THE ART OF LIFE AND DEATH
In tribute to the foundational, yet productively contentious, nature of the ethnographic imagination in anthropology, this series honors the creator of the term “ethnographic theory” himself. Monographs included in this series represent unique contributions to anthropology and showcase groundbreaking work that contributes to the emergence of new ethnographically-inspired theories or challenge the way the “ethnographic” is conceived today.
THE ART OF LIFE AND DEATH
RADICAL AESTHETICS AND ETHNOGRAPHIC PRACTICE

Andrew Irving
This book is dedicated with much love to the person who encouraged and taught me to be curious about the world: my mother, Olive Beryl Irving.
Table of Contents

LIST OF FIGURES xi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS xiii

BEGINNINGS 1
The limits of the world

CHAPTER ONE 33
Thrown out of the world: A city of flesh and stone

CHAPTER TWO 69
Detours and puzzles in the land of the living: Toward an imperiled anthropology

CHAPTER THREE 103
To live that life

CHAPTER FOUR 133
Rethinking anthropology from a pragmatic point of view

CHAPTER FIVE 159
A disintegration of the senses
CHAPTER SIX
The eternal return

ENDINGS
You only live twice

REFERENCES
INDEX
List of Figures

1.1 John Randel’s map of New York City 1811.
1.2 Omega Oil, West 147th Street, Harlem, NYC.
1.3 Radway’s Ready Relief, Delancey Street, NYC.
1.4 Frank in front of a fading advertisement.
1.5 Xenon by the Pacific Ocean (2013).
1.6 (Sepia) Dreams and false alarms, by Benjamin Trimmier, 1994.
1.7 The sun goes down on beauty, by Benjamin Trimmier, 1995.
1.8 Benjamin sitting opposite Yoda (2012).

2.1–2.4 Leaving Albert’s apartment for the clinic.
2.5–2.8 Journey to the clinic.
2.9–2.12 Approaching the clinic.
2.13–2.16 Returning from the clinic.
2.17–2.20 Sushi bar.
2.21–2.24 Second Avenue and St. Mark’s Place.
2.25–2.28 Walking back to Albert’s apartment along Second Avenue.

3.1 Wheatfield with crows, by Vincent van Gogh, 1890.
3.2 Colours on cardboard, by Juan Arellano, circa 1997.
3.3 Tricolor man, by Juan Arellano, circa 1997.
3.4 Untitled charcoal drawing by Juan Arellano, circa 1999.
3.5 Three days of blood, by Rebecca Guberman-Bloom, 1996.
3.6 Blood work (detail), by Rebecca Guberman-Bloom, 1997.
3.7 Skin (detail), by Rebecca Guberman-Bloom, 1997.
3.8 Aposentos (Blanket 2), by Ricardo Morin, 2000.
3.9 Self-portrait in a chair, by Ricardo Morin, 1998.
3.13 Wall of Harriet Nabesse’s grandfather’s house.

4.1 Lucky Cheng’s restaurant (formerly the Club Baths).
4.2 John Vasquez and Jon Greenberg’s old apartment building.
4.3 First Avenue: The route the body was carried.
4.4 Tompkins Square Park.
4.5 Redden’s “Home for Funerals.”
4.6 Jon Greenberg’s dead body blocking traffic and being carried along First Avenue.
4.7 Neil tries to recreate his brother’s facial expression in the moments before his death.

5.1 Empire chair in the gloaming, by John Dugdale, 1994.
5.2 The death of Marat, by Jacques-Louis David, 1793.
5.3 My spirit tried to leave me, by John Dugdale, 1994.
5.4 Screenshot from Blue, by Derek Jarman, 1993.
5.5 Study after Velazquez’s Portrait of Pope Innocent X, by Francis Bacon, 1953.

6.2–6.3 Comparison with packet.
6.6 Mug shot of William Cullum.
6.7 US Attorney announcement.
6.8 Crystal meth warning poster.
6.9 William Cullum’s most recent painting as of the time of writing: Requiem for Lin Jun, 2015.