Diversity, Migration and the Future of Anthropology

Allegra
February, 2020

Hello! This month we have found some great opportunities for you in diverse parts of the world, and given that broad theme of this month's #events post is diversity, this only seemed appropriate. We hope you'll find the different conferences and summer schools useful venues for your research.

Happy browsing!

As always, if you would like your event to feature in our next events list or if you wish to write a short report, don't hesitate to get in touch with our events admin, Kanchi, at events@allegralaboratory.net or through any one of our social media platforms – Facebook, Instagram or Twitter.

Summer School: Human Rights, Minorities and Diversity Governance: Linguistic and Religious Diversity
22 June – 3 July, 2020
Eurac Research, Bozen/Bolzano (Italy)

Eurac Research's Summer School on Human Rights, Minorities and Diversity Governance is an interdisciplinary, two-week program for all those interested in minority rights and diversity governance. The 2020 edition explores the theme of "Linguistic and religious diversity" by examining the challenge and opportunities of diversity through theoretical and empirical perspectives from Europe, Asia and the Americas. In seminars and workshops led by international experts, participants will critically engage with topics including religion and gender, radicalization, multilingualism, language and intercultural competences, and minority protection mechanisms in Europe and beyond. Field trips in South Tyrol will provide opportunities to gain first-hand experience of local approaches to minority protection and diversity governance.

Deadline for application: March 15th 2020

Field School: [13th CIFAS Field School in Ethnographic Research Methods]
July 20th – 30th, 2020
New York

The goal of the Field School is to offer training in the foundations and practice of ethnographic methods. The faculty works closely with participants to identify the required field methods needed to address their academic or professional needs. The Field School is suitable for graduate and undergraduate students in social sciences and other fields of study that use qualitative approaches (such as education, communication, cultural studies, health, social work, human ecology, development studies, consumer behavior, among others), applied social scientists, professionals, and researchers who have an interest in learning more about ethnographic methods and their applications.

For more information, contact Renzo Taddei

Call for Papers: [Writing International Student Migration in Africa]
13 – 15 July 2020
Nairobi, Kenya

African students are the most mobile students in the world – 5.8 per cent of African students enrolled in higher education undertook study outside of their home country (Kritz 2015). Despite this, international student migration (ISM) in

Africa has received limited attention. This workshop seeks to bring together emerging knowledge on international student migration in Africa and is an opportunity for early career African scholars to develop their academic writing skills to enable them to publish in international English language journals.

Deadline for paper applications: March 31st 2020

Conference: 23rd Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA): Future Asias
6 – 9 July 2020
University of Melbourne

The biennial Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA) Conference is the largest gathering of experts working on Asia in the southern hemisphere. The conference has been a regular feature of Australian scholarly life since 1976. The National Library of Australia has kept a record of these conferences since 2004, using its web archive service, Pandora. A full list of ASAA conferences, and any websites that still exist, is also available on the ASAA website. This particular conference will focus on the theme of 'Future Asias', and will give the attendees an opportunity to explore and discuss the many factors that contribute to the overall Asian Studies success. There will be an exciting program of speakers, panels, social activities and lots of networking opportunities. Delegates will be able to share successful strategies, engage with key stakeholders and develop important partnerships.

Register here

Conference and Call for Papers: ICSAEC 2020: Social Anthropology and Emerging Cultures
23 – 24 April 2020
Tokyo

The ICSAEC 2020: 14 International Conference on Social Anthropology and Emerging Cultures aims to bring together leading academic scientists, researchers and research scholars to exchange and share their experiences and research results on all aspects of Social Anthropology and Emerging Cultures. It also provides a premier interdisciplinary platform for researchers, practitioners and educators to present and discuss the most recent innovations, trends, and concerns as well as practical challenges encountered and solutions adopted in the fields of Social Anthropology and Emerging Cultures.

Deadline for registration: March 22nd 2020

Feature image (cropped) by matthiasboeckel (Courtesy of Pixabay)

With My Life

Theophilus Kwek
February, 2020

‘[…] I will preserve and protect
The honour and independence of my country
With my life!’

First light: a deep purple over the edge of the camp, as the young conscripts

bring themselves to attention on the parade square, their equipment arrayed neatly around them. The words of the Singapore Armed Forces ('SAF') Pledge echo across the dull brickwork, and across the camps and barracks where others, like them, are undergoing two years of mandatory military training – alongside a corps of regulars, reservists and a handful of volunteers.

Since 1967, all Singaporean males aged eighteen and above have been liable for full-time National Service (or 'NS', as it is better known), and around 25,000 of them join the ranks of the SAF yearly. Over five decades – and several generations of fathers and sons – NS has come to feature heavily in pop culture depictions of Singaporean life, its rituals of hardship and solidarity configured as a rite of passage. Indeed, beyond routine declarations of allegiance and acts of service, NS has become a touchstone of Singapore identity, if not of myth.

The close association between NS and nationhood, however, belies the fact that a significant number of these young soldiers are, in truth, foreign nationals. Current figures are hard to obtain, but in 2011 the Defence Minister revealed that 8,800 second-generation Permanent Residents (who are subject to the same obligations) had been conscripted in the preceding five years. When I joined up two years later, I met colleagues who held passports different to my own, and spoke a dazzling range of first and second languages. Many had relocated to Singapore with their parents at a much younger age, in search of work or better educational prospects.

Permanent Residency, in the words of one government website, is a legal status short of citizenship for those who have chosen to 'call Singapore home'. In many liberal democracies, the status is seen as a pathway to citizenship, and guarantees individuals many of the same rights as citizens. By contrast, Permanent Residents in Singapore face a widening gap between their entitlements and those afforded to full citizens. Moreover, despite being liable for NS, Permanent Residents are not assured citizenship. On the contrary, those who do not fulfil their obligation, or renounce their status before being conscripted, risk being denied permission to work, study or remain in Singapore thereafter.

> *What would it mean for a non-citizen to leave his old life at the gates of the camp, and learn to shoot and kill in the name of another country?*

What *did* it mean, day by day, for my peers who found themselves arms deep in the wet Singaporean mud, and were made to yell the words of the Pledge along with the rest of us – but whose position here, at the end of two years, was no less precarious? It would take me years, and my own journey through NS, to find out.

*

I first learned those words at eighteen, fresh out of school and cockily eager to see what all the fuss was about. Up to then, I had mostly gone to what were known, in Singapore's no-nonsense patois, as 'elite schools': institutions which made no bones about the idea that we were *crème de la crème*, and hot-housed us into thinking that we were meant for greater things. Even NS – which at least in theory was meant to be a melting-pot of all backgrounds – promised to be a breeze. As we gleaned from friends and seniors, we would join a 'leadership cohort', and take a special regimen intended to test our suitability for positions in the officer corps.

As it turned out, I would not spend more than a few months in the army, before being granted leave to complete my studies overseas. By the time I made it back for the remainder of my two-year obligation, my time abroad had given me new ways of seeing the camp.

In one sense, it was a site of rigid hierarchies where our worst instincts of elitism and class snobbery, not to mention misogyny or racism, could too easily be amplified. At the same time, having done my postgraduate year in the rapidly-expanding field of Refugee Studies, I was inspired by how my professors were applying Agamben's ideas on the 'state of exception' to the refugee camps at Calais and elsewhere, and realised that the army camp that I would soon return to also produced 'bare life', in its own way. While the citizen-conscript was perhaps the conceptual opposite of the stateless refugee, he was subject to arbitrary

restrictions that, similarly, whittled down his sense of personhood and voice. With this in mind, I began to think of the army camp as an exceptional space, created as an exercise of state sovereignty, and meant to sustain that very sovereignty.

A new perspective on the camp wasn't complete, though, without a sense of the lives within it. And partly because of the time I had spent advocating for refugee rights in the UK, partly to reckon with coming home to a country that felt so suddenly distant, I wanted to take a good, close look at the relationship between citizenship and conscription, two strange and powerful ideas in themselves, as it played out in the experiences of those around me.

So I hit the library. On weekends, as our officers released us to the outside world, I read about the Jourdan Law of 1798, which declared that 'every Frenchman is a soldier and must defend his country'. In one stroke, the French First Republic consigned the feudal army to history, and brought a new political compact into being. Much wider citizenship rights were now on offer, in return for equally onerous responsibilities: the duty to die for one's country, an old ethic made new. As the modern era unfolded, male conscription became tied to various citizenship entitlements, from housing to healthcare, as well as a slew of nation-building myths that equated a militaristic, masculine identity with service to the 'fatherland'.

But could these myths still hold? Serving in a supply platoon with men of mixed nationalities, I was in the perfect position to observe how that centuries-old relationship was coming undone. For them, conscription was not so much tied to citizenship, but simply the price of living in the same city as their families, or retaining the option of making a life in it. Few intended to remain in Singapore for the rest of their careers – an unattractive prospect for these mobile millennials – and questions of national identity or allegiance seemed, at best, outmoded. The famous lines from the World War I poet, Wilfred Owen, came easily to mind. If the myth of '*dulce et decorum est, pro patria mori*' had already rung hollow in his day, I had a hunch that here, in our basement storerooms, it had long lost its sway.

Writing an ethnography seemed the best way of getting at these questions, but I was also wary of starting on one. The discipline has had a troubled history in our region, and it is difficult, even for the most sensitive researcher, not to reproduce the fraught dynamics of knowledge production in a former colony. Yet here was an opportunity that I would not again have: to be conscripted alongside my interlocutors, subject to the same restrictions as them and, under the eye of our commanders, for a matter of months, to share in their hard work and heartaches.

> *I began to take my notebook into camp: as a citizen, a conscript, and a collector of stories. My battalion were already my people. Now they would also be my ethnos.*

*

Even so, I didn't know where to begin. I wanted to start conversations as naturally as possible, but where in the camp were the men truly at ease? In the bunks, there was always the risk of an impromptu spot-check; and given that it was where they had a semblance of private time, I was reluctant to intrude. The alternative was in the shade of the storerooms or garages, where the weight of their vocations would be especially salient. But encounters in these spaces were so contingent that I was rarely in the right place with my notebook at the right time.

Eventually I decided on the office, which being air-conditioned was where the men retreated from the afternoon heat, to enjoy cookhouse desserts (ice-cream on Tuesdays, fruit otherwise) or sleep off the morning's heavy lifting. It was also where hierarchies were established and solidarities formed, 'dead time' was made productive through gaming or small talk, and conversation flowed most freely across the manly distance created by a work-desk.

In this way I had the opportunity to interview fifteen men: citizens of China, India, Malaysia, Taiwan and the Philippines. All had come from very different social and familial backgrounds, and gained a wide range of experiences in the army. Some

were designated as Supply Assistants, in charge of a range of logistical and (largely) menial tasks, while others were selected as commanders, and were trained as Officers or Specialists. Each had passed through quite different unit environments, and told stories that were in turn hilarious and harrowing .

With a few, talk flowed for more than an hour around the open-ended question of their dreams and plans. There were others with whom I sat down for several shorter conversations, interspersed with the demands of their official duties (or viral videos on Tiktok). The wider battalion became part of this process too as the other conscripts, overhearing my conversation with one of their friends, would so often step in to embellish a story or dispute a point.

At the end of each week, I parsed my notes from these conversations, reading and re-reading them against theoretical frameworks of duty and belonging. Unsurprisingly, their narratives were rich and varied. But some patterns emerged, and I was able to identify among them three ‘frames’, which I thought of as their ways of relating, and relating to, the ideas of citizenship and conscription. In the first, *relational* frame, which was most commonly held, conscription was seen as a mode of identification: as a carrier of personal or societal values – both desirable and not – that were seen as uniquely ‘Singaporean’. Others held a more *transactional* frame, where conscription represented a cost to be squared off against material entitlements linked to citizenship status; while a third, smallest group expressed an *aspirational* frame, where conscription was seen positively as a bridge to achieving their transnational ambitions, further afield.

Thinking about all this outside of a formal academic institution was a challenge, and I took every opportunity to test my ideas with anyone who could be prevailed upon to sit down for a cup of coffee. I was fortunate, too, to be able to share some of the work in its gestational phases with an informal workshop of researchers studying aspects of forced migration in Singapore, and at a bustling conference in Sydney, a world away from the starched silence of the camp. For most of the time, though, my best confidants – and sternest critics – were the men themselves, who

forced me to clarify my ideas, and perhaps most importantly, made sure I was having fun.

*

As the months in the camp wore on, the office became the site of many other observations, not all of which were directly related to my project, but which spilled easily into a series of brief sketches and longer essays. These ‘field-notes’, as I called them – only half ironically – made their way to friends near and far, telling them how I was getting on in the army, and sharing a little of the NS experience with those abroad. What I didn’t realise then was how much the writing would help me, too, make sense of the upheavals and transitions in my own life, and nudge me towards a way of understanding myself again in this city I had grown up in.

Returning home, after all, hadn’t been easy. Against the backdrop of Trump’s election victory and the interminable Brexit process, my classmates from grad school were off to do big things in the world: advocating for undocumented children in New York, or fighting human trafficking in the Mediterranean. They had taught me to recognise my obligations to distant strangers, but back here, conscripted on a small island, what were my obligations to those who served beside me in the camp?

Day by day, my informants drew closer to completing their period of conscription, and we celebrated the end of their NS together, with what simple snacks we could carry with us into camp. I continued to meet with some afterwards, as they struck out to turn the aspirations they had shared with me into reality: some taking on part-time jobs to support their families and others, against all odds, going to university. By the time I felt ready to share my research with an academic audience, all of them had returned safely into the civilian world, and begun new lives., I sent off the draft of the paper I had written – containing as many of their voices as I could weave into my narrative – on the day I left camp for the last time.

We, who finished our time unscathed, were the lucky ones.

In late 2018, news broke that Liu Kai, a full-time National Serviceman conscripted around the same time as us, had been killed in a training accident. It had not been a good year for the SAF: a series of conscript deaths, including one in an elite Guards unit, had already prompted public outcry and serious soul-searching. But this was different. Observers pointed out that Liu had been a citizen of the People's Republic of China, and a Permanent Resident in Singapore. On the popular internet forum Hardware Zone, some wondered why a non-citizen would give his life for a country that wasn't his 'homeland', while others hit back with statements of solidarity: 'since he served NS, I consider him [a] true blue Singaporean'. Most commenters were quick to count Liu as one of 'our boys'.

At the time, the same sentiments echoed around the camp, in snatches of conversation in the cookhouse and corridors. Yet who were we to speculate on the value of a life? None of us would ever know what Liu was thinking at the end, whether he felt, in those final moments, if he was making good on the Pledge's too-heavy words. All we could do was ask the same of ourselves: what did it mean, after all, to be serving out this time 'with our lives'?

No ethnography, I knew, could possibly answer this question, and I hardly knew if I could answer it for myself. But I was glad for the window I had been given into the lives of these men – and in the end, for what precious and dreaming lives they were.

Featured image by Alvin Ong.

Call for reviews: Law, technology, Bureaucracy

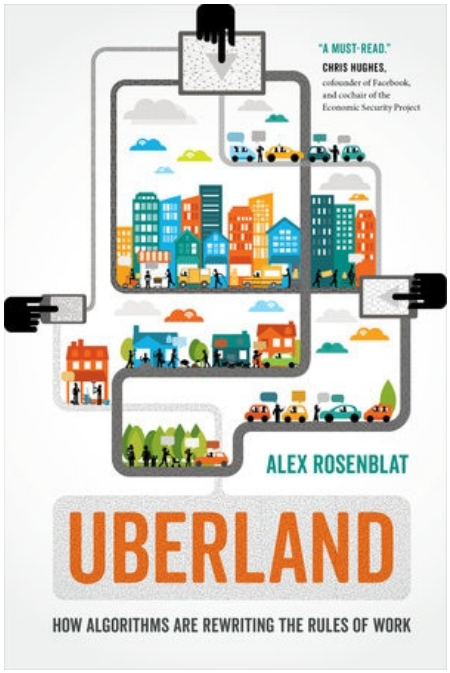
Allegra
February, 2020

Our new Book Review Team has expanded with the arrival of Emilie Thévenoz

(Thank you Emilie for joining us!), which means we are now able to publish more calls for reviews this year. The second call for 2020 – after the one on climate change and the environment we published in January – is about law, technology and bureaucracy. From algorithms in Uberland to law and spirits in Ghana and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, this call should be a delight for political and legal anthropologists, and socio-legal scholars more broadly. Enjoy!

How to Proceed:

As we receive many requests for reviews, please send an email to reviews@allegralaboratory.net indicating which book you would like to review, your postal address, and 2-3 sentences explaining why you should be reviewing the book. Please explain how the book relates to your own research or interests. We will get back to you once we have selected the reviewers.

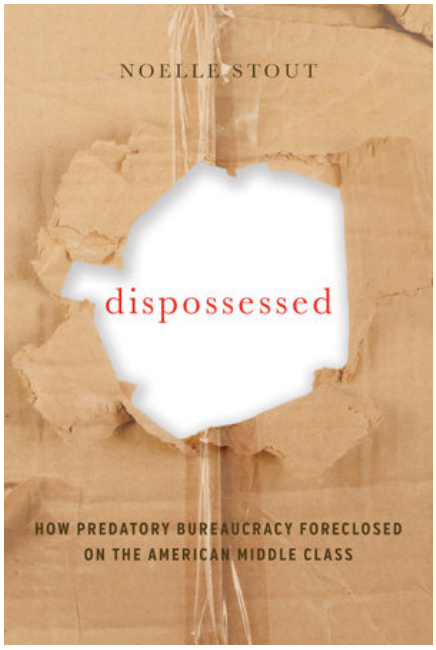


Alex Rosenblat. 2019.*Uberland: How Algorithms are Rewriting the Rules of Work*. California University Press

Silicon Valley technology is transforming the way we work, and Uber is leading the charge. An American startup that promised to deliver entrepreneurship for the masses through its technology, Uber instead built a new template for employment using algorithms and Internet platforms. Upending our understanding of work in the digital age, *Uberland* paints a future where any of us might be managed by a faceless boss.

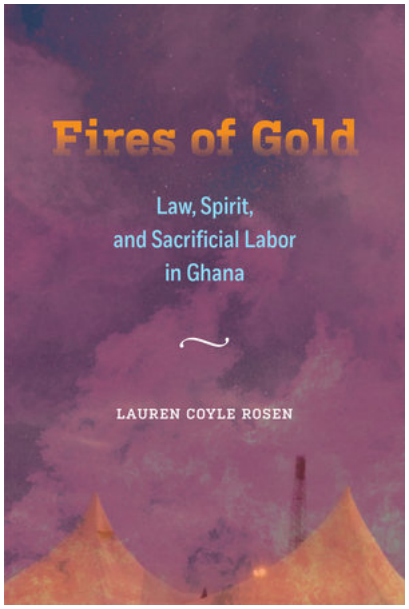
The neutral language of technology masks the powerful influence algorithms have across the New Economy. *Uberland* chronicles the stories of drivers in more than twenty-five cities in the United States and Canada over four years, shedding light on their working conditions and providing a window into how they feel behind the wheel. The book also explores Uber's outsized influence around the world: the billion-dollar company is now influencing everything from debates about sexual harassment and transportation regulations to racial equality campaigns and labor rights initiatives.

Based on award-winning technology ethnographer Alex Rosenblat's firsthand experience of riding over 5,000 miles with Uber drivers, daily visits to online forums, and face-to-face discussions with senior Uber employees, *Uberland* goes beyond the headlines to reveal the complicated politics of popular technologies that are manipulating both workers and consumers.



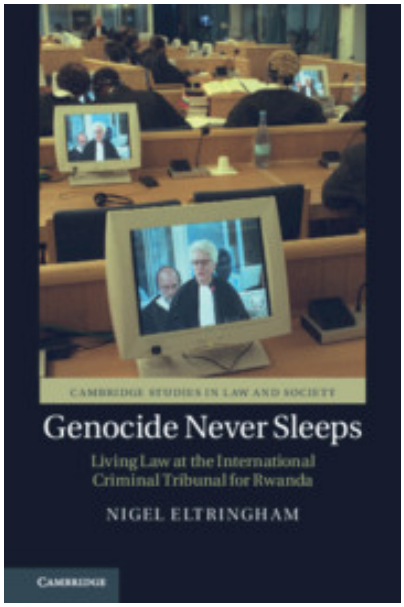
Noelle Stout. 2019. *Dispossessed: How Predatory Bureaucracy Foreclosed on the American Middle Class*. University of California Press.

In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, more than 14 million U.S. homeowners filed for foreclosure. Focusing on the hard-hit Sacramento Valley, Noelle Stout uncovers the predacious bureaucracy that organized the largest bank seizure of residential homes in U.S. history. Stout reveals the failure of Wall Street banks' mortgage assistance programs—backed by over $300 billion of federal funds—to deliver on the promise of relief. Unlike the programs of the Great Depression, in which the government took on the toxic mortgage debt of Americans, corporate lenders and loan servicers ultimately denied over 70 percent of homeowner applications. In the voices of bank employees and homeowners, Stout unveils how call center representatives felt about denying appeals and shares the fears of families living on the brink of eviction. Stout discloses the impacts of rising inequality on homeowners—from whites who felt their middle-class life unraveling to communities of color who experienced a more precipitous and dire decline. Trapped in a Kafkaesque maze of mortgage assistance, borrowers began to view debt refusal as a moral response to lenders, as seemingly mundane bureaucratic dramas came to redefine the meaning of debt and dispossession.



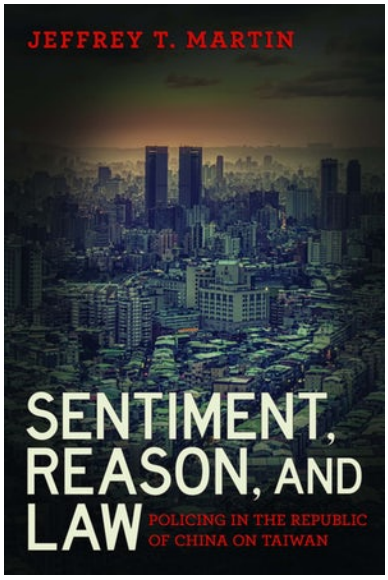
Lauren Coyle Rosen. 2020. *Fires of Gold: Law, Spirit, and Sacrificial Labor in Ghana.* University of California Press

Fires of Gold is a powerful ethnography of the often shrouded cultural, legal, political, and spiritual forces governing the gold mining industry in Ghana, one of Africa's most celebrated democracies. Lauren Coyle Rosen argues that significant sources of power have arisen outside of the formal legal system to police, adjudicate, and navigate conflict in this theater of violence, destruction, and rebirth. These authorities, or shadow sovereigns, include the transnational mining company, collectivized artisanal miners, civil society advocacy groups, and significant religious figures and spiritual forces from African, Islamic, and Christian traditions. Often more salient than official bodies of government, the shadow sovereigns reveal a reconstitution of sovereign power—one that, in many ways, is generated by hidden dimensions of the legal system. Coyle Rosen also contends that spiritual forces are central in anchoring and animating shadow sovereigns as well as key forms of legal authority, economic value, and political contestation. This innovative book illuminates how the crucible of gold, itself governed by spirits, serves as a critical site for embodied struggles over the realignment of the classical philosophical triad: the city, the soul, and the sacred.



Nigel Eltringham. 2019. *Genocide Never Sleeps: Living the Law at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda*. Cambridge

Accounts of international criminal courts have tended to consist of reflections on abstract legal texts, on judgements and trial transcripts. Genocide Never Sleeps, based on ethnographic research at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), provides an alternative account, describing a messy, flawed human process in which legal practitioners faced with novel challenges sought to reconfigure long-standing habits and opinions while maintaining a commitment to 'justice'. From the challenges of simultaneous translation to collaborating with colleagues from different legal traditions, legal practitioners were forced to scrutinise that which normally remains assumed in domestic law. By providing an account of this process, Genocide Never Sleeps not only provides a unique insight into the exceptional nature of the ad hoc, improvised ICTR and the day-to-day practice of international criminal justice, but also holds up for fresh inspection much that is naturalised and assumed in unexceptional, domestic legal processes.



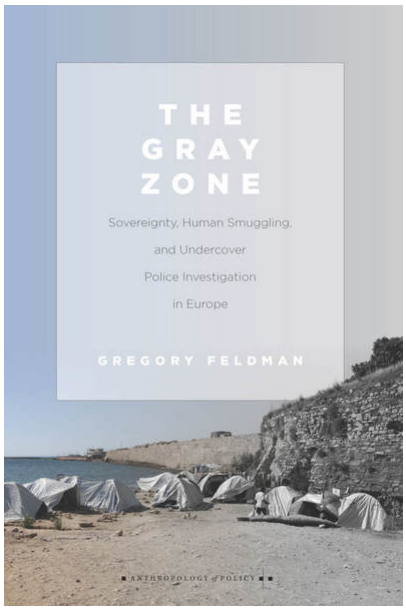
Jeffrey T. Martin. 2019. *Sentiment, Reason, and Law:* Policing in the Republic of China on Taiwan. Cornell University Press

What if the job of police was to cultivate the political will of a community to live with itself (rather than enforce law, keep order, or fight crime)? In *Sentiment, Reason, and Law*, Jeffrey T. Martin describes a world where that is the case.

The Republic of China on Taiwan spent nearly four decades as a single-party state under dictatorial rule (1949–1987) before transitioning to liberal democracy. Here, Martin describes the social life of a neighborhood police station during the first rotation in executive power following the democratic transition. He shows an apparent paradox of how a strong democratic order was built on a foundation of weak police powers, and demonstrates how that was made possible by the continuity of an illiberal idea of policing. His conclusion from this paradox is that the purpose of the police was to cultivate the political will of the community rather than enforce laws and keep order.

As *Sentiment, Reason, and Law* shows, the police force in Taiwan exists as an "anthropological fact," bringing an order of reality that is always, simultaneously and inseparably, meaningful and material. Martin unveils the power of this fact, demonstrating how the politics of sentiment that took shape under autocratic rule continued to operate in everyday policing in the early phase of the democratic

transformation, even as a more democratic mode of public reason and the ultimate power of legal right were becoming more significant.



Gregory Feldman. 2020. *The Gray Zone: Sovereignty, Human Smuggling, and Undercover Police Investigation in Europe*. Standford University Press.

Based on rare, in-depth fieldwork among an undercover police investigative team working in a southern EU maritime state, Gregory Feldman examines how "taking action" against human smuggling rings requires the team to enter the "gray zone", a space where legal and policy prescriptions do not hold. Feldman asks how this seven-member team makes ethical judgments when they secretly investigate smugglers, traffickers, migrants, lawyers, shopkeepers, and many others. He asks readers to consider that gray zones create opportunities both to degrade subjects of investigations and to take unnecessary risks for them. Moving in either direction largely depends upon bureaucratic conditions and team members' willingness to see situations from a variety of perspectives. Feldman explores their personal experiences and daily work in order to crack open wider issues about sovereignty, action, ethics, and, ultimately, *being* human. Situated at the intersection of the EU migration apparatus and the global, clandestine networks it identifies as security threats, this book allows Feldman to outline an

ethnographically-based theory of sovereign action.

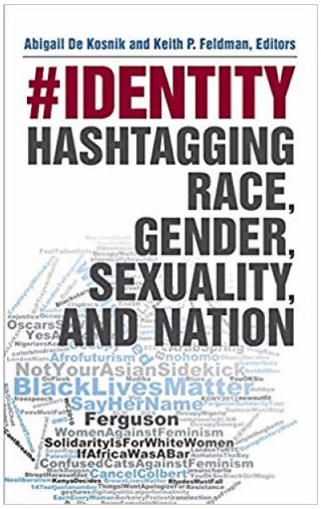
Featured photo: Lady of Justice, photo (cropped) by edwardlich (Creative commons, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

#Identity: Hashtagging Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Nation

Samuel Ritholtz
February, 2020

#Identity: Hashtagging Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Nation by Abigail de Kosnik and Keith Feldman (eds) serves as an exciting reminder of the illuminating potential of academic inquiry. An edited collection of work from the UC Berkeley-based Color of New Media Working Group, the essays of this book analyse "how people of colour, female, and queer people, and people outside the United States have navigated and developed digital networked spaces." Building on established New Media scholarship that challenges the presumed whiteness of social media, the essays in this book reveal and analyse the inherent diversity of experience present in our social media landscape from a critical theory perspective. Conceived in response to theatre director Ashley Smiley's contestation to "dwell for a moment on 'the hashtags you've been forced to remember'" this book serves as a pathway to critically digest through an intersectional perspective the information patterns of our over-saturated daily lives.

In its introductory section, the book starts out with a helpful piece by de Kosnik that conceptually frames what follows. Positing whether twitter is a stage, de Kosnik applies two performance theories to the social media space. First, she uses Irving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* in order to "conceptuali[ze] digital networks as performance", which thus "emphasizes the individual's experience of those networks." Then, de Kosnik applies Marshall McLuhan's concept of the "global theatre" in order to develop an "approach to digital networks as performance spaces" in which "more attention [is] to be paid to performances by collectives. "These two complementary analytical frameworks, of individual and collective performances on social media, lay the groundwork of analysis for the remaining parts of the book.



The book's first part, on "Black Twitter Futures", centres its analysis on the racial dynamics of social media. The section is rich in critical race, black feminist, and new media theory; yet, all the pieces feel accessible to those not well-versed in these theories. While the scholars all explore different dynamics of Black Twitter in the USA, they each shine in their capacity to disentangle how Black Twitter redefines aspects of Black social media users' lived experience, especially the Black femme experience, as well as how the culture production of Black Twitter interjects into predominantly white communications landscapes. The essays in this section point out that while this interjection may raise the voice of Black social media users, it has the unfortunate potential to expose users to racist feedback and cultural, linguistic appropriation. Norris and Rodriguez's chapter on Sandra Bland and the #sayhername movement introduces a useful typology in which to understand the roles different social media users play in producing differing narratives around race. The section ends with a transcribed conversation between de Kosnik and famed St. Louis-based community organizer and civil rights activist Reverend Osagyefo Sekou. The inclusion of this conversation was a provocative way to ground in reality the high theory articulated in the preceding chapters.

The second part, on “Mediated Intersections”, interrogates the political implications of hashtag activism. Presented as a deep dive “into the intersections between digited networked communication and various groups,” the inclusive chapters all examine how social media participation builds community and has political impact. The chapters focus on the organizing of feminists and postfeminists, survivors of relationship violence, queer, Latinx, and queer Latinx people.

> *Importantly, the scholars of this section note that community building and political impact are not necessarily positive phenomena, as Ogle’s article observes that the self-identified feminist and parodic #ConfusedCatsAgainstFeminism blog reinforced antifeminist claims in postfeminist narratives.*

In this section are insightful terms that define common phenomena, such as Lizárraga and Cortez’s description of “queer residue”, as a way to describe the queer Latinx experiences at risk of erasure by gentrification in San Francisco as archived on the social media accounts of the drag queen Persia.

Part III, on “Disavowals” focuses on “the reactionary deployment and effects of social media intent on securing white and heteronormative forms of identity.” The three papers that make up this Part are the strongest of the book because of how the writers critically analyze dynamics on social media to reveal the underlying logics of broader societal trends beyond the internet.

> *In this section, the authors challenge prominent narratives behind popular hashtags. Booten’s piece reveals that while #alllivesmatter has become part of the rhetoric of anti-blackness used to respond to the #blacklivesmatter movement, its uses online defy such clear cleavages with some #alllivesmatter users advocating a civil rights agenda.*

While Ruberg’s piece on the uses of #nohomo on twitter reveal how cisgender

heteronormative men use this hashtag not to perpetuate homophobic ideals, but to performatively overcome their gender anxiety and assert their heterosexual masculinity. Lastly, de Kosnik's piece brilliantly investigates the controversy of the #cancelcolbert hashtag to discover how the cultural progress of the 2010s has produced the rise of the 'divo citizen'. Building off Berlant's theory of the 'diva citizen', de Kosnik argues that alt-right netizens have reconceptualized themselves as threatened minorities of 'PC culture' that voice their racist, homophobic diatribes as acts of resistance against their "strong feelings of subordination."

The fourth part, "Twitter International", looks at the power and potential of new media across the world. The essays in this chapter reflect on the use (or non-use) of twitter by lower-middle income youth in India, the dynamics of different trending hashtags in Nigeria and Ghana, the pan-African twitter conversation of #IfAfricawasabar, and the discursive activism—both online and offline—of black Britons. This collection of essays is more empirical in its focus on the global variation in new media engagement around the world. They are followed by Part V, "Notes from the Color of New Media", which are edited transcriptions of two meetings from the Color of New Media Working Group after the inauguration of Trump and in the run up to Berkeley Free Speech Week. These transcriptions were a clever ending to the book because the commentary from the Working Group members, often rooted in their own experience, once again grounds in reality the esoteric themes discussed in the book. Additionally, it reminds the reader of the weight that this Working Group and book is published by scholars of UC Berkeley, an academic institution that has always been at the vanguard of radical political and intellectual engagement—and with this book continues to be so.

> *As a whole, #Identity provides a range of frameworks through which we can interpret and understand, through an intersectional lens, the oft-times overwhelming cacophony of social media.*

The book's mix of high theory and empirical examples allows it to be of interest to both scholars working on topics of identity and activists fighting for a more inclusive world. The power of this work is in how it takes seemingly mundane or isolated experiences of everyday life on social media and connect them with broader global power dynamics that can empower or disenfranchise. Through critically reflecting on online communication spaces, the scholars make sense of how mass communication become the avenue for revolution.

As with any edited collections, the overall coherence of the text suffers from having multiple authors. While the range in epistemological approaches to uncovering truth can be interesting, some texts feel uneven— whether too short, too empirical in comparison to other chapters, or too much of an experimental poster structure. While this variation does allow for a bit of rest between denser chapters, I think a more cogent structure of each chapter would have allowed the reader to absorb some of the broader themes of the book, as opposed to taking disparate messages from each chapter. Additionally, with some of these empirical chapters, the analysis feels a bit prescriptive: analyse an empirical phenomenon, find a matching theory, discuss results. This formulaic approach in a text rife with high theory and analytical heft emphasizes the descriptive nature of these chapters which at times seem more fit for a specialized journal than this book. With that said, on their own, these descriptive chapters are interesting to read and produce interesting insights.

Another missed opportunity of this text is in its framing. Based on conversations and work between 2013-2015, the book predominately reflects on the nature of social media before "the alt-right took over twitter" (Singal 2017, quoted on page 9) in 2015. As such, when reading about the different power dynamics present in social media performance, weighing in the back of the reader's head is the world we live in today, whether these dynamics still persist when social media has been hijacked by demagogues with legions of anonymous trolls. Certain texts feel almost dated because the dynamics they cover refer to a recent past.

This alleged missed opportunity, though, could be rewritten as simply this reader

wanting more. The book presents a new ambitious research agenda to continue to interrogate how the diversity of the world creates a prism of experiences on the internet. The range of new voices presented by this work is exciting in that it demonstrates the high quality, considerate work of the future of the academy. In 2020, with the primacy and durability of social media established, we need more research such as that present in *#Identity* to make sense of the vulnerabilities and opportunities created by the ever-shifting new media landscape.

Featured image (cropped) by anokarina (flickr, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Review: 'A Socialist Peace? Explaining the Absence of War in an African Country' by Mike McGovern

Rishav Kumar Thakur
February, 2020

In *A Socialist Peace?* Mike McGovern aims to explain why there was no civil war in Guinea at a time when many expected otherwise. Narrowing down on a particular time-period in 2000-2001 marked by widespread discontentment with the then government, economic instability and cross-border incursions from neighbouring states, McGovern provocatively contends that there was no war because people chose to avoid war. Focusing on communities in the Forest region and their attitudes towards ethnic groups dominating the national scene, McGovern finds that "durable dispositions" – "semireflexive orientations to the world that do not require deliberate or conscious thought" — developed in the socialist period under Sékou Touré's regime (1959-1984), acted as the glue of the nation in this crisis.

Sékou Touré was the first President of independent Guinea who ruled the country

till his death in 1984. His brand of socialism was marked by top-down policy making and planning centred around creating the pre-eminence of the national identity over other ethnic, religious or clan-based loyalties. While most Guineans hold the Touré regime with ambivalence on account of widespread state-sponsored violence, McGovern found that when faced with a crisis in 2000-2001, "both the rhetoric and practices of the socialist period" were "resuscitated" by Guineans in a variety of different ways.

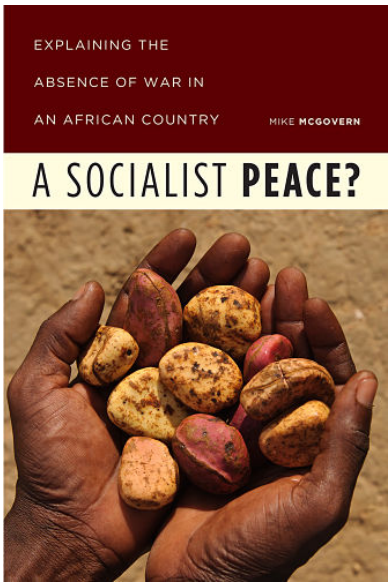
> *A Socialist Peace? is divided into three parts over which this complex argument unfolds by making use of McGovern's long-term ethnographic engagement primarily with Loma speakers in the Forest region of Guinea.*

Part I (Chapters 2 and 3) sketches the creation of Forestière ethno-nationalism. Communities in the Forest region, as opposed to nationally dominant groups such as the Maninka/Manya and Fulbe, never lived under large-scale states before French colonisation and historically practiced African religions other than Islam or Christianity. In Chapter 2, McGovern shows how these differences interacted with nation-building projects in Guinea's socialist era, like the Demystification program, which produced Forestières as the denigrated pre-modern others of the Guinean nation who (stereotypically) play with magic, pray to obscure gods and eat just about anything.

Further, he sketches the story of how socialist land-to-the-tiller policies disrupted the ways in which settlers (such as Maninka/ Manya) had been historically incorporated in the Forestière region by hierarchical uncle-nephew relations. In these relations, men from Forestière groups would give their sisters or daughters to settler men in marriage and, in turn, lay claim to the loyalty and support of the male child born of such unions. Touré's land-to-the-tiller program lessened the importance of honouring such relations along with incentivising rapid population inflow to the Forest region.

Chapter 3 centres around the crystallization of the narrative of being short-changed and betrayed by the settlers among Forestière communities such as the

Loma. Here, McGovern pays close attention to how different stories "became laminated together" in narratives of betrayal —like stories of the host autochthon betrayed by the guest settler, or betrayals of men by women folk— following legal interventions such as the outlawing of giving daughters in marriage against their will by the Touré regime. The processes of lamination formed a "common-sense understanding of the dangers posed by particular kinds of people" against Forestières. These processes culminated in the massacre of Manya in n'Zérékoré, the capital of the Forest region, in 1991.



Part II (Chapter 4) is about how and why the Loma in the Forest region avoided war in a context where they had been toying with the idea of ethnically cleansing the region of the Maninka/Manya settlers. In September 2000 when Charles Taylor carried out a series of cross-border attacks into the Forest region, the "disruption of normal communications and administrative control, and a high level of ambient violence, as well as wide circulation of weapons" provided a perfect opportunity to carry out such ethnic cleansing. Though these incursions targeted United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy/ Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (ULIMO/LURD) rebels and refugees (primarily Maninka/Manya) who had fled to Guinea after being flushed by Taylor from the Lofa County in Liberia, Forestières suffered in these attacks as collateral damage. Further, the Loma were not friendly towards these Manya fighters and refugees as ULIMO/LURD had killed their Loma hosts and destroyed sacred forests in Lofa County back in 1996. As it became clearer that Taylor was retaliating against the Guinean state which had given the ULIMO/LURD a safe haven (and base to carry out attacks on Liberia), organisations representing Forestières and others called on the government to change their tactics in order to send the right signals to Taylor. These petitioners were brutally repressed by the Guinean state.

> *In this context, McGovern builds a detailed case of Forestières avoiding ethnic cleansing, or revolting against the central government, in the weeks following October 2000 when a group of Liberian Loma men came with the proposal of attacking the Manya from a few villages in the Forest region of Guinea.*

In the face of such proposals stoking existing ethnic rivalries, someone in a village where these Liberian Loma men had come to seek safe passage, opposed and quashed this proposal by saying, "Here there are neither Manyas nor Loma, nor anything else: we are all Guineans." Building his analysis from there on, McGovern documents how war and ethnic cleansing were avoided. He sketched the resuscitation of "both the rhetoric and practices of the socialist period" like the resurgence of multi-ethnic citizen militia groups which patrolled neighbourhoods and manned check points to curb the movement of such insurgents.

Part III (Chapters 5-7) grapples with the resilience of socialist structures and rhetoric as the grounds on which politics is played out and national belonging is imagined in Guinea. In Chapter 5, McGovern focuses on the same period of September-October 2000 as in Chapter 4, but moves to discuss the national scene. McGovern analyses how President Lansana Conté in the face of incursions sponsored by Charles Taylor, along with the increased mobilisation by 'internal enemies', took recourse to the socialist rhetoric of vigilance and directed mob violence towards refugees while continuing to protect ULIMO/LURD. At the same time, the Guinean population mounted its critique of the regime using moral categories developed during the socialist period under Touré. Chapters 6-7 deal with the general strikes of 2006-2007 in response to spectacular corruption of the Conté regime and worsening economic indicators, followed by a discussion around the death of Conté and an analysis of the successor regime of Dadis Camara (2008-2009). In doing so, McGovern works to identify some shifts in what he terms as the political "common sense" in Guinea, including the dwindling coinage of durable dispositions developed under the socialist era.

> *Through a very detailed study of Guinea, A Socialist Peace? engages deeply with a rich set of theoretical questions. It is, thus, a must read for scholars who are grappling with questions of conflict, resilience, social memory and the dynamics of temporality both within and outside West Africa.*

This book opens up a number of windows for further research. Firstly, McGovern's thinking around how the socialist legacy lives on in generations which did not have direct experience of living under the Touré regime encourages more work on understanding how such inheritances are transferred to and cultivated among newer generations. Secondly, it shows how historically sensitive ethnography may provide valuable inroads to studying the long-run (unexpected and perhaps non-intentional) interactions of state policies and societies. Such studies may importantly complement what is learnt from traditional policy evaluations with constrained time-frames and light-touch approaches. Thirdly, because McGovern builds his chapter on the avoidance of war (Chapter 4) by using his own experiences in Macenta Préfecture in 2000-2001 along with detailed notes from an anonymous research colleague, this book implicitly makes a case for collaborative ethnographic projects.

More experimentation and thinking are required to understand how such collaborations may be undertaken enabling ethnographers to tackle research questions over larger scales, greater complexity and time-frames. Finally, while the role of the common man or 'the masses' has been a focus in the study of revolutions, this is less so in studies of conflict. McGovern's thoughts on "weak agency" and his provocations around considering the role of common folk in producing — and avoiding— wars promises an important investigative avenue for future work on peace and conflict.

Featured Image Courtesy of pixabay.com

“Not Your Kind of Artist”: Di-Andre Caprice Davis and the Fluid Mosaic

Di-Andre Caprice Davis
February, 2020

Introduction to the work of Di-Andre Caprice Davis

Di-Andre took part in the Fluid Mosaic by creating a 3rd part of her ongoing art project: *"Not Your Kind of Artist" entitled: Part 3- More than what you Thought.* I met Di-Andre Caprice Davis when she was at the art residency Alice Yard in Trinidad and Tobago (WI). In conversation, the artist explained the title of the series of works. That is, in Jamaica, as is the case in the entire Caribbean region, an 'artist' is almost exclusively conceived as someone involved with music and performance practices. The general public remains suspicious toward visual arts.

> *This entire series functions as visual statements about making art and how to see it. Her art practice elicits a process of encoding and decoding, as a model of communication. Following Stuart Hall's model (1973) in interpreting the media messages, Davis' audience plays an active role with the videos she displays, relying on their own social contexts for interpretation.*

With her series *Part 3- More than what you Thought*, she proposes sensorial *correspondence* with the youth of the Caribbean region and elsewhere, and the general audience. In collaboration with the concepts of the Fluid Mosaic, correspondence is thought of in the way that anthropologist Tim Ingold (2007) distinguished between interaction and correspondence. He defines the latter as the in-between state that articulates a divided world. In-between (different from the two separated words: in between), is a movement of generation and dissolution in a world of becoming where things are not given yet. It is an ongoing condition, a midstream.

According to Davis: "One of my major interests is to experiment with different artistic methods as a way to help with psychological disorders, self-development, memory, problem-solving, consciousness, creativity and thinking. Keeping a mind free to experiment without knowing where it will lead is important to me. This approach allows for discoveries which are part of the creative learning process. I believe that this is a major aspect of socio-emotional development and it fosters a better way of living" (2019). For Di-Andre art practice has an educational

objective: she is interested in reaching out to young people with their own tools and registers. Thus, she most often uses free mobile applications from which she makes postproduction, as well as online generators.

"Not Your Kind of Artist" Part 3- More than what you thought and the *Fluid Mosaic*

The project is a digital installation presenting 8 screens. Three of them will be shared here for the Virtual Museum of AllegraLab.

Di-Andre Caprice Davis takes photos of nature and elements of her country, Jamaica, the urban areas of Kingston and St Andrew, and manipulates them into a new 3rd space, one that constitutes a digital environment. Her work is a mosaic of entities and human beings in a constant state of transformation (Best 1999) and historic manipulation. The artist Caprice Davis shows a visual and sound polyrhythm (Benítez-Rojo 2001) that describes a contrapuntal aesthetic (Ortiz 1940). According to Benítez-Rojo (2001), the heterogeneous societies that constitute the Caribbean are inhabited by "People of the Sea" (p.28). He uses this specific term in order to highlight the various phases of displacements Caribbean people have endured over history. Caprice Davis' work is concerned with 'caribbeanness', and with people of the sea, who live in postindustrial Jamaica.

> *The sea for the artist triggers erratic displacements that accompany living beings, from plants, like the mangrove seeds that float from one land to another; like the hummingbirds that migrate long distances following the changing tropical weather; and like people whose historical displacements and contemporary migrations seem unending.*

Focusing on the motion of the water, the waves and the plants, the work aims to show that: "There is more in the Caribbean than just trauma or slavery" as the artist explained during a conversation in 2019. Her Caribbean storytelling challenges eurocentric and 1st world representations, that conceive of Caribbean

countries exclusively as a post-slavery mortified culture which maintains people in a subordinate position.

These pieces represent the sea, the liquidity of colors and materials, and their mosaic assembly, connect relation-ships (Cozier 1990) visually and aurally. In the screenings, dominant patterns are puzzles of liquid visual realities are in motion.

In *Screen 1* of her series, the colors: black and white, gray, shadowiness and nuances recall the oily surface of the ocean, or of rivers when they are polluted. The images of this screen were taken at the moment when a hospital ship was carrying out medical treatments. The artist described her sensorial memories while recording the images of the putrid smell on the shore resulting from an oil spill. She continued sharing her memory of fishermen's boats floating on the oily waters while they were fishing for the local markets. The fluid surface we see shows the coexistence, the passage and the incompatibility between the elements of oil and water.

> *It is like a "pull and push situation" she said, comparing it metaphorically to the situation of the art communities in Jamaica (2019). This last relationship between art and the artistic scene's social condition in the country explicitly reflects the fluid mosaic itself.*

Caprice Davis' work shows disturbances that provoke entities' mutation. It proposes a natural and digital manipulation of the environment. The oily waters are seen from an in-between position, as the viewer and the artist are both below and above the surface. Moreover, the visual deformation of the oily water conveys the meaning of the fluid mosaic, in which two apparently immiscible elements get together and form a new warped reflection of their previous pure selves. In the artist's video, the viewer is able to observe a deformed version of the fish; as in

the case of the fluid mosaic, the water in the video transforms, making any neat visible perspective impossible. Moreover, the fish can be interpreted as a metaphor of the human condition on the land, illustrating the Darwinian principles of survival.

Di-Andre Caprice Davis' use of colors functions like a fluid mosaic (see *Screens 8*). Like its particles, the colors are fluid and organized. The elements coexist together, passing through the pieces of flowers, plants, animals. There is no direction but a flow, which is defined by Victor Turner (Schechner 1990) as a spontaneous movement in which action and awareness are one. Moreover, the flow is an experience of playing (Csikszentmihalyi in Schechner (2013)): an inner experience of involvement that the artist wants to arouse in the young audience in relation to her works.

In conclusion, especially with *Screen 12*, she highlights the porosity of materiality and the continuous process of eternal passing of the sea itself. The same sea that "shapes" the lives of Jamaicans is blurred by the natural light effect of the slow motion. It is *per se*, the visual representation of the concept of the fluid mosaic, where organic parts flow and constantly modify and hybridize the correspondence between the viewers and the artist.

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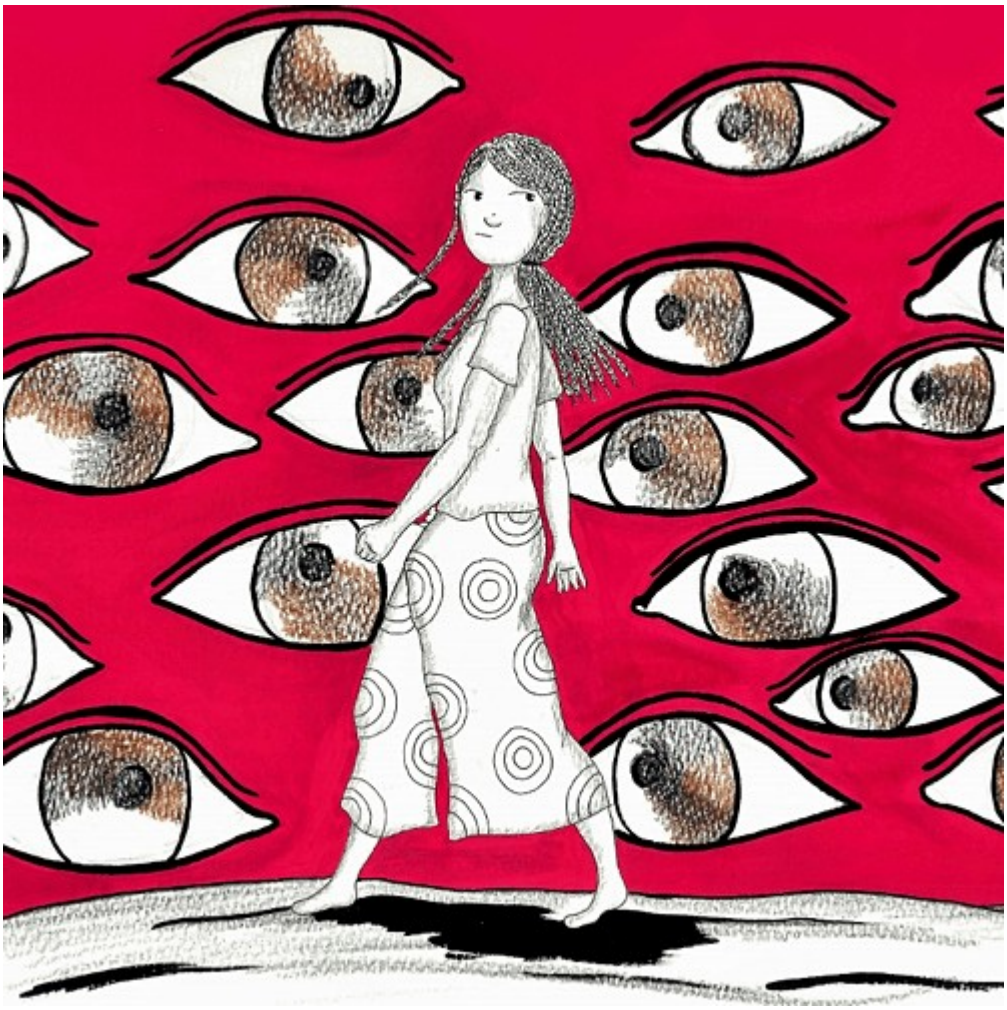
"When Paths Are Closed": Giulia Cavallo on the Fluid Mosaic

Giulia Cavallo
February, 2020



I met Dr. Giulia Cavallo at one of her art exhibitions in Lisbon, Portugal in 2019. For the Fluid Mosaic project she produced a text that is based on her doctoral thesis and her drawing practice. Cavallo's contribution teaches us about the spiritual healing practices in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique. She explains the act of healing as a possibility to open individual "paths" that got closed. In the fluid mosaic model, these "paths" can be thought of in association with membranes. In animals' cells there is a bidirectional communication between the inner and outer spaces of their membrane, similar to the author's explanation of the link between the spiritual and the terrestrial spheres.

> *This passage of information that blurs dichotomies: inner-outer and spiritual-terrestrial can be used as a metaphor when envisioning Cavallo's description of the spirits and the communicative "paths" like the membrane's channels.*

“When Paths Are Closed”

Personal reflections on fieldwork, ethnography and drawing.

Giulia Cavallo Ph.D.

In 2010 I spent almost one year in Maputo doing fieldwork for my Ph.D. dissertation, observing and analysing the therapeutic practices of Zion churches in Mozambique’s capital.

Zion churches are classified as AICs, African Independent Churches, and today they represent a transnational phenomenon that cross different Southern African regions. Their origin goes back to Zion City, in Illinois (USA), where the preacher John Alexander Dowie founded the Christian Apostolic Catholic Church in 1896. Zion churches distanced themselves from the local missionary churches and began to constitute a special category called *amazyione* in Zulu (or *mazione*, as named in southern Mozambique), in opposition to Protestant orthodoxy. Nowadays in southern Mozambique, Zion churches are one of the most widespread religious movements.

In Zion churches in Maputo, disease and health continue to be understood according to relational principles that establish who might be related and how, and who, by contrast, has no chance of joining the family. In this view, the spirits of the family (the ancestors) continue to play a key role, and their collaboration ensures the well-being of their offspring. However, there are differences regarding the “traditional”[1], pre-colonial, spiritual universe, since nowadays the ancestors have to submit to the authority of the Christian God and the Bible. The Zion churches reformulate every day the local perception of evil, which it is still connected to the logic of kinship allegiances, through healing practices. In this context, the act of healing consists first of all on the possibility to open individual “paths” (*caminhos,* in Portuguese) that were closed by the past. This last one, is

habited by vengeful “spirits of tradition” and witchcraft that have to be domesticated to Christianity. Only the conversion of these spirits can help ‘open the paths’ (*abrir os caminhos*) and lead to a future of opportunities.

> *During that year of fieldwork in Maputo, I was submerged in its urban spiritual complexity, in a religious environment where boundaries are blurred, and trans-religiosity is constant; where Christian, Islamic, and “traditional” practices are permeable and reinvented.*

After that very long and intense year of fieldwork, I spent almost two years writing, attempting to describe with words the complex local spiritual world that Zion churches in Maputo reshape every day through their practices. In the backyards of the pastors who received me every day, who fed me and opened their doors to me, I encountered stories of witchcraft, spirits, sorcery, mental illness, bared women, suffering women, single moms, lonely grandmothers, alcoholic men.

In Maputo, spirits are not visible. At least, not for me. I have never seen one. But I saw what they can do. How they can manifest themselves during a ritual, in a living person. I can assure that they are present, they have a story, they have an agency in individual actions, in everyday life. There is a constant communication between the living and the spiritual world. This communication is ambiguous, not always peaceful, linear, congruent. As the healing processes. And I personally felt this fluid heterogeneous coexistence of traits. I embodied it. It was present in people’s narratives and actions.

But how do I truthfully explain it in other ways that is not based on scientific words as the base of my doctorate dissertation? How do I tell about the sense of insecurity that constantly permeate people experiences? And, finally, how to show that these same stories started to be deeply entangled with the way I was experiencing Maputo? How do I show what is invisible to the eyes, but deeply felt in the body?

In 2015, few years after the conclusion of my doctorate, I started a new phase of my life. In that moment I couldn't advance in my academic career, some personal and professional situations were stuck, and I decided to change my route. I started to draw, every day. Since then, drawing became central for me. It became a new way to see the world, and to organize it. A new state of mind.

> *Drawing became also a new tool to explore my ethnography and to reflect on it. It allowed me to communicate what was unspeakable, turning visible what was invisible. Even my emotions during fieldwork, not visible in my academic text.*

Munyama represents one of the more enigmatic words during my fieldwork. Actually, nobody could explain to me this word in a clear and straight way. For almost one year, I thought *munyama* was a generic name referring to a bad spirit possessing a living, but it is not. *Munyama* literally means darkness, in Changane and Zulu languages, and it is a spiritual condition: it is a state of pollution that causes vulnerability to spiritual aggression and that "close the paths". It is a kind of affliction, very similar to a state of disease. And it is only possible to "have *munyama*" if, for example, ancestors are withdrawing their protection causing the permeability of the body to spiritual attacks, if some ritual has not been properly executed or has been neglected, or (and this is one of the main cases I found) if the individual has inherited a spiritual condition from his/her ascendant kin and he/she doesn't know. *Munyama* turns socially invisible who is affected by it: this darkness is felt like a black veil covering the individual, as once it was described to me by a young woman. The body is completely vulnerable, the "paths close", and life gets a brake. This enclosure is revealed from the incapacity to find a good job, or by marital bad relationships, or through the fact of having difficulties to get pregnant, etc.

In a certain way, I can say that this social invisibility, paradoxically, is caused by an excess of visibility, and thus, of a sense of vulnerability. People are always worried of being observed too much, measured, envied. A sense of persecution

and spiritual insecurity is diffused. I personally felt this in my own body. Every little movement in the city, or tiny change in my body was noted and commented. This drawing represents also me, quickly walking in the city, with a constant sense of scrutiny I've never felt before.

Visibility and invisibility.

Individuals who feel invisible, often decide to go to a spiritual healer. Christian or not. And the main power of the spiritual healer is to not only again turn his/her patients (through a long and sometimes laborious process) socially visible, but also to turn visible the spiritual realm, through their own bodies and voices. The healer body becomes a vehicle of communication and long-term negotiations between the living and dead.

During the consultation, the patient's ancestors and healer's spirits communicate, then, the ancestors decide which kind of therapy is more comfortable for *them*. Ancestors and patient. The visible part of the individual is just the minimal part of his/her being. Because an individual is multiple. His/her kin-related spirits are ontologically connected to him/her. An ancestor cannot be separated from their own family, especially when s/he has a *xará*[**[2]**](), a namesake. And when he/she is not connected to his/her kin-related, the spirit is in a wrong position and can become a problem for the livings.

In Zion churches, the use of specific objects during healing rituals, as ropes, gowns or cloths, facilitates the entry of spirits into the human body space. The presence of the ancestors is intensified by clothing through a specific material world. Concerning the strings, called *xifungo*, pastors rarely knew how to answer about their biblical references and the origins of this type of resource. *Xifungo* literally means oath (from the verb *kufungela*, to swear). Originally, the ropes entailed an oath, a request. In the churches I worked with, *xifungo* seemed to be more closely linked to the symbolic concept of "tying". In this sense, tying not only corresponds to the physical act of tying the rope to the waist or other parts of the body, but also to the act of tying a spiritual entity, for the purpose of

holding it for protection or of leaving the body.

The string *tichakachaka,* which unite the entire set of colours used by Zion, is always present during masses and rituals. As they explained to me, this kind of string, and other kind of ritual objects, as ropes, cloaks and caps, do not only symbolically represent all the ancestors (matrilineal and patrilineal), but they physically hold them in the material world. They are a kind of powerful catalysts of the spiritual realm, as are songs and some specific rhythms played by the drums.

> *In this perspective, religious rituals manifest the continuity and fluidity between livings and dead, their need to maintain communication and contact, and in some way, to maintain a memory of the past.*

The material world can contain the spirits, as do the living bodies, in a continuum not explicit in everyday life, but fully revealed by religious practices.

On my side, on the surface of the paper, I tried to give visibility to these narratives. This attempt is entangled with a storytelling, but also with a very personal cognitive exercise. Since I was a child, I have a specific way to organize knowledge and information in my brain. I need to visualize it in a touchable and sensorial structure, or I get lost. I find this not so far from the colourful and material world of Zion churches, and how they organize relationships and information.

Drawing allowed me, in synergy with writing, to organize in a graphic way the magmatic, sometime incoherent, flux of information people gave me during fieldwork. These drawings talk about the people I met, but, mostly, about my encounter with them. I draw my process of understanding and caring about this encounter, turning visible what before was invisible to me, and that now is so familiar. A very personal process of learning and communication which reveals my fully presence in the field.

Thesis: Cavallo, G. 2013. Curar o Passado: mulheres, espíritos e “caminhos fechados” nas igrejas Zione em Maputo, Moçambique, ICS – University of Lisbon, PhD dissertation

[1] Tradition is an ambiguous term which became emic in Mozambique, and it is often used referring to spirits and witchcraft. I maintain this word, but in quotes, taking this premise in account.

[2] *Xará* is an Amerindian (Tupi, Brazil) term which entered the common language of Mozambique, mostly through Brazilian soap opera in the years 1980-1990 (Pina Cabral 2010). In *Changane xará* is *mavizweni*, but personally I have never usedthisterm andoftenpeople resortto the wordxará.

Featured image by Giulia Cavallo.

‘The Lines of Destiny’: Leticia Barreto and the Fluid Mosaic

Letícia Barreto
February, 2020

Introduction

I met the artist Leticia Barreto in Lisbon, Portugal, during a visit to one of her collective exhibitions. In her contribution to “Fluid Mosaic”, she proposes two texts. In the first, she explains her thoughts on the theme in relation to herself, as a woman, an artist and an immigrant. Focused on the concept of liquidity, inspired by the “fluidity” of the fluid mosaic she uses “liquid identity” in her second text. Barreto’s term resonates with the sociologist Bauman’s concepts of “liquid society” and “liquid modernity” (2007). Liquid society consists of social forms that have no time to ‘solidify’, unable to serve as frames of reference for human action. In these conditions, individuals have fragmented lives that create a sense of uncertainty. Differently, Leticia Barreto refers to the term liquidity to a

capacity for being flexible and adaptable that immigrants learn for survival.

In Barreto's second text she explains her previous work "The Lines of Destiny" in relation to the fluid mosaic. She interrogates the work through lines inscribed in human palms, the representation of each immigrant's map of displacement. The lines of destiny she originally created for that piece are individual and unidirectional. Together we imagined the paths of an immigrant as if they were creating lines that followed the movements of the elements of a cell. We imagined that rafts in a fluid mosaic could move in multiple directions, sometimes crossing the paths and changing trajectories. Similarly, the "lines" of an immigrant that displace collectively can be represented as an entanglement of individual directions/lines.

Inspired by the Fluid Mosaic, new questions were posed to Barreto's work "The Lines of Destiny" that stimulate possible evolutions: what happens to the migrants' lines of destiny when they hold the hand of another person? What are the poetical relations of the lines of a migrant who crosses borders hand in hand with another person?

Leticia Barreto on the Fluid Mosaic

In the universe, the microcosm reflects the macrocosm and vice versa. The fluid mosaic in biology, is a model generated in a microcosm that can be applied to the macro. Following this interpretation, I feel the microcosm as my personal and subjective position, that somehow reflects to larger aspects.

When I reason with the concept of Fluid Mosaic, in the way the cell structures' work, in their protective membranes that are simultaneously porous and malleable; when I think of the chaotic movements of the cells in its mosaic with so many different structures that are as well in continuous movement, I cannot stop thinking about my feelings and experience of migration, as I found myself into this hectic world of constant flow of human beings and goods. To live in a globalized world, according to Gioielli (2005) does demand, more than ever, the

experience of inhabiting and belonging at once, to different places in permanent re-articulation.

What I feel, is that in order to live in this big fluid mosaic that is the world, I need a kind of liquid identity that means for me: on one hand, to be able to adapt to a new situation, place and cultural system, and, on the other hand to be able to remain centered amid all of life's chaos of so many spatial, temporal end social changes.

Not all experiences during a migrant journey are easy.

Based on these feelings, the writer Ryszard Kapuscinski speaks about this challenge of leaving your own culture and to face other´s culture and the importance of maintaining your own identity, even in front of conflicts and misfortunes:

"[S-]He [the immigrant] paid a high price for breaking away from his own culture. That is why is so important to have one's own, distinct identity, a sense of its strength, value, and maturity. Only then a [wo-]man can boldly confront another culture. Otherwise, [s-]he will lurk in his hiding place, fearfully isolating [her-]himself from others. All the more since the Other is a looking glass in which I see myself and in which I am observed – it's a mirror that unmasks and exposes me, something we would prefer to avoid." (Kapuscinski, 2009: 92).

Reflecting on Kapuscinski words and his notion of the mirror that I have resonated with since 2010, I, myself, artist and immigrant, need to adapt to the hosting country and to protect my own identity. In this sense, I resonate an inner paradoxical state as have the biological fluid mosaic membrane and its hydrophobic and hydrophilic molecules.

I only realize my nationality and the symbolic weight it has, and the clashes that

my values can represent in the face of another culture when I left my born country, Brazil.

Although I lived in Italy in 1998 and between 2000 and 2001, where I attended fine arts courses with a scholarship, it was only when I moved to Portugal in 2007 that I truly felt the challenges of immigration. My initial idea was to be here for just one year, but I decided to continue my university studies and a little after, I started a relationship with my partner Joaquim. After his parents died, and because Portugal was facing an economic crisis, we decided to go to Brazil to reopen the art school I had there. Our projects ended up not being the way we expected. As the writer José Saramago (1999) said, "… you have to leave the island in order to see the island", I feel that I had to move from my country in order to really see it. We decided therefore, to return to Portugal again.

Now, looking back, I feel we made the right decision to return to Portugal. Not just because here we could make a living as art teachers, but mainly because of the present situation in Brazil with the new government. Sometimes I feel like a foreigner in my own country.

Lisbon, that has been the "port of hope" of thousands of refugees during World War II, has been a place for me to learn, to meet and to overcome new challenges. I learnt more about myself and how to adapt to a new situation and how to re-invent myself somehow.

My first years here as an immigrant were not easy. I had big challenges with bureaucracy. I faced xenophobia, particularly gender based, since Brazilian women in some countries in Europe are usually associated with prostitution. I also had some health problems. All of these, made me doubt if I was on the right path: I thought many times of going back home.

In order to survive this excess of feelings, I started the artistic project *Foreign in Me*, which later became my master thesis. Since then, migratory flows and their challenges, the concepts of "home" and the sense of belonging to a place, have become part of my poetics as a visual artist. It is like what said the poet Rilke: "all

artwork is good when it is born out of necessity” (Rilke, 2001: 28).

‘The Lines of Destiny’ and the Fluid Mosaic

In order to dialogue with the Fluid Mosaic project, I decided to continue and expand the work that was created in collaboration with my partner Joaquim Marques, in 2016 entitled: “Linhas do Destino” (“The lines of Destiny”).

The history of civilization could be represented as kind of map where you can see a continuous flow of people and goods from one place to another. The historical period can change, but the motivations to find better living conditions remain pretty much the same.

Used as a metaphor of a migratory route, “the lines of destiny”, a concept originally borrowed from palmistry, represents a combination of events in our lives and our personalities. This project is about our own biographies, regarding our migratory experiences.

One palm was my own, and the second was Joaquim´s hand. Joaquim´s relatives from Portugal had to escape to Angola, at that time a Portuguese colony, during Salazar´s dictatorship. With the struggles for national liberation in Africa, his relatives had to return to Portugal, dispossessed, and facing the prejudice from their own compatriots. His parents immigrated illegally to Frankfurt, Germany, where he was born. Joaquim came to Lisbon in 1998, thanks to a scholarship of art school. He lived in Brazil three year and a half, and even now, that he is back to Portugal, he feels like “an eternal foreign”, and he likes this feeling.

By translating our own migratory pathways into our palms, and recording them into photography; with this project, we asked to people who wished to participate, to share their own migratory routes with us. Based on all the shares, it resulted that along the migratory context no one remains the same when leaving their

country.

Now, looking back to this work, the Fluid Mosaic project let us see how all the other lines of our hands are connected and intersect with the destiny we focused on.

Following the new reasons/lines of our hands, and life, the collaboration with the Fluid Mosaic let us question on the intersection of events, choices and changes that keep create and modify the one of our destinies as migrants.

A fluid identity, capable of adapting to this fluid mosaic made of constant changing world is needed. The clash with the habits and culture of the hosting country is sometimes inevitable. In the destiny's lines of our lives, many are the possible trajectories, many are the deviations and intersections, with other realities, other people. Along this, it leads to the possibility to be able to transform the rough stone of our personality into a precious gem. Each path is unique and plural as our fingerprints are, symbols of our identity and our existence.

Afterword, thinking of our work with the theme of the fluid mosaic, created a continuation of the "The Lines of Destiny" project, where we are now perusing an interest in the intersections of the plural 'lines' that question and show our life, those of which are not unidirectional, but in constant mutual modification.

Letícia Barreto o Mosaico Fluido

No universo, o microcosmo reflecte o macrocosmo e vice-versa. Em Biologia, o mosaico fluído é um modelo gerado no microcosmo que pode ser aplicado ao macro. De acordo com essa interpretação, minha posição pessoal e subjectiva é como o microcosmo, que de alguma forma reflecte aspectos mais amplos.

Quando reflicto sobre o conceito do Mosaico Fluído, na forma como as estruturas celulares funcionam, nas suas membranas protectivas, que são simultaneamente porosas e maleáveis; quando penso no movimento caótico das células nesse mosaico com tantas estruturas diferentes e que estão em contínuo movimento, não posso deixar de pensar sobre meus sentimentos e experiências em relação à imigração, uma vez que encontro-me nesse mundo caótico em constante fluxo de pessoas e bens. Viver em um mundo globalizado, de acordo com Gioelli (2005)[5] exige, mais do que nunca, a experiência de habitar e pertencer, ao mesmo tempo, a diferentes lugares em rearticulação permanente.

Sinto que para poder viver nesse grande mosaico fluído que é o mundo, eu preciso de uma espécie de identidade líquida. Isso significa que para mim, por um lado, preciso ter capacidade de adaptar-me a uma nova situação, lugar e sistema cultural, e, por outro lado, ter capacidade de manter-me centrada em meio ao caos de uma vida com tantas mudanças espaciais, temporais e sociais.

Nem todas as experiências durante a jornada migratória são fáceis.

Baseado nessas impressões, o escritor Ryszard Kapuscinski fala dessa dificuldade em sair da própria cultura e confrontar-se com a cultura do outro e sobre a importância de manter a própria identidade, una e forte, mesmo perante confrontos e adversidades:

“Arrancar-se à sua cultura tem um preço alto. Por isso, é tão importante ter a sua própria identidade bem vincada, sentir a sua força, o seu valor e a sua maturidade. Só assim o homem [a mulher] [o/a imigrante] pode confrontar-se sem complexos, com uma outra cultura. Caso contrário, vai refugiar-se no seu esconderijo e desprender-se, com medo, dos Outros. A verdade é que o Outro é o espelho onde me revejo e onde me vêem; é um espelho que me desvenda e que me despe, algo que eu preferia evitar” (Kapuscinski, 2009: 92).

Fig 1: Letícia Barreto, 2010. Eu e o Outro (I and the other). Mirrors and transparent adhesive.
Changeable dimension according to the installation.

Refletindo sobre as palavras de Kapuscinski e na sua noção de espelho e com a qual me identifico desde 2010, eu, artista e imigrante, preciso adaptar-me ao país de acolhimento, mas ao mesmo tempo proteger a minha própria identidade. Nesse sentido, eu identifico um estado interior paradoxal, do mesmo modo que a membrana biológica do mosaico fluído e suas moléculas hidrofóbicas e hidrofílicas.

No meu processo migratório, eu aprendi que preservar minha identidade cultural é essencial para a sobrevivência emocional.

O que eu tenho que deixar para trás? O que eu trago comigo quando eu deixo minha terra natal?

Uma grande mala, uma mochila, um universo de sonhos e de esperanças. Trazendo na bagagem não apenas pertences, mas também as pessoas, os sentimentos, as paisagens, as experiências pessoais. Nesse processo é importante desenvolver a habilidade do desapego: deixar a família, amigos, projetos não concretizados; deixar minha terra natal em busca de uma nova vida, novos sonhos acalentados. Nessa bagagem também trago o desejo de um dia regressar à casa; sabendo que a família será sempre o meu porto seguro.

Só me dei conta da minha nacionalidade e do peso simbólico que ela tem, e dos confrontos que os meus valores podem representar, perante outra cultura, quando deixei meu país, o Brasil.

Embora eu tenha vivido em Itália em 1998 e entre 2000 e 2001, onde participei de cursos de belas artes graças à uma bolsa de estudos, foi só em Portugal, em 2007, que senti verdadeiramente os desafios da imigração.

Minha ideia inicial era ficar por aqui apenas por um ano, mas decidi prosseguir meus estudos universitários e pouco depois, iniciei o relacionamento com o meu companheiro Joaquim. Depois que os pais dele faleceram, e porque Portugal enfrentava uma crise económica, nós decidimos ir para o Brasil para reabrir a escola de arte que eu tinha lá. Nossos projetos não funcionaram do jeito que

esperávamos. Como dizia o escritor José Saramago (1999) "…é preciso sair da ilha para ver a ilha", sinto que tive que sair do meu país a fim de realmente vê-lo. Decidimos, portanto, retornar a Portugal.

Agora, olhando para trás, sinto que tomamos a decisão acertada ao voltar para Portugal. Não apenas porque aqui temos conseguido sobreviver como professores de arte, mas especialmente por conta da atual situação no Brasil. Artistas, ativistas, pesquisadores, professores, e cientistas tem sido perseguidos e censurados. Às vezes sinto-me como uma estrangeira no meu próprio país.

Lisboa, que foi o "porto da esperança" para milhares de refugiados durante a Segunda Guerra Mundial, tem sido para mim um local para aprender, para conhecer e para superar novos desafios. Aprendi mais sobre mim mesma e sobre como adaptar-me a uma nova situação, e de certa forma tive que me reinventar.

Meus primeiros anos como imigrante aqui não foram fáceis. Tive grandes desafios com a burucracia, enfrentei xenophobia, particularmente baseada no género, uma vez que em alguns países da Europa mulheres brasileiras são geralmente associadas à prostituição. Eu também tive problemas de saúde. Tudo isso, fez com que eu duvidasse se estava na direção certa; eu pensei muitas vezes em voltar para casa.

E assim, para sobreviver ao excesso de sensações, iniciei o projeto "Estrangeiro em Mim", que depois tornou-se um projeto de mestrado. Desde então, os luxos migratórios e os seus desafios, o conceito de "casa" e o sentido de pertença a um lugar, tornaram-se parte da minha poética como artista visual. É como dizia o poeta Rilke: "toda a obra de arte é boa, quando nasce por necessidade" (Rilke, 2001: 28).

"As linhas do Destino" e o Mosaico Fluído

Para dialogar com o projeto Mosaico Fluído, eu decidi dar continuidade e

expandir o trabalho que foi criado em colaboração com meu companheiro Joaquim Marques, em 2016, intitulado “Linhas do Destino”.

Fig 3: Letícia Barreto, 2016. Linhas do Destino. Impressão sobre papel fotográfico. 70 x 50cm.

Fig 2: Joaquim Marques, 2016. Linhas do Destino. Impressão sobre papel fotográfico. 70 x 50cm.

A história da civilização poderia ser representada como uma espécie de mapa onde você pode ver o movimento contínuo de pessoas e bens de um lado para outro. O período histórico pode mudar, mas as motivações para buscar por melhores condições de vida permanecem mais ou menos as mesmas.

Usada como metáfora para o fluxo migratório, “as linhas do destino”, um conceito originalmente emprestado da quiromancia, representa uma combinação de eventos em nossas vidas e personalidades. Este projeto é sobre nossas próprias biografias; relacionado às nossas experiências migratórias.

Uma palma é minha, e a a segunda é do Joaquim. Alguns parentes dele de Portugal tiveram que escapar para Angola, à época uma colónia portuguesa, durante a dictadura de Salazar. Com as lutas de libertação nacional em África, seus parentes tiveram que voltar para Portugal, despossuídos e enfrentando o preconceito de seus compatriotas. Os pais do Joaquim imigraram ilegalmente para Frankfurt, Alemanha, onde ele nasceu. Ele veio a Lisboa em 1998, graças a uma bolsa de estudos para a faculdade de Belas Artes. Ele viveu no Brasil por três anos e meio, e agora, já de volta a Portugal, ele sente-se como “um eterno estrangeiro” e gosta dessa sensação.

Traduzindo nossos próprios percursos migratórios nas palmas de nossas mãos, e registando-os em fotografia, desafiamos outras pessoas que tivessem interesse, à compartilharem seus próprios percursos. Baseado nessas partilhas, confirmou-se que ao longo do percurso migratório ninguém permanece o mesmo quando deixa o seu país.

Agora, considerando retrospectivamente esse trabalho, o projeto do Mosaico Fluído nos fez perceber como todas as outras linhas das nossas mãos estão conectadas e se interceptam com a linha do destino que era o nosso foco.

Fig 4: Part of the project 'Linhas do destino': that show some migratory reasons that shape the other lines.

Na sequência de novos motivos/linhas das nossas mãos, e vida, a colaboração com o Mosaico Fluído levou-nos a questionar o cruzamento de eventos, escolhas e mudanças que continuam a criar e modificar nossos destinos como migrantes.

Uma identidade fluída, capaz de adaptar-se a esse mosaico fluído, feito de um mundo em constante movimento é necessária. O confronto com os hábitos e a cultura do país de acolhimento é às vezes inevitável. Nas linhas do destino de nossas vidas, muitas são as trajectórias possíveis, muitos são os desvios e os cruzamentos, com outras realidades, outras pessoas. Dessa forma, é possível transformar a pedra bruta da nossa personalidade numa pedra preciosa. Cada percurso é único e plural, assim como as nossas impressões digitais, símbolos da nossa identidade e da nossa existência.

Nessa reflexão posterior sobre o trabalho e o tema do Mosaico Fluído, levou-nos a iniciar a continuação do projeto "Linhas do Destino", onde nosso o interesse será na intersecção dessas múltiplas "linhas" que questionam e mostram nossa vida não como unidirectional, mas em constante modificação mútua.

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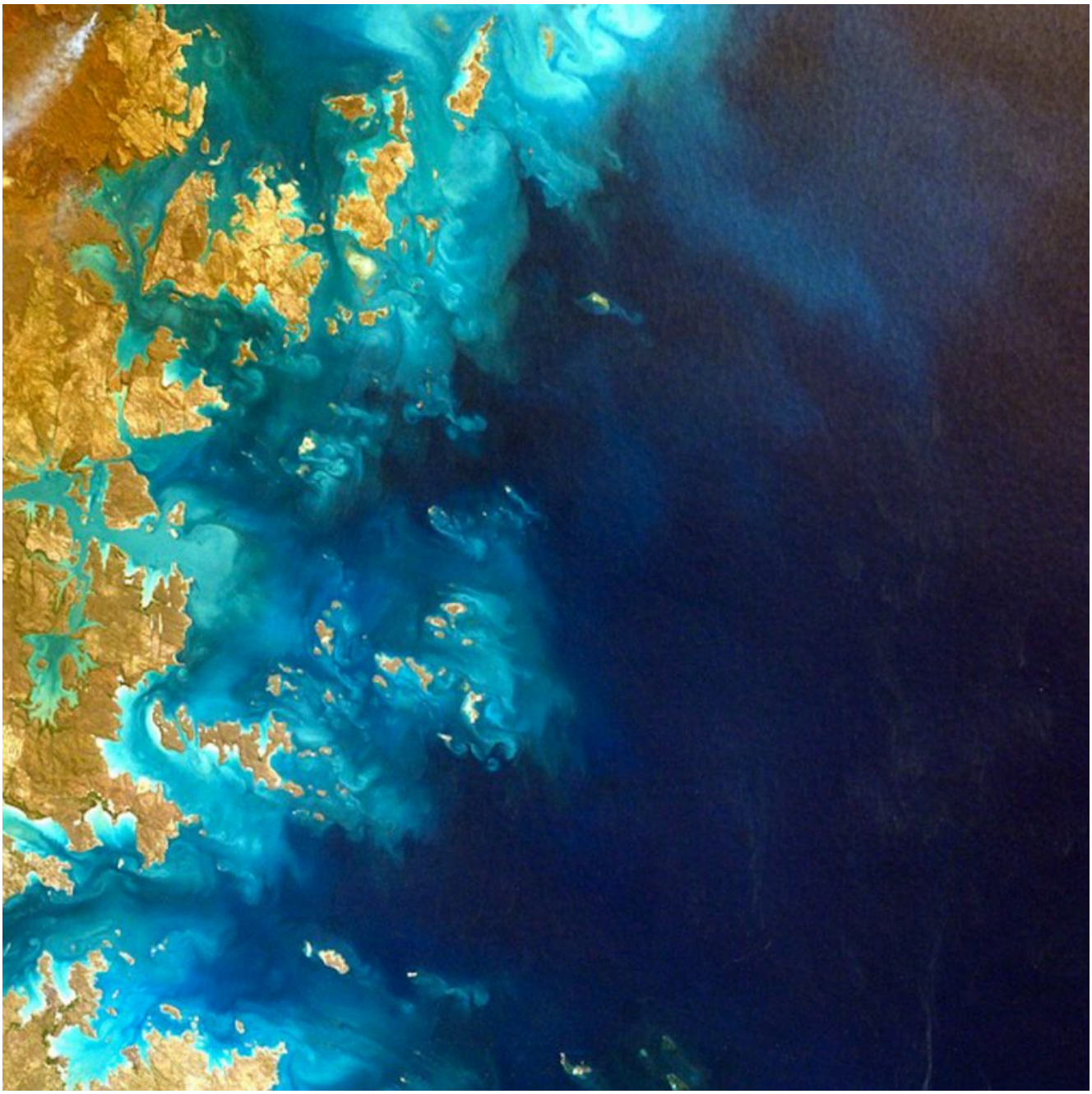
“L’étranger”: Ariane Benoit on the Fluid Mosaic

Ariane Benoit
February, 2020



Introduction

Ariane is an anthropologist and a performer who chose to combine these two disciplines in her professional and personal life. She is now based in Montreal, Canada, but I met her during her doctoral degree in Paris, France.

In our conversations about the Fluid Mosaic that works with biological notions,

she was most struck by cell membranes. She was inspired to interpret the membrane as if it was her body; a master node that joins her up with “others”. From this interpretation, she deliberately seeks to challenge the idea of the membrane (or body) as an absolute barrier that separates entities. Although the membrane does act as a sort of barrier, it is porous and malleable, allowing for the passing of different elements from outside the cells that are required for their existence. Therefore, these passing “foreign” elements are a substantial part of the cells themselves.

In her work, Ariane Benoit named these external elements *étranger*-s. In French, the Benoit’s mother tongue, the word *étranger* “foreigner” evokes the work *étrange* “stranger” linking an ambiguity between ‘someone who is coming from another country’ and ‘someone who is weird and unfamiliar’. This also exists in English, as we would find out when subtitling the song in the video. For psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva (2014), who reflected on the notion of *étranger-étrange*, “stranger” does not exist in itself, but rather animates the repressed traumas of the subject upon meeting with an “other” that becomes strange. The category of “other” is here employed as an antithesis of the dialectic structure “self–other”: “*other* is a subject excluded from a dominant *in-group* which constructs an *out-group*” (Staszak 2008). From a phenomenological perspective, microbes are *étranger*-s that co-depend on Benoit’s body, entangling their existence with hers. In other words, one cannot be understood without the other.

In Ariane Benoit work, she pursues an analysis of the strange that is similar to Kristeva’s. For both of them, the *étranger* does live inside each person: “It is the hidden part of our identity” (Kristeva 2014). They both address the notion of fear, but from different angles. For Kristeva the subject’s fear is internal, due to their inability to recognize the strangeness/foreignness within itself; for Benoit, the fear comes from outside, from the mistrust based on the unfamiliarity of the foreigner, which also exists inside her body.

As a way of overcoming this fear, Kristeva talks about a self-awareness process to accept the inner and the outer part of the self-other (Visker 2005). Benoit in a

different way proposes an intersubjective process through the practice of love that embraces the outer-other within the self-other. Despite this difference, both of them affirm that the relation with the “other” is in the self-other; or as Kristeva states: “the foreign is with me, since we are all foreign” (1991: 192).

In the following piece, Ariane Benoit has based her work on her experience of spirituality. She has explained her process as a limitless frame similar to the psychological term Oceanic feeling (Freud1930). This feeling is the source of all religious energy which permeates in various religious systems. It is a sensation of an indissoluble bond and refers to a nondual experience where the world and the subject are a whole.

In Ariane Benoit’s work, she allows us to dive into the mosaic that is part of herself, submerging in her body of water. Her artistic experience is represented by the liquidity of the video’s images. The viewer is part of the underwater elements, belonging to the shoal of fish and jellyfish. The viewer fuses and dissolves their human boundaries to become a whole with the *étranger*-s.

The author’s statement

Fear, ignorance, vulnerability are emotions and states of mind not really accepted in society, or not really valued for the resources they can give us when we accept them and transform them for our better human interests. My barriers are my narrow vision of myself, of my interpersonal relationships, of the world. Anger, envy, jealousy, sadness, or even the prejudices that I can feel, I look at them, I take them in my hand, in the palm of my hand, and I look at them in order to know myself better. It is ok to be afraid, to feel uncomfortable, but it matters to know who I am, who I choose to be. I choose to be transformation, good feelings that bring holistic health and harmony. I try in my daily life to think, speak, act beyond dualism in order to feel good, and to respond to situations in a dualistic world because I have the impression that we get stuck in trying to bring dualistic responses to complex and interrelated situations in a much more ramified way.

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"Porous Borders": José Reyes on the Fluid Mosaic

José Reyes
February, 2020

Introduction

José Reyes is a researcher and an activist. In his contribution here, he offers us an exercise of autoethnography (Adams et al.)[1], a research method in which his personal experience is used to describe and to deconstruct the cultural beliefs, and practices that, at the origins of anthropology was studying the "other" (Muñoz 1998)[2]. Along with this expression, the practice of autoethnography (Ellingson and Ellis 2008)[3] rejects the division of binary oppositions between the researcher and the researched, offering, as it happens with the Fluid Mosaic in biology, a coexistence between antipodes.

As a "mode of performance" (quoted in Muñoz 1998: 81), Reyes describes his autoethnography through a performative practice. He then writes about it and, in

accordance with our discussions together, I formatted it as it was an international airport magazine, published in two languages, English and French (the language of his migrant location). The French format is developed with an inclusive langue, following the feminist practice of writing.

> *His performance works to treat transition, where the notion of gender is deconstructed, reconstructed, questioned and acted. He analyzes all these elements on his own body and his emotions. The borders that J. Reyes mentions are porous, permeable and unfixed.*

As it happens for the Fluid mosaic in biology, the membrane as Reyes' borders have the paradoxical capacity of containing while being at the same time permeable. He continues to develop the Fluid mosaic along with his performance explaining it as the hybrid zone between two main axes, the one of gender and the one of citizenship. He questions the limits and the porosities of the constructions of the performative gender and the ones of citizenship proposing a performance of queerness (Butler 1990)[4] and postcolonial cosmopolitanism (Appiah 2010)[5].

He explains intimately his embodiment of *passing*, as he states in his text, where he feels to situate himself in a fluid mosaic. The body of the author is explained in its permeability that goes beyond dualisms: he describes his body as both individual and multiple. This multiple identarian presence reflects the paradoxical coexistence in the fluid mosaic membrane of the singular parts and their mobile interaction that form the membranous barrier. The collective, as the membrane here in this theme, protects the author and at the same time it allows expression of his own unicity. In addition, choosing a performance is a choice that deliberately engaging a transcorporeal process between making visible and himself being seen and his statement.

During our exchanges, the author shared his ambiguous dis-comfort of writing this project that led him to face his fears and self-constructions of personal boundaries. Participating in the Fluid mosaic project became an exercise of self-respect and self-positioning towards a public. It also became an exercise of self-

expression and self-protection, as the membrane of the fluid mosaic provides in biology for the elements of the cells. The Fluid mosaic became an occasion for him to start a journey of investigation of his own fluidity as a migrant researcher, as a non-straight sexual through the performance as a practice of memorial reenactment. J. Reyes' performance shows not just a contestation but a practice of productivity of fragmentary identity and citizenship that demands negotiation and acceptance. Following the interpretation of the Fluid mosaic abstract, it denounces a fluid positionality that, both queer (Muñoz 1998) and postcolonial subjects (Bhabha 1994)[6] claim facing the violent imposition of fixity. He declares with his project a sense of 'transcitizenship'; he feels to be the embodiment of a bridge, as it is the membrane of the fluid mosaic, that crosses the Atlantic in his displacement between Colombia and France, carrying with it all its postcolonial meanings.

JOSÉ REYES

"Porous Borders"

> *"Some Air, some air, open the borders,"*
>
> *"Stone by stone, wall by wall,*
>
> *we will destroy the detention centers",*
>
> *"Solidarity with undocumented migrants"*

It is for the "Pride March 2019" in Paris that I for the first time decided to disguise myself publicly. I had never done it before because I did not feel I could legitimately do so because of my cisgender[7] appearance. However, I had always dressed up in secret, as if it were a crime, since my childhood.

Maricas and *Guarichas Kosmicas for the Pride March, Paris, France 2019.*

It is my meeting with the "Maricas"[8] collective, run by racialized migrant people

coming from the formerly colonized countries of the Global South who are not identifying with hegemonic sexuality, that encouraged me to cross-dress, this time collectively, in order to reclaim gender fluidity, but also to denounce a racist migration policy and the neoliberal appropriation of the LGBTIQ[9] community's struggles.

This performance interpelled me about my own identity as a homosexual cisgender man and as a Colombian migrant residing in France. This is how I came to question my own stereotypes about representations of femininity and masculinity, but also around my feelings on what it means "to be a Colombian" and "to be a French" person.

The reading of two texts that advance the concept of "hybridization" regarding gender (Bockting, 2008)[10] and of "*mestizaje*" on a cultural level (Anzaldua, 2011)[11] questioned me about my capacity to situate myself in this fluid mosaic, the theme of this research, allowing me to articulate several worlds of meanings and of representations.

The possibility to create a *mestizaje* of gender and citizenship led me to question my dispositions in order to develop a porosity between my masculinity and my femininity. And to establish a dialogue between my two worlds, the Macondian[12] and the Flaubertian,[13] allowing me to build a bridge that connects the two 'shores' of the same liquid body, the Atlantic.

It is this bridge that would make permeable the barrier that divides human beings into men and women, but also into Colombians, French, South Americans, Europeans, Africans, Asians. A bridge that allows me to construct a "citizenship that is fluid and plural".

My trip at the borders

The Pride March was scheduled for Saturday, 29 June 2019, my father's birthday. Until then I had not decided to cross-dress, because I was worried about reproducing a bad parody of "femininity". So I let my heart decide at the last

moment.

We, the *Maricas* collective, planned for this march the staging of a performance where, while situating ourselves within the strictures of gender, we could criticize French migration policy and the commodification of the “Pride March”. We met a day before the event to buy the costumes we would wear.

We met on Friday, June 28 around 11am in Barbès, a popular district in the north of Paris characterized by the presence of a migrant population from African and Maghrebi origins. Once we got together, we went to a store selling affordable clothes for “men” and “women”, which allowed us to go unnoticed at first.

> *However, half an hour after trying on several coats, skirts and shorts, the veiled lady at the cashier and the customers of the store could not avoid looking at us with some embarrassment.*

In the afternoon, we went to a store selling high heels in large sizes. The person who received us, a mixed-race man with green eyes and short bleached hair, asked us with an air of complicity if we needed any information. This surprised us, especially as we had not really considered wearing high heels, as we did not know how to walk in them for a march of more than four hours. Our only wish at that time was to let ourselves be carried by all these marvelous materials, textures and colors.

It was at the end of that day that I started worrying about not having found my costume for our performance. Since I had planned to wear a black corset and a long-pleated skirt, I suggested to one of the *maricas* to accompany me to “Tati”, a very popular store. Once there, we went where the lingerie was, and when I arrived, I came across Natasha, an Argentinian trans I met a few years ago, when I worked as a social helper at an association for people that are migrant and trans.

The valuable advice of Natasha allowed me to buy the black corset of my dreams!

I did not even need to try it on, which was a relief indeed. She only had to measure my back with her hands to find the perfect size. The meeting with Natasha was a very beautiful moment of intimacy: I never felt censored by an indiscreet gaze or inhibited by a mocking comment. She was very respectful of my desires and very understanding of my fears.

> *Now I think of the admiration I have always felt for her. For me, she had managed to embody what I wanted to do one day: to construct my femininity while keeping my masculinity.*

The day of the march arrived, and I still did not feel ready to join it on my own while wearing my black corset. So before leaving home I just had the reflex to put it in my backpack with my very first skirt that I bought two years ago. However, I observed on my way that the people who were going to the march were transgressing the binary codes of genre. It comforted me and it gave me confidence for the performance.

It is only when I met up with the *maricas* and *guarichas kosmicas*, a collective that played a batucada (Afro-Brazilian music) who affirmed diverse sexualities and origins, that I let myself be carried away by my enthusiasm and, for the first time I did not want to disguise myself in secret anymore. So just before we started the march, I went into a small nearby park and put on my corset with my black skirt, letting myself be made up and taken in pictures.

For the staging of our first performance, which was scheduled for the start of the march at 2pm in Montparnasse, we made oversize photocopies of residence permits and wrote on them: “refused”. We marched holding them up to the sound of the batucada for a few minutes, then we trampled them as an act of rebellion. This performance aimed at criticising the increasing refusal of residence permit applications by police *préfectures*.

For our second performance, scheduled for the end of the march at 6pm at Place de la République, we attached a rope festooned with bags of fashionable brands

to our bodies. If this rope initially threatened to suffocate us, we resisted as a collective, opposing a pride march that forgets LGBTIQ people that are racialized, undocumented, precarious, disabled, and who daily experience racism and discrimination.

Once the march was over, I felt physically exhausted but filled with happiness. During our performances, people observed us with benevolent curiosity. I also had the impression that the fact of carrying a "refused" residence permit had given meaning to our performances and dignity to our claims.

As for me, I was proud to have been able to overcome my fears and to have transgressed certain binary gender borders while taking a critical stand against the migration policy of the country that welcomed me ten years ago, as well as against the commodification of the march that I participated in.

« Frontières Poreuses »

> *« De l'air, de l'air, ouvrez les frontières »,*
>
> *« Pierres par pierres, murs par murs, nous détruirons les centres de retentions »,*
>
> *« Solidarité avec les sans-papiers »*

C'est pour la « Marche de Fiertés 2019 » à Paris, que j'ai décidé de me travestir publiquement pour ma première fois. Je ne l'avais pas fait auparavant car je ne me sentais pas légitime en raison de mon apparence cisgenre[1]. Pour autant, je m'étais toujours travesti en cachette, comme s'il s'agissait d'un délit, depuis mon enfance.

(Vidéo 1) Maricas et Guarichas Kosmicas pour la Marche de Fierté, Paris, France 2019.

Or, la rencontre avec le collectif de « *Maricas* »[2] conformé par des personnes

migrantes racisées venant des suds ex-colonisés et ne s'identifiant pas avec une sexualité hégémonique, m'a encouragé à me travestir, cette fois-ci collectivement, afin de revendiquer une fluidité des genres, mais aussi pour dénoncer une politique migratoire raciste et une appropriation néolibérale des luttes de la communauté lgbtiq3.

(Photo 2) Le Collective Maricas, Paris, France 2019.

Cette performance m'a questionnée sur mon identité en tant qu'homme cisgenre homosexuel ainsi qu'en tant que migrant colombien résidant en France. C'est ainsi que plusieurs questions ont surgi vis-à-vis mes stéréotypes autour des représentations sur la féminité et la masculinité, mais aussi autour de mes ressentis sur ce qui voulait dire « être un-e colombien-ne » et « être un-e français-e ».

De ce fait, la lecture de deux textes proposant un « métissage » au niveau du genre (Bockting, 2008)4 et un « *mestizaje* » au niveau culturel (Anzaldua, 2011)5 m'ont interrogé sur ma capacité à me situer dans ce mosaïque fluide, thème de cette recherche, me permettant d'articuler plusieurs univers de significations et des représentations.

En effet, la possibilité de créer un *mestizaje* du genre et de la citoyenneté m'a posée des questions autour de mes dispositions pour développer une porosité entre ma masculinité et ma féminité. Ainsi que pour établir un dialogue entre deux univers, un *Macondiano6* et un Flauberian7, me permettant de construire un pont reliant les deux rivières d'une même frontière, l'Atlantique.

C'est ce « pont » qui rendrait perméable une barrière divisant les êtres humains en hommes et femmes, mais aussi en colombien-ne-s, français-e-s, sudaméricain-e-s, européen-ne-s, africain-e-s, asiatiques. Un pont me permettant d'ériger une « citoyenneté fluide et plurielle ».

Mon voyage aux frontières

La Marche de Fierté était prévue pour le samedi 29 juin 2019, jour de l'anniversaire de mon père. Si j'avais envie de me travestir, je n'avais pas encore décidé de le faire car j'avais peur de reproduire une mauvaise parodie d'une « féminité ». Alors, j'ai choisi de laisser mon cœur décider au dernier moment. Nous, le collectif de *maricas,* avions envisagé pour cette marche la réalisation d'une performance où, en nous situant dans les frontières du genre, nous pourrions critiquer la politique migratoire française et la marchandisation de la « marche des fiertés ». C'est ainsi que nous nous sommes donné-e-s rendez-vous un jour avant l'événement pour acheter en tout complicité les costumes que nous y porterions.

Nous nous sommes retrouvé-es le vendredi 28 juin vers 11h à Barbès, un quartier populaire au nord de Paris caractérisé notamment par la présence d'une population migrante d'origine Africaine et Maghrébine. Une fois tou-t-e-s réuni-e-s, nous nous sommes adressé-e-s à un magasin proposant des vêtements pas chers pour des « hommes » et des « femmes », ce qui nous a permis tout au début de passer inaperçus.

> *Pour autant, une demi-heure après avoir essayé plusieurs manteaux, jupes et shorts, la dame voilée de la caisse ainsi que la clientèle du magasin ne pouvaient pas éviter de nous regarder avec un certain embarras.*

Pendant l'après-midi, nous nous sommes adressé-e-s à un magasin de talons à grande taille. La personne qui nous a reçu, un homme métis aux yeux verts et cheveux courts décolorés, nous a demandé avec un « air complice », si nous avions besoin des renseignements. Entendre cette voix-là nous a prise par surpris, d'autant plus que nous n'avions pas vraiment envisagé d'utiliser des talons, lesquels nous ne maîtrisions pas d'ailleurs, pour une marche de plus de quatre heures de durée. Le seul souhait dans ce moment-là était celui de nous laisser emporter par toute cette merveille de matériaux, des textures et des couleurs.

C’est à la fin de la journée que j’ai commencé à angoisser du fait de n’avoir toujours pas trouvé mon costume pour notre performance. Vu que j’avais prévu de porter un corset noir et une longue jupe plissée, j’ai proposé à l’une des *maricas* de m’accompagner à « Tati », un grand magasin très populaire. Une fois sur place, nous nous sommes adressé-e-s où il se trouvait la lingerie et, en arrivant, je suis tombé sur Natasha, une trans argentine rencontrée quelques années auparavant, lorsque je travaillais comme accompagnateur social au sein d’une association s’occupant de personnes trans migrantes.

(Photo 2) digitale, L’auteur et son corset.
Collective Maricas, Paris France. © Gilles Martinet.

Les précieux conseils de Natasha m’ont permis d’acheter un corset noir de rêve ! Je n’ai même pas eu besoin de l’essayer, ce que m’a soulagé en effet. Il a fallu juste qu’elle mesure mon dos avec ses mains pour trouver la taille parfaite. La rencontre avec Natasha fût un très beau moment d’intimité : je ne me suis jamais senti censuré par un regard indiscret, inhibé par un commentaire moqueur. Elle a été très respectueuse vis-à-vis mes envies et très compréhensive vis-à-vis mes craintes.

> *Maintenant, je pense à l’admiration que j’ai toujours ressenti envers elle. Pour moi, elle avait réussis à incarner ce que je voudrais un jour faire: construire ma féminité tout en gardant ma masculinité.*

Le jour de la marche arrivé, je ne me sentais toujours pas prêt de rejoindre tout seul la marche en portant mon corset noir. Alors, avant de sortir de chez moi, j’ai eu juste le réflexe de le mettre dans mon sac à dos avec ma toute première jupe achetée il y a deux ans. Or, j’ai observé pendant le trajet plein de personnes qui s’adressaient à la marche tout en transgressant les codes binaires du genre. Cela m’a réconforté et m’a mis en confiance pour envisager pour la suite la réalisation de la performance.

Pour autant, c’est en retrouvant les *maricas* et les « *guarichas kosmicas* », un

collectif des femmes jouant de la *batucada* et ayant des sexualités plurielles et des origines diverses, que je me suis laissé emporter par mon enthousiasme et, pour la première fois, je n'ai eu plus envie de me travestir en cachette. C'est ainsi que juste avant de commencer la marche, dans un petit parc situe près du début du cortège, j'ai mis mon corset et ma jupe noire, me laissant maquiller et prendre en photo.

(Photo 4) Le Collective Guarichas Kosmicas, Paris, France. 2019.

Pour la réalisation de notre première performance, prévue pour le départ de la marche à 14h à Montparnasse, nous avions photocopié à grande taille des titres de séjour et écrit y dessus, « réfusé ». Nous avons marché avec pendant quelques minutes au son de la *batucada*, puis nous les avons piétinés comme acte de rébellion. Cette performance visait critiquer les refus en augmentation des demandes des titres de séjour de la part des préfectures de police.

Pour notre deuxième performance, prévue pour la fin de la marche à 18h à la Place de la République, nous avons attaché à une corde pleine des sacs de magasin affichant des marques commerciales reconnues. Si cette corde tentait tout au début de nous asphyxier, nous nous y résistions en tant que collectifs nous opposant à une marche des fiertés oubliant des personnes lgbtiq racisées, sans papiers, en précarité, en situation de handicap et devant faire face dans leur quotidien à multiples situations de racisme et de discriminations.

Une fois la marche terminée, je me sentais épuisé physiquement mais comblé de bonheur. Lors de nos performances, les gens nous ont toujours observé-e-s avec une curiosité bienveillante. J'ai eu par ailleurs l'impression que le fait d'avoir porté une pancarte en affichant la photo d'un titre de séjour « refusé », avait donné de la hauteur à nos performances et de la dignité à nos revendications. Quant à moi, j'étais fier d'avoir pu surmonter mes craintes et d'avoir transgressé certaines frontières binaires du genre, tout en portant une position critique sur la politique migratoire du pays qui m'avait accueilli il y a dix ans, ainsi que sur la marchandisation de la marche à laquelle je participais.

Notes

English

[1] A cisgender refers to a person that does identify with the gender assigned when was born.

2 This term in some Spanish speaking countries, has a pejorative connotation used in order to etiquette homosexual and trans people. It has been appropriated by some activist groups under a claiming connotation.

[3] Lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans, intersexual and queer.

4 BOCKTING W.O. (2008): Psychothérapie et expérience de vie réelle: de la dichotomie à la diversité de genre. Sexologies 17: 211-224.

5 ANZALDUA, Gloria (1987) : *Borderlands/La Frontera : The New Mestiz*a, San Francisco, Aunt Lute Books.

6 The Macondian universe is from Macondo, a fictive city created by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Nobel Prize in Literature (1982) from Colombia, in his novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The terms here mentioned is in association to the magical realism.

7 The Flaubertian world refers to a psychological ironic universe created by Gustave Flaubert, exponent of French literature realism.

French

1 Une personne cisgenre est celle s'identifiant avec le genre qui l'a été assigné à sa naissance.

2 Terme ayant une connotation péjoratif utilisé pour désigner les personnes homosexuelles et trans' dans certains pays hispanophones. Il a été approprié par certains groupes afin de l'investir d'une connotation plus revendicative.

3 Lesbiennes, gais, bisexuel-les, personnes trans, intersexuelles et queers.

4 BOCKTING W.O. (2008) : Psychothérapie et expérience de vie réelle : de la dichotomie à la diversité de genre. Sexologies 17 : 211-224.

5 ANZALDUA, Gloria (1987) : Borderlands/La Frontera : The New Mestiza, San Francisco, Aunt Lute Books.

6 L'univers Macondiano vient de Macondo, une ville fictive crée par Gabriel Marquez, Prix Nobel pour la littérature (1982) de la Colombie, dans son roman Cents ans de solitude. Ce terme est en relation avec le réalisme magique.

7 L'univers flaubertien se réfère à un univers psychologique ironique crée par Gustave Flaubert, poteau de la courante littérale française du réalisme.

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[9] Lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans, intersexual and queer.

[10] BOCKTING W.O. (2008): Psychothérapie et expérience de vie réelle : de la dichotomie à la diversité de genre. Sexologies 17: 211-224.

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[12] The Macondian universe is from Macondo, a fictive city created by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Nobel Prize in Literature (1982) from Colombia, in his novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The terms here mentioned is in association to the magical realism.

[13] The Flaubertian world refers to a psychological ironic universe created by Gustave Flaubert, exponent of French literature realism.

“In Transit”: Wong Kwang Lin on

the Fluid Mosaic

Kwan Lin Wong
February, 2020

Introduction

Wong Kwang Lin is an anthropologist and a dancer based in Singapore. K.L. Wong asked her colleagues and friends to create a collective choreography that brings together multiple interpretations of a theme. Through improvisation, the dancers interpreted the theme of the Fluid mosaic as an expression of passage and transit. In the choreography and video art, the question of transition emerges. Each dancer embodies the movement, as the elements float in the fluid

barrier. Everyone exists autonomously while enacting and interacting with the other elements in a transitional space. Likewise, the body of the dancers and their gestures express a fluidity and the performative unrepeatability of movements that again allude to the dynamism and chaotic behavior of floating particles in biology. The rhythm of the montage expresses dreamlike scenes that exist between the sleeping and waking states, which link again with the liminality of the Fluid Mosaic. This liminality (Turner 1974) is preserved also between the collective improvisation and the montage, made by Alexander Lim, that purposefully maintained some ambiguity between the real and the surreal.

> *K.L. Wong and the team address the theme of the transit in both the macro- and the micro-perspective. The term transit includes the prefix trans, from the Latin word for across and through. One additional meaning of it is: to go beyond.*

Under this value, the prefix trans is used in astronomy to denote something farther from the sun (Vourloumis and Andan. n.d.). It is under this last metaphoric signification that Wong's project is situated. From a macro-perspective, the spaces where the choreography is performed are the airport, the subway, the bus. Her choreography aims to go beyond borders of individuality and disciplines while performing in spaces that cross the borders. All the spaces host 'entities' that are in transit and transit themselves as well. This directly recalls the behavior of particles in the fluid mosaic. The dancers use props that are transitory as strollers and luggage. On the micro-level, the bodies interact through dance as they were parts of cells that cooperate fluidly while maintaining their diversity.

The choreography proposed for this project looks like the embodiment of the process of transiting. As it happens in the membrane of the fluid mosaic, when the elements are enclosed, they interact speeding up their kinetic. This similar process can be seen in the choreography and its montage, where chopped rhythms and rapid movements highlight the dancers' interconnection. The crisscrossing of the dancers' legs, arms and bodies evokes again the biological crossing of the elements in the membrane as well. The overall work is structured

as if all characters had their own fantasies that play out during the choreography. Some fall asleep and interpret the entire work as a flash back construction, for other it is a telenovela, others are playing at candy crush and then the dancers become part of the game as well embodying the balls' movements; or again, the meeting and the goodbye of friends at the airport.

Reflections by WONG KWANG LIN

The choreography takes place in locations the anthropologist Marc Augé (1992) termed "non-lieux" (non-spaces). Did you think about that?

K.L.W. Definitely, that's the book I'm reading on the train! I like the idea that in spaces where people are just meant to be passing through and not *doing* much, there could actually be a lot going on. Especially since most Singaporeans spend so much of our lives on public transport. Because apart from being non-places, the bus and MRT (Mass Rapid Transport) especially are also *common* places both in the sense that we use them almost every day, and are also meant to be accessible to the general public.

What about the choice of the music and the choreography?

K.L.W. The music is "All the Way" by Nova Materia (2017). We chose it for the complexity and variations in the rhythms, and also the dark or chaotic sense it evokes (at least for me, this feels like a contrast to how passive daily journeys seem to be).

All the movement was either improvised while filming, or choreographed right before filming the scene. In that sense, we didn't intentionally see choreography and video montage as two different forms, but decided how to cut and edit after getting as much footage as we could.

What is the relation between the private and the public space?

K.L.W. People are always watching each other when little scenes of strangers'

lives play out on public transport, yet the transience of the moment means it can feel like such a private space even in a crowd. I don't know if other people feel like there are times you'd just like to fall apart, but just need to trudge through the duties of the day first – but in these periods I love scheduling emotional breakdowns for long bus rides home, because that uninterrupted period is so ripe for overthinking. Sometimes there is a lot of moral panic around how atomized and uncaring people are getting in modern, urban life, but there can also be something comforting about the unspoken consensus to leave the strangers around you alone even if they're weeping, or, for that matter, writhing all over the bus.

I sometimes feel quite uncomfortable in this city, like I'm always being watched or judged, whereas I remember one of my lecturers saying you could wear a banana costume down the streets of London and no one would bat an eyelid. But I have learned from other friends in Singapore that sometimes nonconformity, even audacity can be tolerated more than one would expect, I guess. Though I do imagine there's a lot I could get away with by appearing to be a small, neurotypical Chinese girl (and therefore harmless).

Your video evokes the parallelism between goods and people, that as perpetual transient beings 'transit' in transitory -non spaces- as the malls and the airports etc. It seems to me, in order to make a connection with the theme, that your bodies are transient entities that 'agglomerate' in the action of transiting in a transitory space that exists just because of the transit itself.

K.L.W. I didn't initially think of us as being perpetually transient beings, but that's certainly a valid way of looking at it, and I do like that this position comes with such a sense of uncertainty and possibility at once. For me, there was an interesting tension between the transient, mobile nature of these places or vehicles, and the permanence that we nevertheless associate with their infrastructure. Singaporeans expect public transport to be running regularly (and get quite upset when it doesn't!), and the mundane ritual of taking a bus or MRT

is so significant in forming place-familiarity. When my train or bus goes past particular stops, I'm thinking – this is the door I have to stand at to get out right at foot of the escalator, or this is where I hung out every week after school, or where I used to harbor the tiny, absurd hope of bumping into someone because they'd have to change here to get downtown. It's what makes the city endearing.

> *On a bigger scale, if we are to see ourselves as an agglomerated body, how are we meant to inhabit it?*

Certain affordances arise from physical infrastructure and the built environment, not to mention explicit norms communicated through eager personalities or legal penalties. I recently read a reflection by my friend Alfonse Chiu that felt relevant: "[the street view] is democratic in the sense anyone can be there, but the true markers of civic freedom remain bracketed by the quotidian and ubiquitous presence of surveillance and self-censorship, which is a reason why incursions touching on public ownership of public spaces remain so neutered in states such as Singapore, where an official dogma goes unarticulated yet clearly understood—that public spaces are meant for transit, and rapid ones at that; anything else, get a permit."

Each dancer is isolated and simultaneously united at times, in contact through body or gaze, but paradoxically autonomous from one another. They interact through movements with themselves and with the physical space they are dancing in. What do you think about this interpretation?

K.L.W. To go back to Augé, "Every day individuals borrow, so to speak, itineraries they have no choice but to follow, constrained by memories that are born of habit and that sometimes subvert it, brushing by, unaware of, but sometimes having an inkling of, the history of others, taking paths plotted with a collective memory turned trivial, whose efficacy is perceived only occasionally and at a distance"(Augé 2002: 25) So yes, your ideas of transitory space and isolation/unity at once are very relevant! We probably think of ourselves as separate individuals, yet we incorporate strangers in our daydreams, recognize

familiar commuters who take the same routes every day, etc…

As an anthropologist and a dancer, what is your relation between these two disciplines for this project?

K.L.W. I didn't think very intentionally about 'bridging' the two but I do think they're fairly prone to seeping in and out of each other in some ways. In both areas, I enjoy looking at affective and embodied experiences on what might be considered a small or mundane scale, and dance helps me to clarify and process ideas that I can't quite make sense of with thoughts and disinterested reasoning alone. The dancer Nancy Stark Smith has this concept of an "idiot button" to reset your mind while dancing, but dance itself often functions as that button for me in a broader context, and reminds me to focus on what human experience feels and how people relate to each other, beyond theories and data. Like any other kind of art, I guess – and anthropologists sometimes talk about ethnography as a kind of art or involving elements or artistry, because this effectively brings across sensory or emotional states that are analytically significant.

The Team

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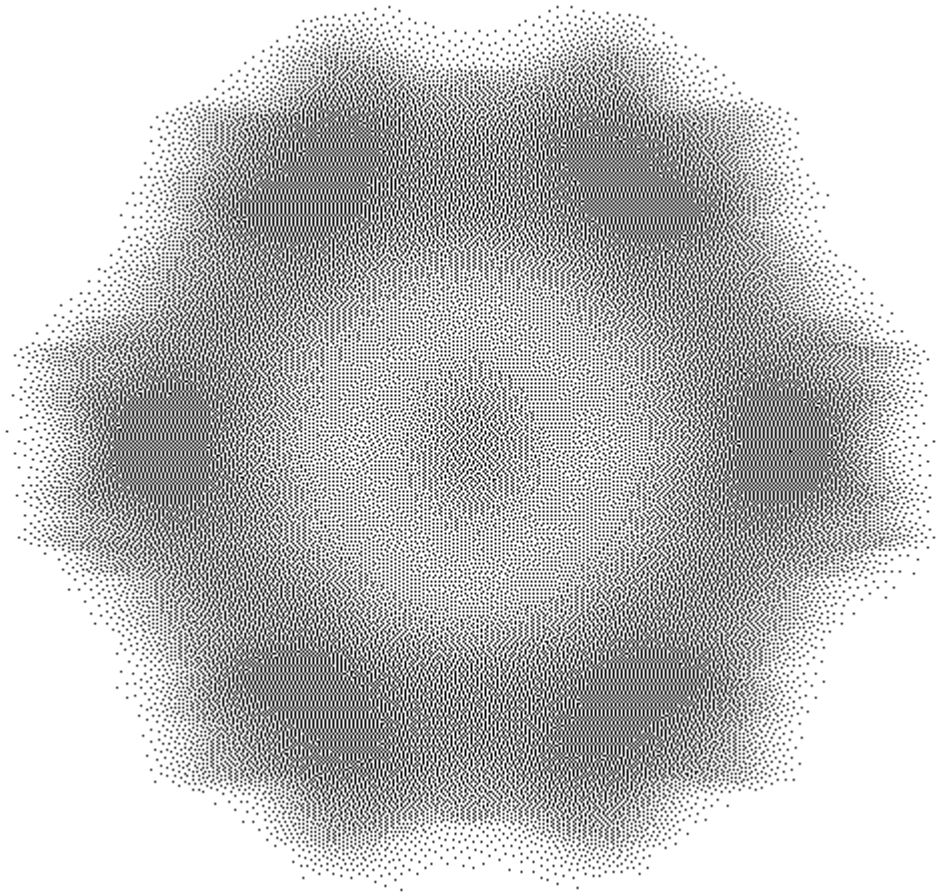
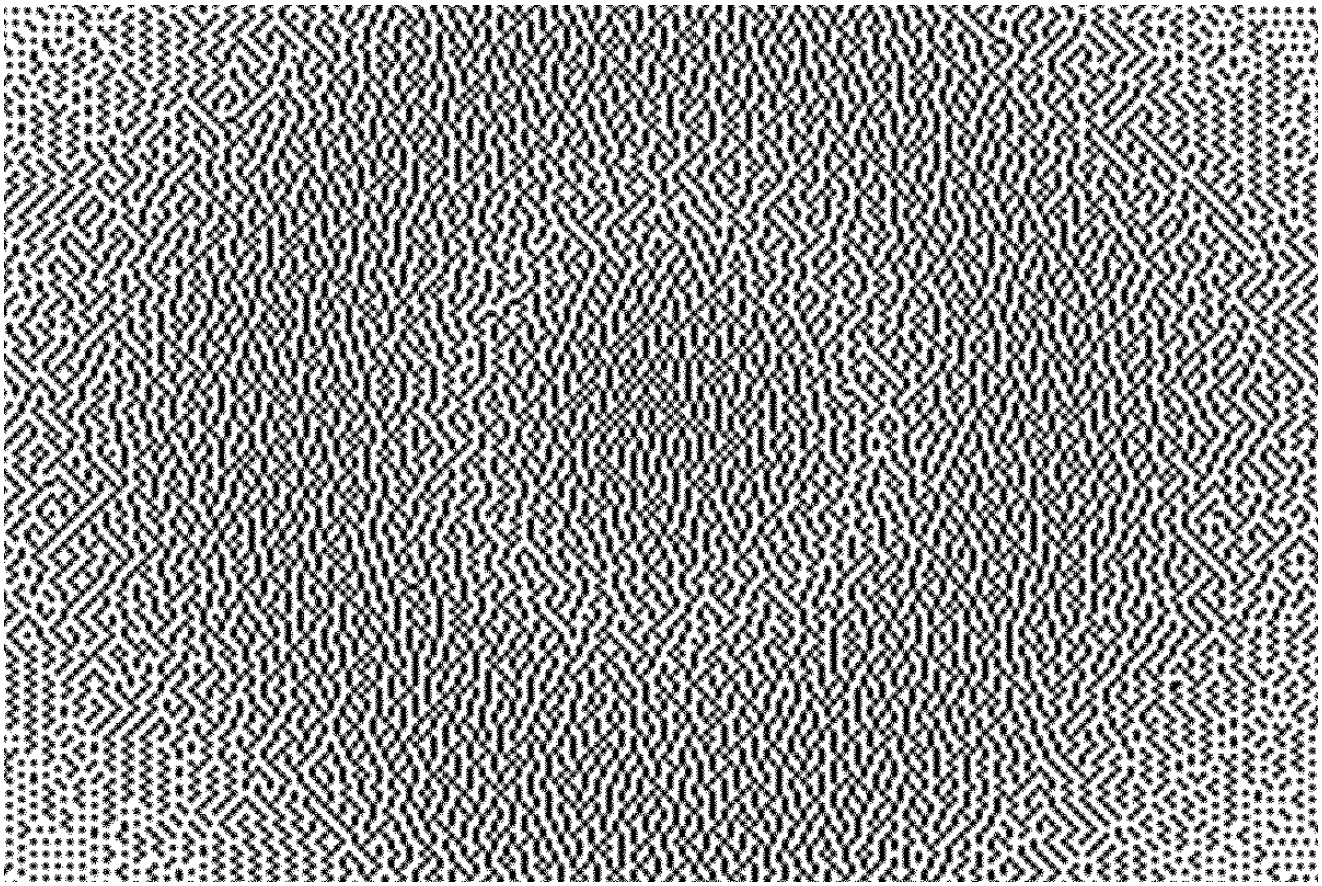
Featured image by Ian Yeo (courtesy of Unsplash.com).

"On the Fluid Mosaic": Rodell Warner

Rodell Warner
February, 2020





Introduction

I met Rodell Warner in Trinidad while he was collaborating at Alice Yard art residency in Trinidad and Tobago, West Indies and then a second time when he exhibited his works at the Third Horizon Caribbean Festival in Miami, USA. The artist's contribution to the Fluid Mosaic is inspired by the sensorial synesthesia-s he felt while thinking about the theme and its theoretical explanation.

In our exchanges about his contribution, he talks about the feeling of wonder he feels while working artistically. The artist explains it as the beginning of his creative process. As Plato (*Teeto 155d*) and Aristoteles (Metafisica 982b) stated, the *thaumazō*, which etymologically means to wonder, is the main axe that pushed the artist to contribute to this transdisciplinary project.

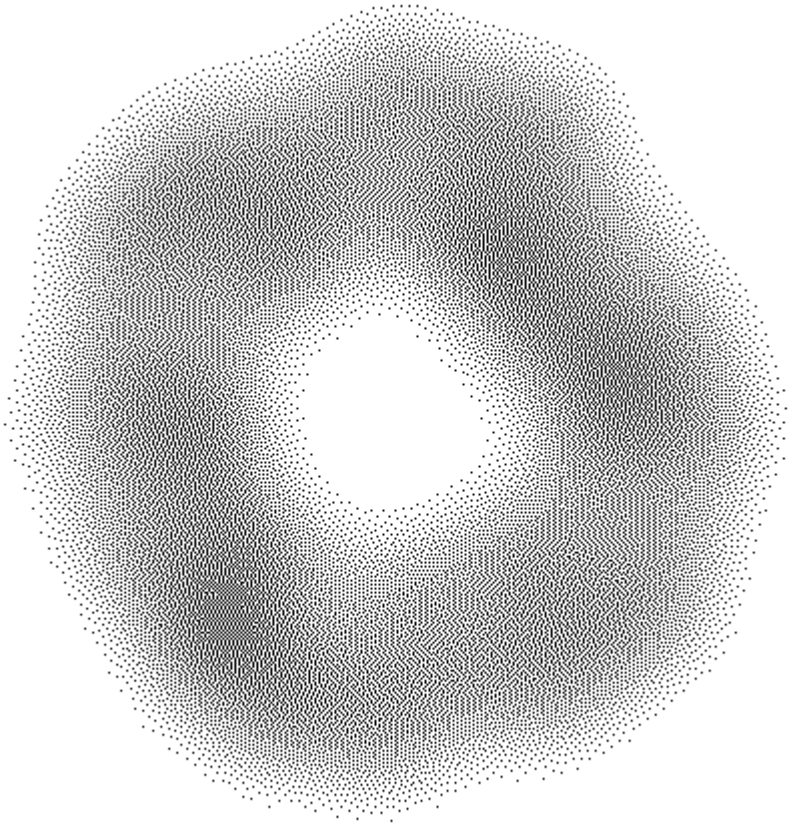
According to Enrico Berti[1], in philosophy there are two kinds of wonder: one

explains wonder as a state of amaze (thaumazō) and the other one is connected to the sensation of perplexity and questioning: from the ancient Greek aporia _ ἀπορία: "to be in the incertitude" where wonder is connected with the sensation of unknown that pushes a research.

Warner's process creates links to the philosophical concept of wonder as interrogation and as a phenomenological opening of newness. Aporia from *a-poro:* a- impossible poro- passage, evokes an impassable passage, a dead-end street. In ancient Greek philosophy it indicated the impossibility of giving a precise answer to a problem that has two paradoxically valid solutions. Warner's process of creation follows the wonder-aporia coexistence as the paradoxical structure of the fluid mosaic in biology. The fluid mosaic in fact functions as liminal stage of passage that let communicate and let cohabit antipodal existences of the particles of the cells in-and-out the membrane. Following this interpretation, the artist focused and developed the communication between paradoxes and antipodal states of being for images where their borders are digitally blurred, contributing to the concept of the fluid mosaic. Moreover, their particles develop visually a digital black and white *pointillism*[2] where the dots are autonomous and simultaneous in constant blended visual relation.

He first shares some works inspired by the theme, and then, he extrapolated some details from these ideas. As 'mosaic tiles', he fits ideas together with his ongoing visual research and interests. The Fluid Mosaic for Warner unveils itself in its micro-scale. Following its biological description, the artist focuses, as he embodied the lens of a microscope, on the particles of organic movements. Below is Rodell Warner's personal statement of the project and part of our conversations.

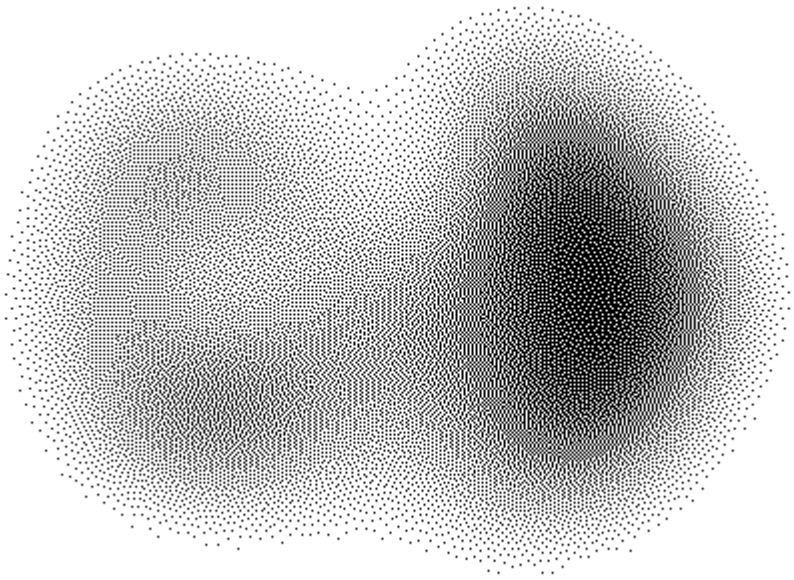
Reflections by Rodell Warner

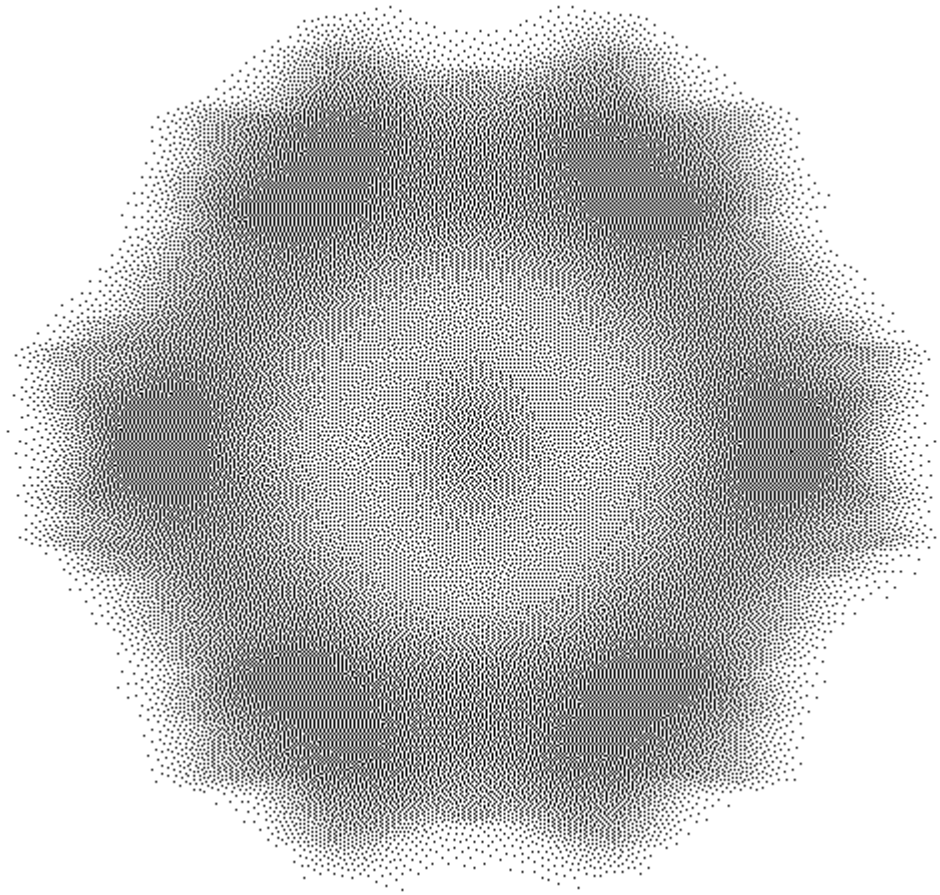


Some of the ideas articulated in the abstract of the *Fluid Mosaic* had particular resonance with me in relation to a set of animated images I've been experimenting with since 2015. In particular, ideas of "porous and malleable barrier[s]", "functional bridges… that connect the interior and exterior parts", that these "bridges are not fixed or perpetual" but "keep flowing inside the liquid border".

> *Similarly resonant are the words used to describe movement in the mosaic, for example, "…a disturbance, a crisscrossing changing phenomena in the membrane from which the mosaic and the cell are transformed. This act of passing is excessive and ephemeral. It implies an ever-changing state of the boundary of the cell that, in turn, mutates its identity."*

My animation experiments, this particular set of experiments in which the moving image is made of moving cells bordered by ever-changing boundaries, could easily be described, and probably best described, by the words you have written to illustrate the fluid mosaic.





What about your choice of the use of Black and White in your GIFs?

RW: Because I was interested in observing/showing the motions and spatial relationships in these movements of dots and patterns, I only needed black and white. Also, because black on white offers the highest contrast possible, the clearest illustration, I find it useful.

How do you feel your animations? As organic? Do you feel them as nebulous representations of identity? This is a question in order to know more about your inner thoughts while creating the theme here.

RW: While experimenting with these animations, I was interested in generating results that were surprising to me. I would just try things and try things until I

managed to create something that excited me.

> *What I realised about the iterations that did surprise and excite me is that their movements resembled the movements of living things.*

I noticed that what I recognise as organic movement is in fact a certain level of complexity of movement. At a certain point, if something is complex enough, it registers to me as resembling something living. Some living things move more complexly than others, but, usually, even with the simplest of living movements I encounter – perhaps the wiggling of a worm, or even a batting of eyelashes – a certain threshold of complexity is surpassed that gets our attention in a way that's different from the movements of things being moved around by, for example, the wind, or things that have been thrown. There's something about that subset of motions – the motions of living organisms – (which itself might have something of a liminal border) that we are especially attuned to or quick to recognise.

> *The movements of living things feel different to us than most other movements, apparently because most other movements are in important ways less complex.*

In relation to our conversation about the fluid mosaic, this set of programmed, animated digital dots share so much in common – in form, in movement, in description – with living things [and cellular life]. For example, they resemble structures and spatial relationships and movements in the images of "antibodies in action" that the Fluid mosaic shares in its dynamic.

Can you describe your way of working/feeling while treating this theme? Was there a process of memories while creating? or was it more an *élan* of future newness?

RW: Definitely more of an elan of future newness. The way I work allows me to be surprised because I program a set of actions, have my computer render the animated result, and, when it's finished, I review the outcome. I'll then tweak my programming to support any new outcome that excites me, or to edit out anything

that I find uninteresting. In the case of these images, I was very interested in how the borders of the regions of pattern interact with and overwhelm each other, and how the definitions of regions changed with movement, and how the characteristics of the objects changed over time, and I am always especially keen to make seamless loops so that I can watch the progression happen over and over without interruption. Because the movement and changing imagery is so complex, I'm not sure that I ever see it all satisfactorily enough to feel like I understand it completely, so I feel the act of watching over and over remains interesting because the image is a kind of a puzzle that is never completed in my mind, but that I am always attempting to get a total understanding of. Another way of saying this would be to say that what is presented in the GIF remains always in some way a mystery to me.

I made all these GIFs years before our conversation about the fluid mosaic, and I am amazed to see how fittingly the description of the fluid mosaic can be used to describe these GIFs, and how easily descriptions of the fluid mosaic can be substituted for descriptions of them.

The fluid mosaic in biology implies a liminal state between dichotomies, such as an external environment and an internal one delimited by a permeable barrier. Did this peculiarity resonate with the theme in your work or in your process of working?

RW: I feel there is an illustration of this liminal state in the animated GIFs, or that their movement and progression are analogous with this description of a liminal state, but there is another resonance I feel with this, and it is in my process of working, and it relates to the dichotomy of "working" and "resting". I find it best to alternate between actively attempting to make progress on generating images, and not actively working on advancing the task. I repeat this cycle as much as necessary until the work feels resolved. What I am interested in is what can be gleaned in moments between the two states, or from the interaction of these two states.

> *My observation is that I advance towards my goal not only when I am actively attempting to, that while I am at rest, attempting not to work, important progress can be made.*

My observation is that the barrier between these states is not as clear as I tend to imagine, and that there is a fluidity at all times once a goal exists, until that goal is achieved, until the work is resolved.

[1] Berti E. 2008. *In principio era la meraviglia,* Roma: Ed Laterza.

2 Pointillism in Art is a technique that arose in France in the 1880's. It requires the artist to use small dots of primary color to create the impression of secondary and intermediate colors. By utilizing only primary colors, and by placing them closely to one another, the brain perceives the colors as the secondary color created by two dots next to each other. This allows the person to see different colors in the paintings, even though the artists are just using three colors – red, blue, and yellow. This assemblage of singular dots is seen as a hole as porous as the membrane of the Fluid Mosaic is in biology.