibility drift. To be succinct, the tasks noted in the affidavits (I am personally aware of the language in editorial assistant, graphic designer, and managing editor affidavits) are broad. I, like other team members, signed on to these affidavits assuming that there would be some sort of reasonable check on the amount of work we would be expected to take on given the amount of compensation offered or, in some cases, the hours per week set according to our respective roles. Instead, the broad tasks enumerated in the affidavit have been intentionally exercised to

- [1] allow for the near limitless expansion or drift of our responsibilities to include more and more tasks without broaching the topic of commensurate compensation
- [2] threaten the withholding, or force the concession, of compensation if tasks are deemed incomplete

This, unfortunately, is a pattern we have discerned frequently. Related issues include

- **Assuming the responsibility for paying subordinates.** I was told, as was my predecessor, that if I would need the help of editorial assistants or interns to complete any of the work listed on my affidavit, I should take it upon myself to pay them the appropriate percentage of my own compensation.
- **Forcing early departures.** All affidavits note that compensation will be withheld in full if any task noted on the affidavit is left incomplete at the end of the term of that affidavit. Not only have team members completed a year or more of service to HAU without receiving their compensation, but, given the threats that they will likely not receive compensation even if they do work through their full term, choose to leave early to cut their losses. This is a vicious cycle that has caused an undue amount of upheaval in the daily workings of the press. To my knowledge, I only know of one team member that has left the press at the end of her affidavit term without open contestation with Giovanni.
- **Withholding compensation for costs incurred to the press.** Frequently Giovanni will focus on a single error that cost the press—no matter how small—and note that the funds will be deducted from the team member’s affidavit to “cover the costs” caused by “negligence” or simple error. As our compensation is rarely proportionate to the amount of work we undertake for a given project, these punitive measures are often extraordinarily disproportionate.

Pattern of undermining confidence so that team members will accept a deduction in their compensation. Giovanni's rebukes are frequent and caustic. Setting aside the not easily dismissed mental and emotional wear this has on all members of the team, there is a clear utility in undermining the confidence of team members as Giovanni has been successful in bullying concessions of due compensation in the past—and, frankly, in the present as I have conceded part of my compensation on one occasion as well.

- This has a clear correlation, at least in my mind, to the fact that those hired are often graduate students and not professionals – without the assurance or objectivity of prior experience in publishing, Giovanni's admonitions are entirely convincing.
- I have a series of “notifications” from Giovanni that the press will not pay for my mistakes. He consistently enumerates my mistakes to create a constant barrage of reasons he should either fire me or not pay me.
- These accusations snowball quickly, as Giovanni has made a clear pattern of brinksmanship in order to force resolution—either in the team member quitting, or in the team member forfeiting the compensation due to them.

Lack of training and systematization. Given the consistent turnover of staff (resulting directly from the noted management practices) there has been a clear pattern of “trial by fire” for incoming staff—that frequently results in accepting deductions in compensation as outlined above.

- There clear lack of training incoming staff receives. I had not received near any training from my predecessor in Books.
 - When I have noted that some errors I have made are, at least in part, a result of lack of training and prior experience, Giovanni has responded that such “complaining” is “naïve,” that more “perception” and “confidence” is necessary, and, moreover, that I simply lack “common sense.”
 - When a plan was put in place for my predecessor at the Journal to train me, Giovanni halted her payment after 11 hours of training, stating that no managing editor had every received more training than that and if I still didn't understand the process, it was my responsibility to learn myself. I was later assured by that same Journal managing editor that she shadowed her predecessor for an issue, then produced an issue with his oversight.
- Very few files, instructions, memos, etc. exist as a corpus from which incoming staff could at least consult. Of what does exist, I've found that the templates and work done previously often contain errors or contradictory information that the current management can be held responsible for at any time.

“Shifting sands.” Expectations, protocols, and deadlines change daily making the completion of tasks unnecessarily arduous, as all can be overturned with a one-line email sent in the middle of the night. We've come to call this “the shifting sands” of our work, which of course would not merit mention in this letter except for its clear and demonstrable effect on the public-facing professionalism of the press and its potential to threaten compensation.

False avenue to meditate issues. Following stated concerns about the completion of invoices, Giovanni offered to have my affidavit cosigned by the external advisory board chair, who would then act to ensure the terms and the affidavit. After concluding a few issues, including the forced

resignation of one of our editorial assistants, Giovanni emailed me directing me not to contact her anymore: “you are not to contact Carole for any issue concerned staff management [...] every time you are contacting her for staff management issues you are violating the constitution. You are now formally given an official reprimand, the first of the sanctions prescribed by the constitution.” This left all team members, again, without recourse to any punitive actions that Giovanni might take.

III. LANGUAGE AND BEHAVIOR INAPPROPRIATE FOR MANAGEMENT

Blaming past staff members publicly. From the past several months, I have gotten the clear impression that HAU itself rests on constantly being in a state of upheaval and “transition”—Giovanni constantly uses this as a rationale to extract longer deadlines from all external parties and shorter deadlines internally.

- “Triage” is mentioned consistently to rationalize long hours and absurd production levels—such as the production and release of six volumes this November alone for the AAAs to solidify HAU’s reputation.
- When a member of the staff departs, their name is used repeatedly in subsequent emails to explain all delays or errors. In many cases I have noted that is undue and I think this could significantly affect the careers of past team members.

Pattern of bullying and verbal abuse. The pressure exerted through constant contact with Giovanni has made working for HAU mentally exhausting for some, and intolerable for others, in many cases provoking the departure of staff before adequate replacements can be found or training can be completed, which then further contributes to a toxic cycle where incoming staff members are unable to meet the expectations outlined in their affidavit, as outlined above. Speaking personally, for the past several months Giovanni’s tone in emails has become increasingly inappropriate and unprofessional, including

- Repeated claims that I have been dishonest, “insubordinate,” have gone behind his back, or otherwise betrayed him.
- Repeated use of phrases that are not only unprofessional, but are clearly meant to belittle and condescend. For example, after Giovanni began repeatedly using the phrase, “it’s not rocket science,” in emails, and I asked him to stop. In response, he said it was a “reprimand” and “FYI ‘its not rocket science’ is not a derogatory or offensive phrase but a humorous one according to the Cambridge dictionary.”
- Such tirades come at the drop of a hat, varying between lengthy paragraphs written with his iPhone and brief, biting reprimands shared with authors or other members of the HAU community cc’d. At one point, Giovanni mistakenly cc’d the entire AnthroMatters listserv when rebuking me.
- At times, particularly when a team member has decided to resign, Giovanni has made clear his intentions to slander them in professional circles, once even going so far as to ask me to rewrite my own affidavit to note that if I would leave before the term stated, I would be subject to being “blacklisted” by Giovanni in all the anthropology departments where he might exert his influence.

Threats of legal action. I, personally, have been threatened with legal action by Giovanni da Col several times in relation to the completion of my affidavit. While the mechanism for a legal suit against one of HAU’s team members has never been made clear, he has threatened to sue as an

individual while also flaunting the legal grey area HAU itself is in: “You can check the status of an ‘unincorporated association’ according to UK law and see what it does entail in terms of responsibilities. Law and morality (taken as responsibility towards authors) are on my side.”

To speak to my personal experience, I would like to note that in the months I have worked for HAU, the practices I have noted above have caused me to empty my savings in trying to make this position sustainable.

As this position is not technically that of a fulltime employee, but that of a freelancer, **I have been expected to work nonstop** to complete work according to whatever deadlines Giovanni might dictate. After stating concern that this would be unsustainable for more than a couple months of “triage,” Giovanni noted as a freelancer I work according to deadlines, and therefore need to “work 20 hours a day to deliver” or more, despite my many attempts to demonstrate that deadlines are simply not feasible. I am then held accountable for the projects completed past deadline. Because of a false representation of the status of projects when I signed the affidavit, **I went without compensation for months this summer and fall**—the only compensation I did receive was referred to as “advances” and used to extract further work.

As of now I have **\$6,400.00 due to me** because of work already completed, for book work alone. I have already been notified that Giovanni will “reconsider” deducting a certain amount from that for mistakes. This number will grow by an additional \$1,000.00 for journal work and another \$2,000.00 for additional books by the conclusion of my time with HAU on December 31. According to my current affidavit, \$2,000.00 will be invoiced by the end of November to be completed before the end of December.

With a total of **\$7,400.00 pending**, Giovanni has begun compiling a list of unfinished tasks that must be completed before any of it will be paid—none of which are directly enumerated in my affidavit (which outlines compensation per book project), but which Giovanni has interpreted to be my responsibility; the list includes 17 tasks, many of which are as substantial as running a new call for and hiring new editorial assistants and interns, producing ebooks for our entire backlist, and entirely revamping the marketing program, budget, sales reports, and financial assessment of the press. Given the fact that my predecessor had to forsake a similar amount of funds because of his inability to meet Giovanni’s growing list of last minute responsibilities, I do not have high hopes that any of that money is would be forthcoming without intervention.

For the past nine months I have been working fulltime for HAU, I have received \$6,196.00—about 23 dollars per day while acting as the managing editor for HAU Books, and, for a time, as the managing editor of the *Journal of Ethnographic Theory*. During this time, I have published ten titles (with another on its way) and prepared six more to be published in the months directly following my departure, meaning that in the ten months of my tenure as managing editor, I have nearly doubled HAU’s list in clearing the book projects that had been dormant for months if not years. I have worked countless hours systematizing and documenting all of the many processes of both the books and the Journal in hopes that HAU could further professionalize and increase its capacity. Despite my continued work for the press, and with over half of my compensation held in limbo, I still receive daily threats that Giovanni will make “drastic decisions.” As he has note several times in the past few weeks, if he chooses to fire me, I am not entitled to any outstanding funds the press might owe me.

In a meeting in Chicago, Giovanni repeatedly invoked the idea of HAU as an “artisan press.” To him, I believe it evoked the idea of a press that, from the bottom up, offered an alternative to institutionalized presses. However, to me this only further highlights the biggest issues facing the press—idiosyncratic processes that canalize all decisions, big and small, through Giovanni, the inefficiency and resistance to systematization, and, most regrettably, the extent to which labor is extracted from staff members under the guise of “loyalty” to the principles of the project, and to the project as a “family.”

Like several other team members who have left positions with HAU before me, I regret that the management of the press has caused me to leave, as I have great respect for the principles and intent that publicly undergird the project. However, given my experience in the internal workings of the project, I cannot continue to work to facilitate HAU’s management in its current form.

For clarification or documentation of any of the statements made above, please contact me via my personal email [REDACTED]

All the best,

[REDACTED]