

The title of this anthology, *Regionality/Mondiality: Perspectives on Art, Aesthetics and Globalization*, signals the regional dimension inherent in the globalization of the arts. Rejecting a comprehensive theory of globalization, the texts in this anthology instead circumscribe a situated understanding of the production and interpretation of the arts, which serves to condition cultural translatability. The texts of the anthology argue that cultural translatability should be considered through the concept of *regionality*, that is, the quality of being both territorially and relationally situated. Bypassing the abstract and politically charged category of “nationality,” regionality addresses human relations in and through the more tangible physical environment in and by which they are configured. As seen in the work on archipelagic thinking by the Martinican writer and philosopher Édouard Glissant, both the cultural and physical aspects of one’s immediate environment are used to articulate a form of self-understanding in the face of cultural and economic expansion, the particular character of which is indicated by the term *mondiality*. This concept derives from the French word for “world” or “people,” and thus affirms the fundamentally social and cultural character of experiences thought of as global. Each of the eleven contributions in this volume brings its own perspective on arts and aesthetics, producing world-views that still share a keen awareness of their partialness.

The contributors are

Charlotte Bydler, J. Michael Dash, John Drabinski, Martin Svensson Ekström, Anthony Gardner and Charles Green, Christina Kullberg, Lisette Lagnado, André Lepecki, Patricia Lorenzoni, Cecilia Sjöholm, and Terry Smith.

REGIONALITY/MONDIALITY



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/ MONDIALITY



Perspectives on Art,
Aesthetics and
Globalization



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Perspectives on Art,
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Globalization

An anthology

Södertörn Studies in Art History and Aesthetics 2

Södertörn Academic Studies 57

ISSN 1650-433X

ISBN 978-91-86069-93-3

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ow do we talk about globalization in art and poetics? Is it a function of capitalism that replaces aesthetics with market values? Or is it a matter of interpreting aesthetic expressions across cultural borders? Globalization has come to refer to widely distributed economic exchange processes, communications systems, and political effects on a planetary scale. But it also includes the idea of an outwardly expanding substance or spreading system. The aim of this anthology is to point to a double mechanism at work in the globalization of art: on the one hand, a will to strengthen the regional aspects of its production, and on the other, a wish to underline the social and cultural implications of its global address. The articles gathered in this volume all point to a tendency or impulse that inevitably accompanies globalization in art and poetics, namely, the need to emphasize the regional and local. At the same time, the return to the regional is marked by a global awareness of the need to translate, to create new concepts and new forms of self-understanding. Art and poetics demand an ongoing reinvention of lexica and categories, thus adding to the archives of experience that inform our ideas of how the relation between the local and the global is constituted.

The title, *Regionality/Mondiality: Perspectives on Art, Aesthetics and Globalization*, signals the double implications of globalization. In the art scene today, we can discern an effort to particularize both the production and the understanding of art. This effort can be considered through the

concept of *regionality*, a neologism that makes a substantive out of the quality of being situated territorially as well as relationally. Bypassing the abstract national level, regionality addresses the more tangible physical environment. As can be seen in the articles on the archipelagic thinking of Glissant and on contemporary Sámi art, cultural as well as physical aspects of one's immediate environment may well be used to signal a form of self-understanding in the face of cultural and economic expansion. The term *mondiality* in its turn has been used in the title of this book to signal the particular character of such expansion. The concept derives from the French word for "world" or "people," and affirms the fundamentally social and cultural character of "global" awareness. The global expansion of the art scene is accompanied by new forms of self-understanding, pointing back to the question of how a culture or a people can be formed.

Since the 1980s, several different factors have been emphasized in the varied efforts to characterize the new era in the fields of art and aesthetic theory. For example, since the fall of the Berlin Wall, collectivity and cultural relations have been articulated in new terms, as the post-socialist implications of globalization cannot be avoided. Moreover, not only have the great colonial powers such as Great Britain or France had to take into account their own post-colonial situations, but so too have several non-colonial countries been forced to examine the finer layers and complexities of their cultural identities. In addition, new media together with aggressive markets have forced more or less welcome changes in the conditions for production and distribution of artistic expressions. Transcultural processes have thus altered poetic forms, markets, curatorial work, and interfaces with audiences.

The language of economics – or economic globalization – may inspire a worldview where global capital is the true

totality. But that totality is never actually known. *Mondialisation*, by contrast, sums up world and people in a totalization while pointing out their temporal and spatial dimensions. Mondialisation places participants in contemporaneity in realms of either commonality or foreignness. Contemporaneity is thus shared with others, even if only partially and at a distance. Aesthetic concepts can be used as vehicles to claim a foothold in this contemporaneity, both holding out the common and risking a breakdown of dialogue. The collection of essays brought together here demonstrates the paradoxical abyss entailed in our new “globalized” world, and the power of the link between the regional and the global.

Regionality/Mondiality: Perspectives on Art, Aesthetics and Globalization should be seen as an attempt to define the double position between the regional and the mondial in contemporary art and aesthetics, bypassing globalization and various totalizing methods of understanding. Each author brings a particular view on these issues. Scholarship in aesthetics and art today must negotiate not only the question of how expression is culturally shaped, but also how it addresses the paradoxical contemporary situation wherein belonging and non-belonging, the regional and the global, come together. Artistic practices form models for the community we share, either institutionalized and official, or informal and diffuse. At the same time, these practices often derive from regional corners that are marginal from a global perspective.

The collection has been divided into three sections, suggesting three possible ways to address the issue of the double-bind of *Regionality/Mondiality*. The first section is dedicated to Édouard Glissant’s theory of “relation”; the second presents various modes of transcultural translation; and the third introduces new ways of conceptualizing globalization in philosophy, art and aesthetics.

The first section, *Between Region and World*, takes the cue from the work of Édouard Glissant. Though a presence in francophone literature and philosophy for a long time, Glissant (together with translations of his work in English) has entered the worlds of art and moving images only in the 2000s. This work of aesthetic translation is in itself interesting, but here it will be enough to say that big exhibitions, as well as Manthia Diawara's 2010 film *Édouard Glissant – Un Monde en relation (One world in relation)*, have done much to relate his concepts to current aesthetic debates.¹ Indeed, Glissant offers an especially rich material for thinking of relations within wholes and parts, planarity and situatedness. How do we name regions and worlds in aesthetic registers? Wording is also worlding, as J. Michael Dash shows in "Location Matters: Grounding the Global in Glissant." The small island of Martinique where Glissant was born figures importantly in his poetry and scholarly texts as an example of how totality can be approached without claims to total understanding. As an overseas colony, Martinique relates to France through unequal and oppressive bonds across the Atlantic; through language use and education, through trade and political rights. Events and characters in Glissant's texts are rendered through multiple perspectives. Never fully understood and certainly without a single core personality or nature, persons and plots are fragments that point beyond themselves. Glissant himself invented concepts such as "Relation," "Tout-monde," "archipelagical thinking" (and many more) to be able to share the aesthetic sensitivities that nature and history seem to have formed in equal part. Although Martinique's volcanic warm climate and its location in the Caribbean world distinguish the small island from the cold Northern sea, the omnipresent nature – and especially water in all its apparitions – is integrated with planetary humanity. In her article "Dust between America

and Europe: Details and *Tout-monde* in the Work of Édouard Glissant,” Christina Kullberg points to Glissant’s resistance to totalizations that impose inevitably reductive understandings of cultural forms, a reduction that resounds with the violent experience of politico-economic administration. Cecilia Sjöholm’s “Temporal Sensibilities: Glissant on Filiation” points to the importance of opening up the cultural dominance of the identity of root-identity that tends to structure not only ideas of human relations, but also aesthetic expression in Europe and elsewhere. Sjöholm discusses Derrida’s preference for the concept of *mondialisation* to that of globalization. Revisiting the Judeo-Christian heritage of mondialisation, Derrida hopes to discover new forms of filiation that do not need to impose the hegemonic variety criticized by Glissant.

The middle section on *Transculturation* discusses how works of art, literature, and other forms of aesthetic expression can be transposed from one cultural context to another. Scholarship on art and aesthetics today must raise the question of translatability, i.e., how not only works of art but also everyday aesthetic expressions can be transposed from one cultural context to another. In what ways do situated or regional contexts inform aesthetic experience? Are there limits to translation between the local and the global? What zones of translatability do we cross in questions about value in production and consumption of art and literature? How do we approach travelling movements and concepts within the aesthetic disciplines?

Several authors in this section draw their examples from Brazilian Modernism. “From Objectacts to Dance-things: ‘Transcreation’ in the Works of Robert Morris, Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Pape” by André Lepecki discusses Haroldo de Campos’ concept of “transcreation” as used in some Modernist works from Brazil and the New York Avant-garde scene. Lepecki points to translation as a way

of making anew, using material not only between cultures but also between forms of art; art using the figure of the human body in transposing well known themes into new domains of signification. Also referring to Brazilian Modernism, Lisette Lagnado discusses the drawings of Mira Schendel in “Problems of Interlocution.” Here she discusses the cultural limits imposed on what both Walter Benjamin and Aby Warburg talked about in terms of the “afterlife” of a work of art – how are we to perceive the constraints defined by cultural context, and what means does a work of art offer us in order to negotiate and overcome these constraints? In the drawings of Mira Schendel, the references to linguistic signs become a way of art to point beyond the impositions of the manifestoes defining the Avant-garde of her time.

Patricia Lorenzoni also negotiates transculturalism within the context of Brazilian art, as she points to the materialized invisibility of the *indio* in her article “Re-membering a Crime: A Reflection on the Galdino Jesus dos Santos Memorial in Brasília.” Here we are faced with the limits of cultural differentiation in a country conceived as a “melting pot.” The memorial dedicated to the murdered leader of the indigenous population is placed in a position whereby the person becomes anonymous and non-provocative, thus defusing both the important symbolic importance of the man and the crime of his murder. Art thus serves here to stop and limit the possibilities of negotiation rather than promoting them.

In “Art, Geographies and Values: Thinking Sámi Contemporary Art Archipelagically,” Charlotte Bydler grapples with the relation between another indigenous population and their cultural colonizers. She shows that contemporary art created by the Sámi artists in Sweden may be conceived in a simultaneous movement of un-rootedness and confirmation of tradition: this is the case in the relation between Sámi artists Sunna and Nilsson Skum. Finally, in this

section, Martin Svensson Ekström discusses the flaws and misinterpretations that tend to follow from the understanding of Chinese signs in Sweden. In his article “The Phantasmatic Tomb, or Methodology and *Schmutz* in Intercultural Translation,” Svensson Ekström shows how misinterpretations of signs are intrinsically intertwined with imaginary representations, prejudices, and stereotypical conceptions of Chinese culture and art. Translation therefore becomes “non-translation.” Rather than a way to engage in intercultural exchange, translation becomes instead a way to package and limit the possibilities for understanding the relation between cultures.

The final section engages in a critique of conceptions of universality and globalization. In “Levinas as Traveling Theory,” John Drabinski argues that contemporary European philosophy is in urgent need of a confrontation with the global other. This may entail posing the question of how difference, such as it has been conceptualized by Emmanuel Levinas, may be introduced in the confrontation with race, racism, and the legacy of colonialism. Confronting philosophy’s totalizing assumptions, Drabinski uses the philosophies of Glissant and Levinas to propose ways by which the colonizer (philosophy) may be decolonized.

In “Worlds Pictured in Contemporary Art: Planes and Connectivities,” Terry Smith addresses the elusive notion of “contemporary art” as a way of imagining worlds within the World. Post-1989 life has introduced a planetary consciousness that reverberates in art worlds. In Smith’s opinion, the worldwide terminological shift from “Modern” to “contemporary art” signals a new worldview that rises to this awareness. Instead of a universal art history with conventional temporal-causal links, Smith proposes new connectivities – such as indigeneity, ecology, and virtuality – in a complex model in which relationships are articulated across several spatio-temporal planes and levels.

Smith's text resonates with Anthony Gardner's and Charles Green's analysis of the Biennale of Sydney, where the authors discuss contemporary art in an Australian context. Arguing against the commonly held notion of art biennials playing an active role in the neoliberal wave of globalization, the authors remind us of the value and function of the democratization of art during the "Cold War." Gardner and Green show that a view of biennials as merely one aspect of a global capitalist market that reduce the expression of art to one level is not only reductive and historically false, but also fails to comprehend the role of the biennale from a Non-Western perspective.

This collection of essays has come into being thanks to several contributors. Robert Vallier has done a valuable and much appreciated language check and edited all contributions, including Lisette Lagnado's article that was translated from Portuguese to English by Alberto Dwek. Ada Schendel and Galeria Millan, São Paulo, generously offered us to use reproductions of Mira Schendel's work. We also wish to express our gratitude to Professor Paul Pickering and the editorial board of the Australian National University Press, together with Special Issue editors Caroline Turner, Michelle Antoinette & Zara Stanhope, for the kind permission to reprint the article by Terry Smith, "Worlds Pictured in Contemporary Art: Planes and Connectivities", pp. 31–58, in *The World and World-Making in Art*, Humanities Research Journal Series; Vol. XIX No. 2, 2013 (ANU E Press, <http://epress.anu.edu.au>). Thanks for use of images that illustrate Terry Smith's article go to Fiona Hall and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, and for Ivan Buljan's assistance; also thank you to Pura-lia Meenamatta (Jim Everett) and Jonathan Kimberley, courtesy Bett Gallery, North Hobart, Tasmania, with the help of Mish Meijers. Terry Smith's article is slightly changed

following information kindly supplied by Jonathan Kimberley. One pillar was the research project *Translatability*, funded by KK-Stiftelsen in cooperation with Bonniers Konsthall, Bonnier Publishing Company and Södertörn University. This collaboration led to an exhibition of Brazilian art in 2011. A second pillar was the conference *Archipelagic Connections* on the work of Édouard Glissant that took place at Södertörn University in 2011, initiated by Christina Kullberg, then at the Department for Modern Languages of Uppsala University, and co-organized with Charlotte Bydler of the Centre for Baltic and East European Studies (CBEES) and Cecilia Sjöholm at the Department of Aesthetics at Södertörn University. Finally, we wish to express our gratitude to Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, the Centre for Baltic and East European Studies, KK-Stiftelsen, and Wenner-Grens Stiftelse for generous financial support.

1 The following examples of aesthetic translations just scratch the surface. In 2002, the contemporary art curator Okwui Enwezor introduced Édouard Glissant to the contemporary art world around Kassel, Germany, during his curation of the grand Documenta exhibition. This particular occasion was a conference in St. Lucia, West Indies, set up as one of four platforms to discuss aesthetic concepts. The proceedings were published as *Créolité and Creolization: Documenta 11_Platform 3*, edited by Okwui Enwezor, Carlos Basualdo, Ute Meta Bauer, Susanne Ghez, Sarat Maharaj, Mark Nash, and Octavio Zaya, Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje-Cantz Publishers, 2003. Enwezor's interest in Glissant can also be seen in his 2012 edition of the Paris Triennale, *Intense proximité*, where he published "An exploded discourse" from *Caribbean Discourse, Selected Essays (Le Discours Antillais*, 1981; English translation by

J. Michael Dash, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia [1989], 1999). Manthia Diawara, *Édouard Glissant – Un Monde en relation (One world in relation; USA/Mali 2010*, 52 min, French with English subtitles). Christina Kullberg's and Marianne Tufvesson's translated excerpts of *Poetics of Relation* (1990) have also been published in the magazine *10-tal* (4/2010). And Christina Kullberg has continued to introduce Glissant to Swedish readers with her and Johan Sahlberg's translation of *Philosophie de la relation. Poésie en étendue* (2009) – *Relationens filosofi – omfångets poesi*, Göteborg: Glänta förlag, 2012. At this time, Glissant's poem *Les Indes* (1955/1965) was interpreted by Catherine Delpech-Hellsten and Magdalena Sørensen as *Édouard Glissants Indiern. En dikt om den nakna nattens erövrare*, Stockholm: Elisabeth Grate förlag, 2012.

1

BETWEEN
REGION
AND WORLD

LOCATION
MATTERS:
GROUNDING
THE GLOBAL
IN GLISSANT

J. MICHAEL
DASH

Despite the comparisons between civilisations (always in terms of generalisations: the West, the East), this rapid intervention of Deleuze in the concept of relationality really leaves out of account situations which are other. There is also a predisposition to abstraction which we distrust. ...The rhizome is not nomadic, it takes root even in the air (it's sometimes an epiphyte) but the fact that it is not a rooted stalk predisposes it to "accept" the inconceivable idea of the other; the new always latent bud, which is on the side.

— ÉDOUARD GLISSANT, *Caribbean Discourse*

It is a truth, universally acknowledged by the critics that there are two Édouard Glissants, an early and a late one. Furthermore, the late Glissant is seen by some as not living up to the promise of the early Glissant. According to this narrative, Glissant abandons national consciousness or what Peter Hallward calls 'specificity' for a preoccupation with abstract relatedness or 'singularity'.¹ Indeed there has been a broadside of criticism of increasing stridency not only from Hallward but from Christopher Miller and Chris Bongie as to the negative influence of Deleuzian nomadology on Glissant's ideas. Writing in *Nationalists and Nomads: Essays on Francophone African African Literatures and Culture*, (1998) Miller laments the fact that hybridity and nomadology have become a new orthodoxy in the study of francophone literature. He is alarmed at the fact that a triumphalist nomadology has created a new critical prescriptiveness.

Through the influence of Deleuze on Édouard Glissant and thinkers like him, the ideas of deterritorialization and nomadology have, so to speak, taken root and become a dogma. Most work in francophone studies is framed by some reference to a critique of 'l'Un' and a valorization of 'la Relation', to use Glissant's terms. Much important and valid work has followed these lines. But this body of thought that abhors borders and limitations can itself be limiting.²

Miller's basic dissatisfaction with nomadology, which he equates with Glissantian 'relation' is that it lacks geographical grounding and historical specificity. He seems to insist ultimately in *Nationalists and Nomads* that models of philosophical thought be narrowly representational. His declaration at the end of these essays says it all. He writes, "when faced with a forest, we can't simply declare that we don't believe in trees."³ Miller in his critique of Deleuze and Glissant cannot conceive of philosophical ideas that are not narrowly representational. He is so wedded to the referential that his argument ultimately boils down to championing pragmatic nationalists over apolitical nomads. Glissant's ideas inevitably become distorted in Miller's work since Glissant has always problematized the issue of representation and seen philosophy as creative and conceptual. Glissant even goes so far as to claim that there is a prophetic or utopian dimension in the concepts he creates which are often based on the unknowable. This dimension is expressed as an absence: "Utopia is not a dream. It is what we are missing in the world. That's what it is."⁴ Glissant's concept of the *Tout Monde* is similarly a construct that does not exist. It is an intuition as to what is missing in the chaos-monde. Miller is, nevertheless, as unrepentant as he is unrelenting in his critique of the "Deleuzian Glissant." His earlier 'cri de coeur' at the rampant dissemination of Deleuzian ideas by

Édouard Glissant has become even more shrill in Miller's recent study of the slave trade *The French Atlantic Triangle* (2008) Now he speaks of Glissant's "late period of Deleuzian Nomadology" which, because of its apolitical celebration of global creolization, can go so far as to claim that there may have been a happy Middle Passage as the slave trade was useful in facilitating a new interconnected global space.

Perhaps, no aspect of Glissant's thought has been more misrepresented than his concept of 'la Relation' or relationality. Before the series of almost coordinated attacks by the critics of the Deleuzian bent of postcolonial studies, A. James Arnold asserted that Glissant was simply a franco-phone version of the Cuban novelist Antonio Benítez-Rojo who after discreetly abandoning Castro's doctrinaire Marxism espoused a Deleuzian orthodoxy. Arnold claims that the Deleuzian rhizome was the "cornerstone" of works by Glissant and Benítez-Rojo and uses the language of Benítez-Rojo to characterize Glissant's work. "In a rhizome one is always in the middle, between the self and the Other. But, above all, it should be seen as a non-systematic system of lines of flight and alliance that propagate themselves ad infinitum."⁵

This caricature of Glissant's ideas later became itself the "cornerstone" of an evaluation of Glissant's politics in the all-encompassing study of postcolonialism by Chris Bongie *Islands and Exiles*. In this work Glissant seems at times to be keeping company with "the disenchanted modernist and former Marxist René Depestre."⁶ Bongie suspects Glissant of "disengaging himself from his once-cherished beliefs" which apparently are "a Fanonesque politics of national identity and anticolonial resistance . . . to which Glissant once seemed wholeheartedly committed." In *Islands and Exiles* Bongie still sees the later Glissant as "productively" pursuing the "anti-ideological poetics of international

creolization.”⁷ If the rhizomatic Glissant is “always in the middle” as Arnold seems to claim then the possibility of political action or viable resistance become impossible. This is clear in Bongie’s latest engagement with Glissant’s ideas as he now sees the late Glissant as having moved from the political to the aesthetic in his rejection of resistance for “an increasing skepticism, indeed cynicism ... when it comes to ‘substantive politics’.”⁸

Bongie’s apolitical late Glissant makes a return appearance in Peter Hallward’s critique of postcolonial theory *Absolutely Postcolonial*. In his unrelenting critique of postcolonialism’s celebration of hybridity and its suspicion of political engagement, Hallward sees Glissant as typical of those global theorists who shun politics. Late Glissant, in his view, has betrayed his earlier commitment to national liberation and indeed to any kind of grounded resistance. Hallward’s fierce attack on the free-floating ambiguities of some postcolonial theorists is entirely justified. For instance, Stuart Hall in his highly influential essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” theorizes the multiple presences and tensions within a composite, diasporic identity. He identifies three essential forces: *Présence Africaine*, *Présence Européenne* and *Présence Américaine*. *Présence Africaine* is the site of the repressed. If Africa was “a case of the unspoken,” European presence “was a case of that which is endlessly speaking – and endlessly speaking *us*.” His third presence is the site of migration, nomadism and hybridity “the juncture-point where the many cultural tributaries meet, the ‘empty’ land (the European colonizers emptied it) where strangers from every other part of the globe collided. It is the space where the creolisations and assimilations and syncretisms were negotiated ... it is the signifier of migration itself – of travelling, voyaging ... of the Antillean as the prototype of the modern or postmodern New World nomad, continually moving between centre and periphery.”⁹

There are some discernible resonances between this metaphor for new world space as the site of postcolonial hybridity and Hall's protégé Paul Gilroy ideal Atlantic space. The latter applies his mentor's model to the Black Atlantic. As Gilroy's put it, "the sublime force of the ocean ... as a counterpower that confined, regulated, inhibited and sometimes even defied the exercise of territorial sovereignty."¹⁰ In this triumphalist view of the abstract space of hybridity and creolization, routes triumph over roots, or in Hallward's terms the specific is routed by the singular.

Late Glissant is, for Hallward, no different from Gilroy in the latter's "wholly new way of grasping the specificity of a place – which is precisely to displace it, to look for it in the pure 'between' of other places." Deleuzian deterritorialization has in his view wreaked havoc on Glissant's early nationalist politics. In his words "if Glissant's early texts narrate the constitution of the nation, the later texts generally revel in its dissolution" and "the word Martinique rarely appears in *La Poétique de la Relation*."¹¹ Hallward's belief in the nation and leftist politics has led him to risible extremes. Judging by Hallward's book on the unjustifiably deposed and justifiably discredited Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, *Damming the Flood*, his desperate search for a Caribbean freedom fighter is to say the least unpromising. Hallward's claim that 'Martinique' is absent from *Poétique de la Relation* seems particularly misleading since there are two essays devoted to the black sand beach at Diamant in the south of the island. This zone like several similar diffracting spaces in Glissant's oeuvre, has a primal significance for the island Department of Martinique. Here he contemplates the poetics and politics of tortured geographies where the shore doggedly and mutely confronts the explosive forces of the ocean. In *Poetics of Relation* the precariously grounded subject is sited on the volcanic black-sand beach as he confronts the roaring chaos of the

crashing waves of the ocean. This site is not free-floating fluidity but an elemental theatre of clashing elemental forces. Sited between volcano and ocean, the windswept beach earth cannot be construed as a “terre-mère” but a “terre-mer,” not a motherland but a marine habitat, neither land nor sea.

Celia Britton and Charles Forsdick have put up spirited and worthy defenses of the late Glissant by demonstrating that far from turning his back on politics Glissant has emerged as a militant public intellectual. Britton’s essay “Globalization and Political Action in Édouard Glissant” reaffirms the distinction between early and late Glissant but insists that recent works “clearly signal Glissant’s return to a more overtly political perspective.”¹² Forsdick’s essay tellingly subtitled “The Persistence of the Political” picks up where Britton’s left off. Forsdick similarly sees a turn to the political in the “late Glissant.” He refutes the argument that lateness means compromise and illustrates this by listing examples of Glissant’s engagement in “key political debates” which he says has been “silenced” by the likes of Chris Bongie.¹³ While this is a useful and even necessary way to proceed, the actions of Glissant the French citizen should not be used to redeem Glissant the writer. It would be the equivalent of justifying Césaire’s oeuvre in terms of his *Lettre à Maurice Thorez* or Sartre’s ideas by his defense of the student protests of 1968. It is equally worthwhile to challenge the idea of the “late Glissant.” Was Glissant ever engaged in Fanonesque politics? Was he ever committed to a nationalist ideology? Can *La Lézarde* be called nationalist fiction, especially since in the heyday of politically committed writing, he felt such writing to be inadequate?¹⁴ It seems a distortion to suggest that the so-called “early Glissant” was not interested in a global imaginary, that the breakdown of the single, monopolistic idea of the West into a non-hierarchical multiplicity of

diverse experiences, was not present from the start. Was it Deleuzian nomadology or Surrealist poetics that laid the foundation for the poetic conception of magnetic fields that bring heterogeneous bodies into confrontation with unpredictable results? From the outset as well, it was a poetics (and not a politics or a science) that Glissant felt could grasp the idea of a global relationality. Literature's role was relating the local to the global as he makes clear in his early travel book, *Sun of Consciousness* (1956). Long before we became obsessed with roots and rhizomes, Glissant conceived of specificity in the sixties in a highly unusual way: each particularity concentrated the global as it was contained within a global totality.

It might be more useful, therefore, to turn away from the critical construct of the late Glissant and see where there is a profound continuity in his thought that overrides concerns with the nationalist as opposed to the nomad, the Fanonesque as opposed to the Deleuzian. Instead of arguing whether the 'late Glissant' was or was not bland and apolitical, we might pay attention to the peculiar nature of the Glissantian imaginary in which the tortured subject and the risky encounter seem to be recurrent. Perhaps, the figures of the son and the stranger who wanders through Paris in *Sun of Consciousness* give us insight into the questions of estrangement and legitimacy that haunt the Glissantian imaginary. Indeed, *Sun of Consciousness* is, as he declares, a 'self-ethnography' as post-war Paris seems to be emptied of buildings, passersby, or any discernible traffic. The encounter with the 'patrie', the continental space of the father, gives rise as much to the questioning of filiation as to the geography of precariously insularity to which Glissant would return again and again. It points as much to his personal drama of being recognized relatively late in his youth by his father as to the importance of the writer as wanderer across cultures which are both familiar

and foreign at the same time. The fissured, threatened self must bravely reconstruct itself with each encounter. This painful apprenticeship, or “exhausting splendor” of birth in or through alterity, never ceases in Glissant’s work. We could say that it is a persistent sense of crisis that anchors Glissant’s poetics which presents otherness as a threat as well as an opportunity.

It is well worth remembering that in the same year that *Sun of Consciousness* appeared, 1956, Glissant wrote that there were two marked tendencies in contemporary writing in French, the ethnographic and the literary. He was particularly interested in those who straddled both tendencies, those who associated rigorously the quest for self with the encounter with the other. The old idea of the ethnographer as loner, wandering the borderlands of imperial expansion in search of an idealized, uncontaminated other was being replaced by the global arena of the *totalité-monde* where self and other confronted each other. In this regard we might think of Glissant’s special affinity with Michel Leiris who was interested in the Caribbean because it was a site of risk. Invited by Aimé Césaire in 1948, the centenary of the abolition of slavery, Leiris visited Martinique and Haiti. Before leaving the Caribbean he gave a talk “Antilles et poésie des carrefours” (Antilles and poetry of the crossroads) in which he outlined a new poetics of ethnography. “What I first find seductive in the expression ‘crossroads’ is that it is borrowed from the vocabulary of the roadways. Nothing more down to earth, more everyday, than this crossing of routes or roads that we call crossroads.”¹⁵ Leiris imagines the crossroads as a performative site, not of regulation and stasis but rather one of menace and surprise. Again and again Leiris cites instances where the native inhabitants, local rituals and the very landscape activate the destabilizing potential of a ‘crossroads poetry’. The *trompe l’oeil* effect of the topography of the

Caribbean seems to juxtapose disconcertingly many different landscapes. An encounter in Fort de France with a young black girl with a herd of goats humming a French folk song surrounded by a luxuriant, tropical vegetation evokes poetic elation. Leiris savors the clash of the unexpected and the familiar in everyday settings. It is not simply a case of celebrating difference. The crossroads spectacle as defined by Leiris was a primal encounter akin to the bullfight in which the self is always at risk before the ferocious charge of the unpredictable.

Leiris' interest in the poetics of risk goes back to his fascination with primitive rituals in general and the bullfight in particular. In Haiti he was particularly interested in vaudou ceremonies which are described as "a complete spectacle in which, like in the bullfight, tragic violence appears to be held in check by style and by protocol, in which all that is risked is presented in terms of a stabilized frenzy, like a geometric structuring of a sudden surge of violence."¹⁶ The visceral intensity of such a model with the constant threat of danger as rigor confronts mobility appealed to Glissant. The thrust of the untamed parried temporarily by the stylized maneuver of the matador is rich in aesthetic possibilities and explodes the idea of a stable self or system that offers definitive resolution. Nothing exists outside of the wild charge of otherness or the "totalité monde" for that matter. Static models of difference based on an ideologically stabilized confrontation between self and other are contested by Glissant in terms of an unsettling oscillation between the swerving and thrusting in the dangerous dance between self and other. He defined his theory of relation as a poetics of risk. "The poetics of relation presupposes that each one is confronted by the density (the opacity) of the other. The more the other resists in his thickness or his mobility (without being limited in this way), the more expressive reality becomes, the more fruitful the relation."¹⁷

Glissant's well-known rejection of systems of organization and understanding is profoundly connected to the power of this primal drama that informed his theory of relation. The aim was not to produce a new fusion or hybridity which synthesized opposing differences but to keep the danger alive by not taming the beast's violent unpredictable nature. Nor should one be in awe of and simply surrender to the other, but rather engage with the other. Surrendering to otherness, as Glissant identifies it in Lafcadio Hearn, Paul Gauguin and Victor Segalen, is as dangerous as the refusal of the other. As he constantly repeated, it was necessary to find one's "mésure" which could be both applied poetically and ethically to establishing some kind of balance in the face of the onslaught of the world's primordial chaos. The image of whirling adversaries suggests that the writer should never aspire to producing the definitive enduring work; the real would always upset the symbolic order of language or the coherence promised by systematic thought. Glissant's debt is never clearer than in his second essay on Leiris in 1997. Tellingly entitled "Repli et dépli," as if to suggest the folding and unfolding of the matador's cape, it describes an aesthetic based on the real as "a twisting body and life butts into each tiny corner."¹⁸ Consequently the subject is always off-balance; identity always thrown into question.

As important as the poetics of risk for Glissant is the arena in which this dangerous game of grace and violation is played out. Glissant seems to position himself psychologically on the shoreline, invariably the black sand beach, precariously grounded between fire and water. This is not the image of the black sand beach of Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, where a flayed, supine blackness is exposed to the snarling waves or punched by the white foam. The beach at Diamant is equally exposed to the elements – wind, waves, and the hidden fire of the volcano.

It is an arena marked off from the land by “brown seaweed . . . piled up by the assault of the waves.”¹⁹ In his insistence on relating language to landscape, Glissant sees in the play of resistance and acquiescence with the hidden fire of the volcano relayed by the nocturnal sea as the source of a rhetoric. “The movement of the beach, this cadenced rhetoric of the shoreline, do not seem inconsequential to me. They weave a circularity that draws me to it.”²⁰ The ever shifting, always open text is, at it were, inscribed with the constant weaving in both senses of the word between the shifting subject in the face of the charge of the “totalité-monde.”

If the rhizome is rooted, however precariously, Glissant must find a way of locating the Caribbean’s experience in terms of the poetics of risk. Again, the idea of a late Glissant is less than useful here. The Caribbean dimension to a poetics of risk is Glissant’s investment in a theory of traumatic consciousness which challenges continuities, linearity and filiation. In the introduction to *Poétique de la relation*, normally seen by critics as the start of Glissant’s fixation with nomadology, we have a better sense of the single major obsession that haunted Glissant. It is the radical displacement of the abyss or the Middle Passage. Leiris’ arena becomes Glissant’s abyss where those who survive cannot maintain being (“l’Être”) but enter a process of becoming (“l’Étant”) which never ceases. Being is always at the mercy of traces, pulsions or elans and is never offered the consolation of atavistic return nor the hope of utopian revolution, or even a settled state of *métissage*. Indeed, Glissant’s interest in delirium and neurosis is tied to this question that these mental states contain latent truths of a consciousness born from the abyss. The trauma of the abyss does not make the survivors of the Middle Passage a chosen people. It is one of the many “gouffres” that mark global space as is made clear in open the “address” to Barack Obama, *L’intraitable beauté du monde*. The sections

in italics are Glissant's and the text opens with the idea of emanations from the primal ooze of abyss ("ce qui remonte du gouffre") whose sound is transmitted through another fatherless son or estranged insider, Barack Obama, "fils du gouffre."²¹

Perhaps the most spectacular emanation from the void, Glissant's meditation on the monument at Anse Caffard, explores the relation between secular and sacred, past and present, fixed and mobile as the horizon pulls the landscape forever outwards. The monument at Anse Caffard, on the south coast of Martinique, facing Diamond Rock, commemorates the wreck of a nameless, illegal slave ship, which sank off the coast on the night of August 30, 1830. Of those who survived there were eighty-six Ibos of which sixty were women. Not a single member of the European crew was found alive because, Glissant surmises, they may have been drowned by their African captives who had revolted and committed mass suicide, taking their captors with them to the ocean floor.

The fifteen statues arranged in a triangle whose point faces the open sea, precisely on the line of latitude of the Gold Coast in Africa, rise from the earth, held fast in the rock which continues there under the water, with a moving restraint and dignity. Arms stuck to the body, head slightly inclined, they would bring to mind in a less colossal form the statues of Easter Island if they did not stare so fixedly, it seems, towards the sea where so many ships crammed with shackled blacks capsized. It is all in white, the African color of mourning, you are led to think that the sea winds will stain them yellow little by little. With a gentle negligence, the grass forms clumps in the yellow soil.²²

In this passage from the novel *Sartorius*, Édouard Glissant describes not so much a Caribbean place of memory as an interactive space, which opens out to the sea, to other

islands. The statues gaze therefore down at the place where under the weight of their African cargo nameless Europeans sank to the ocean floor. The scene sets up a series of relational correspondences – the dead white bodies covered in black under the sea echo the African figures clothed in white on the land; the colossal sculptures in Martinique invoke the toppled ancestors of another remote island far out in the Southeastern Pacific west of the Coast of Chile, Easter Island. This is not the static site of racial agony or ancestral memory as nationalist ideologues are tempted to think in Martinique. In a later novel, *Ormerod*, Glissant points to the precariously sacred nature of these monuments as a small bar called Ibo's Snack has been set up at the site both marking the troubled history of the place and banalizing it at the same time.²³


Glissant presents us with slowly yellowing emanations from the ocean floor that are totems of the relational sacred whose “intraitable beauté” is in their openness to multiple projections and trajectories. Yet their location matters as they are forever aligned with the Gold Coast and their grouping in a triangle invokes the memory of the slave trade. Glissant treats the monument as an interactive site which is constantly changing. The borderless rock continues under the water, the grass silently, relentlessly pushes up among the stone figures and the salt-laden sea wind will, with time, turn the figures yellow with age. Glissant's meditation on the memorial of Anse Caffard is revealing in that it refuses the idea of a fixed or grounded past for a vision of archipelagic space that projects transversal connections, slippery geographies and masked origins. It is even more daring a vision than that of the Creolists who wish to see Anse Caffard as a national monument to ancestral Martinicans.²⁴ Glissant asks us to think about these drowned figures, these ghosts of the middle passage who set out but never arrived. The Caribbean Sea not as the

mothering space of origins but the paradigmatic abyss of the “blue savanna.” As terrestrial as it is aqueous, the “limon du gouffre” is the submarine horizon of the shoreline, the primordial space of new beginnings. The nameless Africans on the ocean floor are powerfully symbolic because they resist easy categorization or ideological essentialization. Neither survivors of the Black Atlantic, nor New World maroons nor plantation Creoles, grounded and global, they are all of the above at the same time.

- 1 Peter Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing between the Singular and the Specific*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001.
- 2 Christopher Miller, *Nationalists and Nomads*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 5.
- 3 Miller, 1998, p. 209.
- 4 Édouard Glissant, *La Cohée du Lamentin*, Paris: Gallimard, 2005, p. 16.
- 5 A. James Arnold, *Monsters, Tricksters and Sacred Cows*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996, p. 4.
- 6 Chris Bongie, *Islands and Exiles*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998, p. 181.
- 7 Bongie, 1998, p. 138.
- 8 Chris Bongie, *Friends and Enemies*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008, p. 328.
- 9 Stuart Hall, "Cultural identity and Diaspora," in Jonathan Rutherford (ed.), *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990, p. 119.
- 10 Paul Gilroy, *Against Race*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000, p. 121.
- 11 Peter Hallward, "Édouard Glissant between the Specific and the singular," *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, Vol.11, No.2, 1998, p. 454.
- 12 Celia Britton, "Globalisation and Political Action in Édouard Glissant," *Small Axe*, 30, December 2009, p. 11.
- 13 Charles Forsdick, "Late Glissant: History, 'World Literature' and the Persistence of the Political," *Small Axe*, 33, November 2010, p. 124.
- 14 See Édouard Glissant, "Le romancier noir et son peuple," *Présence Africaine*, No.16, October–November, 1957, pp. 26–31.
- 15 Michel Leiris, "Antilles et poésie des carrefours," *Zebrage*, Paris: Gallimard, 1992, p. 71.
- 16 Leiris, 1992, p. 82.
- 17 Édouard Glissant, *L'intention poétique*, Paris: Gallimard 1997, p. 24.
- 18 Édouard Glissant, *Traité du tout-monde*, Paris: Gallimard, 1997, p. 129.
- 19 Édouard Glissant, *Poétique de la Relation*, Paris: Gallimard, 1990, p. 135.
- 20 Glissant, 1990, p. 136.
- 21 Édouard Glissant, Patrick Chamoiseau, *L'intrahable beauté du monde*, Paris: Galaade, 2009, p. 5.
- 22 Édouard Glissant, *Sartorius*, Paris: Gallimard, 1999, pp. 162–163.
- 23 Édouard Glissant, *Ormerod*, Paris: Gallimard, 2003, p. 126.
- 24 See *Landscape and Memory: Martinican Land–People–History*, (a 2001 DVD by Renée Gosson and Eric Faden) in which the militants of the Creolité movement, Chamoiseau, Confiant and Bernabé, lament the lack of local monuments and focus on the statues at Anse Caffard as a commemoration of Creole diversity in Martinique.

**DU*T BETWEEN
AMERICA AND EUROPE:
DETAIL* AND
TOUT-MONDE
IN THE WORK OF
ÉDOUARD GLI**ANT**

**CHRI*TINA
KULLBERG**

“ etween Europe and America I see nothing but dust.” These words, pronounced by Charles de Gaulle during a visit to Martinique after the Second World War,¹ would probably have been forgotten if it were not for Martinican writer Édouard Glissant. He opens his monumental book *Le Discours antillais* from 1981 precisely with this quote in order to capture the Eurocentric perspective which has over-determined the Caribbean since the “discovery” of the Americas. De Gaulle’s sweeping metaphor suggests that the only transatlantic relationship of interest is the one with the U.S.A. For Martinicans the metaphor comes in a politically sensitive time.² France’s former colonies in the Americas, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and French Guyana, had just been transformed into departments “beyond the oceans” (*Départements d’outre-mer*). With little subtlety, the president reduces the newly born citizens of the French Republic to being nothing but mere particles with no historic or future value whatsoever. International global relations are established between super powers, and whatever lies in between might as well be wiped off the map as far as de Gaulle seems to be concerned.

One of Glissant’s objectives in *Le Discours antillais* is to show that the “dust” between the continents translate into geographical entities: they are the Caribbean islands where a great deal of transatlantic history was in fact shaped. In a sense, he suggests that the metaphor used by de Gaulle is a form of historical revisionism since it deliberately ignores an important part of history – that of the colonization of

the Caribbean islands, the horrors it entailed, and its strategic importance for France's presence in the Americas – in order to assert the former imperial power's central role. But while it is easy to find arguments for the region's historical importance, as Glissant brilliantly demonstrates in his book, the Caribbean islands' present and future impact remains uncertain. Since sugarcane was replaced by sugar beets and no longer a major product for export, the islands' only direct economic potential is tourism. There are thus reasons to ask what role a tiny island such as Martinique, forged by a traumatic history of colonization and transplantation could play in an increasingly interconnected world.

When Glissant wrote *Le Discours antillais* the issue of Martinique's situation in the world had an immediate political motivation: he saw a possibility for Martinique to become independent if it was able to gain control over the internal economic and cultural productions, and thereby also reclaim national consciousness. In this perspective, Glissant quotes de Gaulle's reductive dust metaphor to prove him wrong: the islands of the Caribbean have rich cultures. The problem, Glissant claims, is that colonization has led Caribbeans to denigrate themselves, idealize Europe, and ignore their American reality. All through *Le Discours antillais* Glissant demonstrates how this reduction into a state of nothingness has paralyzed Martinicans, at the same time as the book asserts that it is time for the peoples from the "dust between Europe and America" to come forward as agents. Nevertheless, the hope encapsulated in Glissant's anger and frustration over Martinique's situation in 1981 was soon to be crushed as France's politics of assimilation grew stronger.

Paradoxically, when one of the world's most "successful colonizations," as Glissant ironically describes the French Antilles, had truly triumphed the author did not seem to remain faithful to his struggle for the island. In the 1990s

Glissant apparently abandoned the direct political (and to some extent also poetical) engagement with his pays-natal in favor of more “global” issues. Already in *Poétique de la Relation* from 1990 Martinique is no longer the main target, and starting with the 1993 novel *Tout-monde* along with its theoretic sequence *Traité du Tout-monde* from 1997, Glissant launched a series of concepts related to the global: *Tout-monde*, *totalité-monde*, and *mondialité*, which dominated his work until his passing in 2011. At first glance it seemed like the “dust” in the world had been swiped off the map after all.

Shifting focus from the local to the global is partly Glissant’s response to a growing concern with questions regarding the world, and world relations, expressed among others in discourses on “globalization,” or *mondialisation* to use the French wording. However, the shift in focus towards the global rather enhances the local, only now it is always seen in relation to the whole. As late as in 2005 Glissant exclaims in *La Cohée du Lamentin*: “Oui, les puissances occupent la Terre. *Je crois à l’avenir des petits pays.*”³ While multinational companies and American vernacular culture *occupy* the earth, the future lies in the hands of small countries. Glissant does not make any claims about the present state of the small countries, which at first sight contradicts what he is trying to say: if the dominating powers are so strong today it would be rather naïve to proclaim one’s belief in small countries. But Glissant’s elliptic sentence construction leaves out an important factor in his thinking: small countries, or in philosophical terms, differences, already contribute to the creation of what he calls the *Tout-monde*. This essay examines the relation between differences and whole, as it is played out on an aesthetic level in Glissant’s work. But before we conceptualize the notion of difference in aesthetic terms we need to outline what *Tout-monde* means.

Tout-monde belongs to a series of concepts around the term *monde* – world – invented in order to explore ways to speak about global relations as they are being shaped in the present, without referring to political power that can be measured in economic growth or in terms of visible political impact. The concepts in the series *Tout-monde*, *totalité-monde*, and *mondialité*, basically reflect the same idea of considering the world as a totality of differences. Glissant thinks that the general planetary interconnectedness in which we live today is historically unique. He writes in *La Cohée du Lamentin* that “la mondialité est cette aventure sans précédent qu’il nous est donné à tous de vivre, dans un espace-temps qui pour la première fois réellement et de manière foudroyante, se conçoit à la fois unique et multiple, et inextricable.”⁴ So far he follows the general discourse of globalization as being particular to our time. Yet the interconnectedness of the *Tout-monde* is not restricted to economic or political transactions or to the fact that we are living in an age where the entire world is at our feet by simply pressing the key to our computers. On the contrary, he claims that globalization works against interconnectedness in so far as it entails standardization: compliance to one dominating model (i.e. the U.S.A.), thus reducing instead of embracing the differences.

Breaking with the economic reasoning of the discourse on globalization, Glissant argues that the *Tout-monde* includes a poetic dimension which, contrary to globalization, contains and creates both difference and transformation. *Tout-monde* is not just what we see and what we control in the present, but a movement striving towards the unknown. In *Traité du Tout-monde* he defines it as “notre univers tel qu’il change et perdure en échangeant et, en même temps la ‘vision’ que nous en avons. La totalité-monde dans sa diversité physique et dans les représentations qu’elle nous inspire.”⁵ The idea of the *Tout-monde* includes on the one

hand the sum of all the differences in the world (this is its “diversity”), and on the other imaginative and creative dimensions. The *Tout-monde* is thus at once factual and virtual; it incites and comprises the imaginary. In fact, neither Glissant nor anybody else for that matter knows what will be created in the *Tout-monde* since one of its aspects is unpredictability: what comes out of differences interacting with each other is impossible to foresee. This is the proper adventure of the world. The ones who hold the future are those who have the ability for openness, to enter in a relationship with otherness, and thereby fully experience the world in its entire imaginative and empirical potential. So while the super powers occupy the earth they actually strive against the dynamics of the *Tout-monde*. In other words, engaging with the worldly does not at all mean abandoning the *pays*, the country.

This brings us to the heart of a heated debate that has stirred Glissantian studies in the last decade. Everyone agrees that a shift occurred in Glissant’s writing by the end of the 1990’s.⁶ Important Glissant scholars such as J. Michael Dash and Celia Britton claim that this shift should not be considered a radical rupture since several themes from the author’s early writings remain in his later work. However, against this idea of continuity other critics focusing mainly on the theoretical aspects of Glissant’s work, such as Peter Hallward and Chris Bongie argue that the direct engagement in nations and/or regions disappear in Glissant’s thinking as the notions of mundiality take over. In his book, *Absolutely Post-colonial*, Hallward asserts that Glissant’s work, and indeed all of postcolonial theory, has moved from a direct political engagement towards a Deleuzian theory of immanence. Hallward divides Glissant’s oeuvre into a nationalistic phase represented by *Le Discours antillais*, tending towards specificity and relationality, and a second, later phase, when “Glissant mostly

abandons the nation in favor of a kind of self-asserting self-constituting singular immediacy on the Deleuzian or Spinozist model – an already immediate immediacy, so to say.”⁷ In so doing, Glissant’s concepts of difference (nation, orality, detour, forced poetics, detail, place, opacity, etcetera) fade into the background whereas opened terms (*Tout-monde*, *Relation*, *totalité-monde*, *chaos-monde*, etcetera) play a leading role. This leads Hallward to interpret Glissant’s key term for conceptualizing linkages between differences, “Relation,” not as a relational category interconnecting irreducible elements, as it is usually understood. Instead he sees it as “a name for self-differentiating reality as such.”⁸ The dynamic and dialectic understanding of Relation as difference is then replaced by a model, which explains Relation in terms of an immanent production of difference. This model makes it theoretically possible for Hallward to avoid connecting Glissant’s notions of difference to concrete entities such as place, country, identity, and language.

The problem of reading Glissant (in what could be referred to as a Deleuzian reading), as Hallward does, is that such an approach downplays the Caribbean component of the Martinican’s thinking. To somebody coming from the traumatic history of colonization and brutal transplantation, it is difficult to assume a “pre-established harmony” as Hallward suggests.⁹ I agree with Hallward that Glissant’s theory of differences is in line with Deleuze’s immanent process of individuation. However, Glissant, who often refers to Deleuze and Guattari, never uses, to my knowledge at least, the concept of “immanence.” Considering that Glissant chooses to focus on other Deleuzian concepts, notably the “rhizome,” should alert us against being too hasty in incorporating Glissant’s poetical philosophy within the realms of Deleuzian theory. After all, Glissant teaches us that crossing over borders entails conflicts.

Glissant draws his notion of Relation and difference from the experience of (Caribbean) creolization, understood as “*métissage sans limites, dont les éléments sont démultipliés, les resultants imprévisibles.*”¹⁰ So, contrary to Hallward’s presupposition, at the basis for Relation are violent crossings, forced encounters, and unpredictable outcomes. Bracketing the Caribbean component, Hallward underestimates the Martinican’s resistance to claims to totality and unity. Glissant may be using these notions when inventing the series of concepts around *monde*, as we have seen, but before putting them into use he appropriates them into his own language (*langage*) either by making them proliferate or by giving them other connotations. Glissant appropriates these terms as reminders that all terms of totality always carry a threat of absorbing differences. Yet, Hallward’s critical reading touches upon a tricky issue in Glissantian theory: if mundiality is the sum of all differences, as Glissant claims, is it even relevant to pay any considerable attention to difference? Can the part affect the whole that supposedly encapsulates it?

On a political level Glissant gives a clear answer: small countries do indeed have an impact on the whole because they are more inclined to creating and sustaining differences that are constitutive for mundiality. But, on a conceptual level his notion of totality does indeed seem to postulate a kind of immanence. This is where de Gaulle’s dust metaphor proves to be useful. Taking the idea of dust as a point of departure for analyzing how the part relates to the whole in Glissant’s thinking allows us to distance the analysis from the many concepts of difference used by Glissant and instead approach the question of part and whole on an aesthetic level. For beside the political metaphor there is a more concrete, material dimension of dust. Dust is composed of material particles that we can hardly distinguish, and that can be considered as a form of detail.

In his later writings, Glissant turns to the notion of detail to account for the relationship between small and large entities in the world rather than using more specific and ideologically charged notions of specificity such as nation and identity. This is for example how he conceives of the *Tout-monde* in his last book, *Philosophie de la Relation*:

Le monde est Tout-monde d'abord, par la distention et le détail de ses situés et de ses dévirées. Pour chacun, c'est la leçon qui s'illumine là (ici): de son détail, c'est-à-dire, de ses poétiques, aux détails de tous, où se dessinent des politiques. Le politique est l'accord révélé du détail dépouillé à la totalité ouverte [...].¹¹

By introducing the notion of detail Glissant finds a term for connecting poetics to politics. Thereby, the dusts of the world have received a concept, but more importantly, this notion allows Glissant to show how the rather simple political logic of the role of small countries in the *Tout-monde* relies on an intricate poetics of difference that is played out on a different level than global relations. In the quote, Glissant refers to geographical details, details in landscapes. The detail is here a sort of spatial concept of measure, which is to Glissant simultaneously that which situates and connects to the "open totality." It becomes a concept comprising difference, multiplicity, and engagement with a specific locality. In similar terms, Glissant approaches the question of part in relation to whole: he addresses it as an aesthetic question regarding how a detail in a description or a painting or a musical piece can be a singular expression for an artist, a place, a culture, or a language. At the same time, it can be "read" by others who are foreign to this artist, place, culture or language.

In the remainder of this essay I will analyze the relationship between parts and whole by considering the detail as a

transfer-concept between the political and the aesthetic in Glissant's thinking. Detail is particularly important in Glissant's last three books, *La Cohée du Lamentin*, *Une Nouvelle région du monde*, and *Philosophie de la Relation*, but to fully understand its significance as an inscription in landscape I will also address earlier works, notably *Le Discours antillais*. My aim is to examine how Glissant uses details to address the question of how small countries can take place on the world's arena. Moreover, as an aesthetic trope, detail implies the problem of capturing in writing elements from reality and transferring them to others who are foreign to this reality. In this regard, the detail ties in to the idea of translatability, of how one brings a detail from one context to another. In "Transnational Languages in Glissant's *Tout-monde*," Celia Britton explores forms of contact within the *Tout-monde*, and argues that translation, multilingualism and communication between languages are essential factors of the concept of *Tout-monde*.¹² Britton asserts that the multilingual dimension of the *Tout-monde* offers at once an ethical defense of all languages as being equally important, and "a particular sensitivity to a mode of intersubjective and or intertextual contact that does not depend on ordinary linguistic comprehension."¹³ By writing in the "presence of all languages," Glissant seeks a way to account for relating languages to each other without necessarily presupposing mutual intelligibility. In a similar vein, Glissant's uses of details offer a new way to conceptualize not only relations between the local and the global, but also the possibility of exchanging experiences from one language to another, from one reality to another. The notion of detail hints at another form of global interchange, the aesthetic communication operating in the *Tout-monde*.



As Klaus Speidel reminds us in “L’Écriture du détail,” the detail is something of a black sheep within aesthetic theory.¹⁴ Historically, details have been often considered superfluous, always at the risk of ruining the balance in a painting or a description. Speidel points out that in classic aesthetic theory details have only been worth considering if they were in the right place (*sa juste place*), but they have no theoretical status per se. However, Speidel’s discussion shows that the notion of detail includes several dimensions, which are crucial to Glissant’s thinking. The detail is a small entity in the periphery in regard to a larger entity. A semantic or perceptive detail is subjective and often insignificant within a whole. In other words, the only constant feature in the notion of detail is its relativity. A detail is always a detail in relation to something else. This means that the detail is never a thing, it never refers back to a specific object. Speidel’s conclusion is therefore that the detail’s primary role is to establish a relation. This definition sheds light upon the question why detail is important for Glissant: it is a trope for creating contacts.

In line with Speidel’s definition, Glissant rescues the detail from realism: “Le détail n’est pas un repère descriptif c’est une profondeur de poésie, en même temps qu’une étendue non mesurable.”¹⁵ Detail is here understood in spatial terms, *profondeur* (depth) and *étendue* (expanse), and does not have the indexical function to point out what is there. In *Le Discours antillais* Glissant defines realism rather reductively as the “theory and technique for literal or total imitation.”¹⁶ Realistic descriptions are all-encompassing and determined by an omniscient subject who pretends to grasp the entire world, including the darkest corners of the human psyche. Glissant sees the realist impulse to exhaustive description as a consequence of European conceptions of time. Here time is experienced as linear and harmonious,

and the subject has a sense of historicity. So the point is not that realism is bad. On the contrary, it is profound and challenging, but only in a European context. When adopted uncritically by authors from other regions it is easily turned into mimetic platitudes. Caribbean literature, Glissant argues, must draw from another temporality and reality. The Caribbean peoples do not have direct access neither to their earth nor to their history since both were possessed and determined by the colonizers. Also, the temporal rhythm of Caribbean societies is not dependent on the changing seasons. The tropical climate is more uniform but also more irruptive by means of earthquakes, hurricanes, and volcanoes.¹⁷ Therefore, he suggests that Caribbean writing needs to work with the infinity of details, not claiming to grasp them all but instead using detail to stage how the world *escapes* representation.¹⁸ At the same time, paying attention to detail is a means for rediscovering the real to which Caribbeans historically had been denied access as a consequence of colonization and transplantation. In the traditional French Caribbean folktale, for instance, there are hardly any descriptions of the land, and no details are captured, which Glissant interprets as being symptomatic of a dispossessed people's expression.¹⁹ Modern Caribbean literature, he further argues, has the possibility of writing the detail as a way to establishing a liaison with the earth, and thereby regain the land. Exploring geographical details is thus a way to inhabit a land, making it a meaningful landscape.

The incomplete nature of (intelligible) representation did of course haunt already the realist authors, especially in regard to detail. As Roland Barthes puts it in "The Reality Effect," his famous essay on realistic illusion, "any 'view' would be inexhaustible by discourse: there would always be a corner, a detail, an inflection of space or color to report [...]."²⁰ Details contribute to creating the illusion that

the text refers to an identifiable reality. Yet at the same time they lay bare the limits of (realist) representation. The viewer always misses something. Behind one detail there is another and yet another detail, creating a continuous *mise en abyme*. But contrary to the realists who strive towards hiding the fact that details always escape the descriptive scope, as Barthes further shows, Glissant refrains from using details to give the “realist illusion” that writing can indeed capture the world. Instead, he makes details proliferate so that the text becomes almost unreadable. Glissant reverses the realist panorama. Rather than distance, closeness, via detail, opens up towards the infinite. In *Philosophie de la Relation*, Glissant claims that one may be lost in the details of a tiny stamp as well as in a great city or a dense forest. His descriptions move away from the omniscient perspective, and let the subject be swept away not only by the number of details in reality, but by the very multiplicity within each detail: “Nous entrons maintenant et au contraire dans un infini détail, et d’abord nous en concevons de partout la multiplicité, qui est inétendue, et qui pour nous est indémêable, et sans prédiction.”²¹ The detail is not an expression of particularity. Rather it points towards other places and other details, creating multiplicity.

Details infinitely *mis en abyme* become a window towards the *Tout-monde*’s chaotic play of differences. Glissant writes in *Philosophie de la Relation*:

Du rapport du détail au tout. De mon détail (la roche d’eau) à mon environ (le pays). De mon détail (le lieu) à mon entour (le monde). Il n’y a dès lors pas de description réaliste qui tienne. Un détail n’est pas un fragment, il interpelle la totalité (non totalitaire). À la totalité diffractée changeante.²²

As opposed to the fragment, the relational detail is connected to the rest, to other details as well as to other larger

entities. It can therefore allow us to move from a small element in landscape to the entire country, and from there engage with the world. Such a movement cannot be contained in a structure or explained in an exhaustive narration or description. It does not refer to “that which has taken place,” which according to Barthes is the structural justification for supposedly superfluous details.²³ The detail reveals that writing *cannot* contain a world; they sap the balance and tend towards chaos.

In other words, Glissant looks for the detail precisely in terms of its lack of a decipherable meaning. He would probably have agreed with American writer Leslie Kaplan who claims in “Le Détail, le saut, le lien” that detail is the grounding element of literature that is not concerned with explanations, but with questions.²⁴ A detail may express something, which we cannot directly understand. It hints at reality not by explaining it but by inviting us to question what is in front of our eyes. By designating elements not defining them, the detail respects the limits of representation and offers interrogation and exploration in the place of explanation. When Glissant describes he often approaches the object from different perspectives employing the conjunctions “or” and “and.” Thereby it is not the real or the referent that is caught, but the linkage that was at the heart of Speidel’s definition of the detail as discussed above. Being mainly relational, the detail offers a possibility to show difference without having to explain and thereby reduce it.

The relational capacity gives the detail a phenomenological dimension: it mediates our being in the world in functioning as a link between the individual and the environment. We capture details through the senses. For instance, Glissant’s personal way of being in the world is inseparable from his first “reading” of the hill around Bézaudin, Martinique, where his mother carried him on her back as she walked downhill along the Lézarde river. The image

already appeared in his first novel from 1958, *La Lézarde*, and reoccurs in his last three books. Notably, in *La Cohée du Lamentin* he describes in detail his first encounter with Martinican landscape. His reading of this land comes from traces of reminiscence, of pre-linguistic echoes that pass through the body, through reflexes. It is a sensory memory:

J'avais un peu plus d'un seul mois d'existence, et il faut douter si j'entendais ce bruissement qui sillonnait dans l'air et semblait arroser toutes choses. Pourtant je l'écoute encore en moi. L'intense végétation ne présentait pas une faille pas une éclaircie, mais le soleil la perçait généralement avec une violence sans rage, je les vois encore, nuit bleue des branchages et des lames des feuilles et vivacité du jour.²⁵

The passage is followed by a long, detailed, and dense description, without punctuation, of this particular place. The narrator focuses on the river's movements and rhythm, and on the surrounding jungle. Sensory details, remembrance of sounds, smells, visions, and odors act as joints holding together the subject and the surrounding environment. Glissant concludes the passage, "Et c'est comment, si vous acceptez l'indice, la lecture de cette partie du paysage de Martinique m'est venue."²⁶ This reading will further determine Glissant's readings of other landscapes in the future as well as his understanding of the past. Hence, when Glissant claims that the *lieu est incontournable*, that one cannot escape one's place, that we always carry our places with us and that this place cannot be delineated or contoured, he does not refer to a nationalistic or even regionalist, discourse. "Our" place is always with us in terms of unarticulated reminiscences and traces of our first encounters with a particular landscape. Glissant seems to suggest that every human being has a kind of environmental imprint.

In the quote, the narration takes on the perspective of a one-month-old baby, whose subjectivity is formed by the surrounding landscape, and who does not have any pre-established images. The baby *takes in* the environment. The river acts upon him. It is as if the landscape becomes the actual subject on the long wandering sentence. More importantly, the baby is not a conscious seeing subject. J. Michael Dash has observed that Glissantian narration is characterized by an attempt to move away from the visual. Downplaying the visual perspective the author shifts “our attention away from the gaze that objectifies and the false sense of total control toward a more sensuous relationship with the world.”²⁷ Similarly, by taking the focal point of a baby, Glissant stages how landscapes penetrate being, and affects body and mind with a pre-linguistic order, a pure sensory experience that the poet then tries to share by means of writing. The attention to detail in landscape becomes a strategy for revealing reality beyond the subject’s control.

But if the subject is able to record details in the landscape before having access to language, we cannot really say that these details are *read*. Without language, the odors, sounds, and sights are not interpretable in the sense that they are given meaning. They are merely taken in, and leave their trace in the subject’s experience. Such a connection between subject and details hints at another form of communication with the surrounding world in which rational understanding is not central. Instead, a form of communication, which operates without reliance on a thinking subject, emerges. To Glissant such a connection has nothing to do with today’s advanced technologies, or the activities of an apparently a-human “Market,” which seems to operate very much beyond human control, and to which the general media refers as if it were an agent. Instead, the communication that does not occur between

subjects has other, far reaching consequences: landscapes may also communicate between themselves.

Thinking the *Tout-monde* does not only address the question of how humans and cultures interact, but asks how one landscape resonates in another. Glissant establishes a correspondence between the entities of the world in terms of beauty, which emerges through interconnected details in landscapes.²⁸ He writes in the beginning of *Une nouvelle région du monde*:

Comment la beauté de cet endroit-ci correspond-elle avec tant de hasard bleu à la beauté de cet endroit-là qui est si analogue et qu'on trouve dans les végétations salées du Brésil ou dans les pires embruns bretons ou sous les caps tranchés net de la Terre de feu ou à l'épais des enfoissures laquées de Norvège ou dans les liserés à peine visibles des neiges et des glaces des côtes de Sibérie, autrement dit, qu'est-ce que la beauté, qui va ainsi du friant au cassant et à la violence et à la méditation et du lointain et à l'en-dessous.²⁹

Strikingly, Glissant turns to romantic tropes to account for the interconnectedness of *Tout-monde*, and asks how it is possible that different places, and especially aquatic regions, share a similar beauty. The quote simultaneously answers the question by evoking details in these seemingly different landscapes such as snow, ice, sand, and water crushing against coastlines. These details communicate with each other without being in direct physical contact thanks to their aquatic materiality; they consist of water. Despite their differences they share something and thereby create a basis for an aesthetic. "We can make landscapes come closer," Glissant writes in *Une nouvelle région du monde*. This conjunction of landscapes occurs when we see how the details in one landscape correspond with that of another landscape.³⁰ In their inherent multiplicity details

provide the possibility for creating a common ground. But for humans to decipher these connections and their beauty, we must leave our dominant subjective perspective and let the sensory details act upon us, just like the baby carried by his mother through the hills of Bézaudin. This singular capacity to be open to the impressions of the outside world is in itself a power: “le pouvoir d’être égaré par des roches et des terres et des eaux et des écumes en forme d’interrogation et d’exclamation, ou plutôt la suspension infinie que fait cet égarement quand il s’accroche aux mots fous et aux matières sereines de l’art [...]” as Glissant poetically puts it in *Une Nouvelle région du monde* (17).³¹ At the basis for Glissantian aesthetics there are thus uncontrollable forces of nature rather than rules; it is not a system but a chaotic interaction with the outside. Because of this power to sweep away the subject the engagement with details in landscapes becomes the ground for the dynamic interchanges of the *Tout-monde*.

Consequently, details enhance the dialectic movement in Glissant’s thought. On the one hand, details have the power to link us to others. On the other, they prevent the generalizing movement towards a totalizing harmony. As far as they are connected to landscape, details add concrete dimensions to the virtual domain of *Tout-monde*. This means that there is not a plane of immanence, as Hallward claimed. Rather, Glissant conceptualizes the *Tout-monde* as interconnected layers. The correspondence goes from a detail in the individual’s reading of landscape to another detail in the collectively shared landscape to other details in other landscapes in the world. There is never any transcendent grasping of the entire totality, only interrelations and interfaces between here and there.

Clearly, in Glissant’s thinking the issue of worldwide connections does not only concern communication between linguistic languages, but also our sensory apprehension of

the world and the connection between places. In fact, Glissant seems to be using details in order to move away from the impossible impasse of translatability that haunts the *Tout-monde*, as Britton showed in her analysis of multilingualism in Glissant's work. Forging linkages between Norwegian fjords, Siberia, Robben Island, the Jura mountains, and the Diamant beach in Martinique is not a matter of transferring meaning from one language to another. The key is to express a common sensation, which is accessible and at the same time inaccessible to all the languages in the world. Nothing is thus untranslatable in so far as we share (*partage*) the same sensory ground. To Glissant, translation never implies a smooth passage from one language to another. It is impossible to achieve a perfect translation without gaps, lacunae, and violations. Equally, the relation between the detail and the whole is not smooth, one does not go easily from one level to another, and connections may imply violent confrontations. The point is that the linking is possible. What happens is another question, which is in fact impossible to answer since the *Tout-monde* is a totality in transformation with an unpredictable outcome. So via details in landscape we place ourselves at the limits of translatability at the same time as we are linked to the rest of the world. This eco-aesthetics offered by Glissant is not regionalist but open-ended, and more importantly, it has something profoundly democratic in the sense that it is accessible to all. Also the illiterate can read details in landscape.

- 1 Édouard Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*, Paris: Gallimard, (1981) 1991; "Entre l'Europe et Amérique, je ne vois que des poussières."
- 2 Considering that many Martinicans took great risks to join the French Resistance during the War, de Gaulle's statement is an insult.
- 3 Édouard Glissant, *La Cohée du Lamentin*, Paris: Gallimard, 2005, p. 27. "Yes, the powers occupy the earth. *I believe in the future of small countries!*"
- 4 Glissant, 2005, p. 23. "Mondiality is this unprecedented adventure, which is given for us to experience, in a time-space, which, for the first time truly and strikingly is conceived at once unique and multiple and inextricable."
- 5 Édouard Glissant, *Traité du Tout-monde*, Paris: Gallimard, 1997, p. 176. "Our universe as it is changing and enduring by exchanging and, at the same time the 'vision' that we have of this world. The totality-world in its physical diversity and in the creation that it inspires"
- 6 Celia Britton, "Transnational Languages in Glissant's *Tout-monde*," pp. 62–85, in *World Writing: Poetics, Ethics, Globalization*, Mary Gallagher (ed.), Toronto: The Toronto University Press, 2008, p. 62
- 7 Peter Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing between the Singular and the Specific*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001, p. 62.
- 8 Hallward, 2001, p. 122.
- 9 Hallward, 2001, p. 123.
- 10 Édouard Glissant, *Poétique de la Relation*, Paris: Gallimard, 1990, p. 46. "[A] limitless *métissage* its elements diffracted and its consequences unforeseeable."
- 11 Édouard Glissant, *Philosophie de la Relation*, Paris: Gallimard, 2009, p. 34. "The world is *Tout-monde* first through the distension and the detail of its situations and veering. For each one this is the lesson, which shines through here (there): from one's detail that is to say from one's poetics, to the detail of everyone, where politics take shape. The political is the revealed consent of detail given to the open totality."
- 12 Britton, 2008, p. 63
- 13 Britton, 2008, p. 63.
- 14 Speidel, Klaus, "L'écriture du détail: allers-retours entre peinture et littérature," *Fabula LHT (Littérature, histoire, théorie*, September 2007), www.fabula.org/lht/3/Speidel.html.
- 15 Glissant, 2009, p. 28. "The detail is not a descriptive point of reference, it is poetic depth, and at the same time an extent that cannot be measured."
- 16 Glissant, 1991, p. 342.
- 17 Glissant, 1991, pp. 343–344.
- 18 Glissant gives a personal example of when he is asked to draw a forest, he immediately gets lost in the details of each tree so that the forest never appears as complete or delineated. Glissant, 1991, p. 339.
- 19 Glissant, 1991, pp. 414–416.
- 20 Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect," translation Richard Howard, *The Novel. An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*, Dorothy J. Hale (ed.), Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, p. 232.

- 21 Glissant, 2009, p. 27. "Now, and on the contrary, we enter in an infinite detail, and first we see from everywhere the multiplicity, which is inexpanse, and which for us is not possible to untangle [undémêable], and impossible to predict."
- 22 Glissant, 2009, p. 102. "On the link from detail to the whole. From my detail (the cliff in the water), to my environment (the country). From my detail (the place) to my surroundings (the world). From then on no realistic description is valid. A detail is not a fragment, the detail questions the totality (non totalitarian). To the diffracted and ever changing totality."
- 23 Barthes, 2006, p. 233.
- 24 Leslie Kaplan, "Le détail, le saut, le lien," *Remue*, <http://remue.net/spip.php?article2600>, site last modified 14 January 2008. "Le support d'une littérature qui n'est pas fondée sur l'explication, mais sur l'étonnement, le questionnement."
- 25 Glissant, 2005, p. 89. "I was about one month old, and one has to doubt that I heard the noise in the air and seemed to water each thing. Yet I still hear it inside of me. The intense vegetation was opaque and did not offer any light, but the sun generally broke through with a violence without anger, I can still see them, the blue night of the branches and the blades of the leaves and the vivacity of the day."
- 26 Glissant, 2005, p. 90. "And this is how, if you are willing to accept the sign, my reading of this part of Martinican landscape came to me."
- 27 J. Michael Dash, "Writing the Body: Édouard Glissant's Poetics of Re-membling," *World Literature Today*, Vol. 63, No. 4, 1989, p. 611.
- 28 Glissant, 2005, p. 45. "[Beauty] is and excerpts from a work or an element the force of differences, which at the same time are accomplished and already predict their relation to other differences."
- 29 Édouard Glissant, *Une Nouvelle région du monde*, Paris: Gallimard, 2006, p. 14. "How does the beauty of this place correspond in a hazardously blue way to the beauty of that place, which is analogous and that can be found in Brazil's saline vegetation or in the worst fogs of Brittany or under the steep capes at the Land of Fire or in Norway's thick icy fjords or in the hardly visible edges of snow and ice on the coast line of Siberia, in other words, what is beauty that moves like this, and from violence to meditation and from far away to underneath."
- 30 "Nous pouvons rapprocher les paysages," Glissant, 2006, p. 151.
- 31 Glissant, 2006, p. 17. "The force of being misled by the cliffs and the lands and the water and the foam, which have taken the shape of interrogation and exclamation, or rather the infinite suspension that this kind of misleading creates when it captures crazy words and art's serene material." For a discussion about Glissant's eco-aesthetics, see: Christina Kullberg, "Fouiller le paysage: The Geo-Poetics of Édouard Glissant," *Literature, Geography, Translation*, Cecilia

Alvstad, Stefan Helgesson & David Watson (eds.), Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publications, 2011, pp. 187–197; and Chapter 4 in Christina Kullberg, *The Poetics of Ethnography in Martinican Narratives: Exploring the Self and the Environment*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013.

TEMP❖RAL
SENSIBILITIES:
GLISSANT
❖N FILIATI❖N

CECILIA
SJÖH❖LM



iliation, argues Édouard Glissant, is the temporal relation that governs Western sensibility. It is linear and based on a certain horizon of expectations, whether those expectations are conscious or not. In *Poetics of Relation*, the chapter on filiation begins in the following way:

In the Western world the hidden cause (the consequence) of both Myth and Epic is filiation, its work setting out upon the fixed linearity of time, always toward a projection, a project.¹

Filiation does not just refer to descent or a certain patriarchal system or a certain logical temporality. It is all of these things, bound together by the horizon of projection, a horizon formed through the striving out of something and the aiming towards something. Filiation, in Glissant's work, is a horizon that we can move beyond only with difficulty. If we are to succeed, we need to observe the stories, the literature, and the witnessing that tears the horizon of filiation apart, supplanting our expectations of successive orders with a receptive capacity to meet with the entangled web of relations that would arise among those who are ruled over rather than rulers, those that are made invisible rather than seen, and those that are proud of their loss rather than their origin. Glissant is not only offering us another conceptual notion of heritage. He is reclaiming an altogether different form of temporal sensibility – one responding to the voices, the lives and the desires of those who remain obscure in the eyes of history.

Glissant's reflections on the concept of filiation are more than just a cultural critique; they are a contribution to the deconstructive tradition of French philosophy, questioning the use of certain given transcendental or metaphysical concepts such as time, space and being. Although it is never overtly stated, his thoughts on filiation are implicated in a dialogue with his contemporaries on the scene of French philosophy and yet, branching out in a wholly new direction. As I will argue in this article, when Glissant's notion of filiation is compared to that of Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida, it can be seen that his challenge to sensibility of temporality of European philosophy is quite radical.

There is a certain reductive rhetoric imbued in his characterizing Western temporality as linear, accusing the history of metaphysics for aiming towards universal reason rather than differentiation, identity rather than difference etcetera. Throughout the 20th century, there have been many attempts to think temporality otherwise than as a linear structure within the Greco-European tradition, not least through the work of Martin Heidegger, and after him Jacques Derrida, Luce Irigaray and others. However, as I intend to show, Glissant presents us with something new: the idea that the rhizomatic structure of time is a consequence of colonial conquests. Rhizomatic thought is not a new form of consciousness, created in European philosophy as an internal critique of European consciousness. It has existed in cultures such as that of the slave plantation for a long time, although we need to look at the literature and the stories that make it emerge. Glissant looks at the question of temporality from an angle where time is regarded in connection with living memory rather than history, and within a rhizomatic structure of relations that are sometimes clandestine and hidden, rather than from a structure of historicity, agency and consciousness. Any linear conception of temporality is intrinsically caught in a

hegemonic structure, deeply embedded in the belief in a history of development.

Filiation is a word that, generally speaking, implies not so much a temporal dimension as a question of genealogy. Filiation is inheritance, implying a line of descent that relates an individual to a birthfather and his family. The concept can also be broadened to imply a more figural relation. A bank can be in a relation of filiation to its head office, its various branches are also filiations. This is a brief description of the word in English. In Swedish, the word to describe the kind of ascent that is implied by *filiation* would be *härstamning*, a word that implies a system of branches leading back to a family tree, as is to be seen also in its German version: *Abstammung*. Just as is pointed out in Glissant's critique of filiation as the figure of a mode of temporality, a certain order is indicated in the English and Swedish languages alike; a descent, a family order, a kind of belonging in which a hierarchy is also contained. Somewhere, the family tree has its roots, in the actions and deeds of a *paternitas*, the original father. In the French language, and in the way in which Glissant uses it, that aspect is perhaps stressed even more.² Looked at in the dictionary of Littré, this is how we are to use filiation: it implies, above all, the son's descent from a father.³ But it points to a system of organization, in which one phenomenon gives birth to another, not least in the world of ideas. There is *filiation*, also between the sciences, when one science gives rise to or is deeply involved in the development of another. And finally and above all, there is one sense in which *filiation* is used, which appears foreign at least to a Swedish ear: it is a term used in the philosophy of history. Littré writes: "L'enchaînement des événements qui fait que du précédent naît le suivant; d'ou se forme toute la trame de l'histoire." That is, the chain of events that makes one give birth to another; out of which the whole drama of history is shaped.

Littré also adds a remark: we must not confuse filiation with affiliation: filiation is descent from the father through the son, and figuratively speaking the series, the *enchaînement* or chain. Affiliation, on the other hand, is something added, not through a series but through association. In the case of affiliation, therefore, there is no relation of necessity, only contiguity.

This particular aspect of the French language allows, perhaps, someone whose native language is not French to understand Glissant's reflections on temporality a bit better. Filiation is not *philia*. It is not a term of friendship or reciprocity, and it is not a term of love. It is a relation, but it is a relation instituted through contiguity and not through choice. In *Poétique de la Relation*, filiation can be seen through several modalities. Filiation is the mode in which Christianity presents its system of belief: Christ is the son of God, instituting a notion of succession and linearity of which we recognize ourselves as the inheritors. Through its notion of filiation, Christianity succeeds in generalizing the conditions of humanity, tending also towards the universalization of the human condition.⁴ God is the father of the son, the Son is the Christ, offering a model of redemption in which we are all to mirror ourselves. This is the model of religion, governing the West. We are well aware of its shortcomings, familiar with its history steeped in blood, often critical of its presumptions, and wary of its patriarchal forms of power.

As Glissant shows, however, filiation is not to be reduced to its Christian implications. The Western history of the sciences, also, is steeped in filiation. This becomes clear not least in looking at the natural history as explained by Darwin. Natural selection, in this perspective, is the chain of evolution, culminating in the generalization that encompasses every cell participating in the grand scheme of Natural History.⁵

Filiation, however, is not reducible to the grand narratives. The most prominent Western myth of the unconscious is also, in Glissant's world, intimately linked to the very notion of filiation. It is applicable also to the structure of tragedy, and to the myth of Oedipus. What ancient tragedy unravels, according to Glissant, is actions linked to the broken chain of filiation, which tragedy discovers. Tragedy is all about uncovering or discovering the moment in which the moment of filiation is broken. That moment has been held off or deferred until it can no longer be put off: "the tragic action" Glissant writes, "is the uncovering of what had gone unnoticed."⁶ However, what breaks apart is not only the chain of filiation, but the legitimacy of a community. In ancient epic or tragedy every community, argues Glissant, relies on a primordial act of creation.⁷ It could be the mythic institution of a city, or the story of Abraham, perhaps. The filiation that links the community to that act of creation must be maintained. If not, the community "wanders the world,"⁸ unleashed from the necessity to which it was bound through its primordial act of creation. We may understand this through the example of Oedipus who will err, blinded and doomed in the face of the world. Tragedy is always linked to violence, instituting an order of exclusion. This kind of system in which legitimacy, filiation and exclusion moves is often masked through dramatic events: wars and conquests create their own others, they legitimize a difference between citizens and their enemies, or the foreigners of the city. Filiation, then, is not just about any mode of *enchainment*, or any form of descent. It is about the question of the mode in which a community constitutes its own ground, its legitimacy and perhaps, its own blindness to the ground on which stands. What must be pointed out is the way that tragedy's blind spot relies on an exclusion which is less that of a foreigner or a non-citizen from another city-state, but more importantly that of slaves. The violence of exclusion

accounted for by Glissant, is the violence against those whose voice are never heard in tragedy. Although women were excluded from power in real life, they were still present in the characters of the play. That, however, is not the case with slaves. In ancient tragedy, slaves are the unknown foundation for the staged image through which the community becomes conscious. They are part of the invisible ground against which the community perceives itself.⁹

As filiation is broken, the community faces another mode of existence, one in which it is faced with the other in a new territory. This is what Glissant calls the expanse, "l'étendue."¹⁰ In tragedy, the mode of expanse enters as the myth is made even more powerful in other modes. For instance, tragedy as such becomes more and more sophisticated, expanding into new scenes, new modes of acting and new genres. With this expansion comes a will to expand the original myth, or to generalize its powers. Here enters Freud, attempting to generalize the mode of filiation symbolized by Oedipus into a model of unconscious desire.¹¹


However, Glissant claims, this is not possible. Filiation cannot be implanted elsewhere, Oedipus cannot be exported. This is a point to be argued against: as we have seen in recent years, the Lacanian concept of Oedipus has been set loose from its incarnation in paternal representations. The father and the son are no longer actual figures, or individuals, they are merely functions in a symbolic system lacking representations.¹²

Serving to verify that point, is the fact that Oedipus daughter has been exported to Africa; received and transcribed in Fémi Osofisan's *Tègònni: an African Antigone* (1999), where the myth takes on a new form. It is now applicable to a political situation specific to Africa, challenging, as Astrid Van Weyenberg has shown, that Greek tragedy be a European concern rather than an African one.¹³ If we are to read *Antigone* as a tragedy concerned with

the laws of the land, rather than family ties, its African implications stand out more clearly. *Tègònni* was written during the 1990s, and it depicts the turmoil when Nigeria was first subjected to British colonial law and then to military dictatorship. Òsófisan's use of a Western myth has double directions. First, it challenges the West for its complicity in the political turmoil that has hit certain African nations. Secondly, it uses a European myth in order to appeal for help. Through the myth, known to all, the call becomes readable.¹⁴

These versions of tragedy indicate both the power of tradition as a system of filiation, and the undermining of that system through its own success. Eventually, filiation turns into *expansé*. Considering Òsófisan's version of *Antigone*, we may challenge Glissant with the help of his own terminology and see tragedy as *expansé* rather than filiation. Tragedy is not colonizing, it is already set in the diversity of the modern world and it originates not so much in Europe as in a place between continents. The politics of tragedy is less concerned with heritage than with uprootedness. Many tragedies deal with the ways in which its protagonists have been cast out, where politics is no longer dependent on the founding myths of the fathers. The uprootedness of tragedy does not allow for a return to a founding myth. It leads, rather, to something which Glissant would perhaps call a *métissage*, a reworking of the myth where the roots are undone and then woven into a wholly new political and cultural fabric.¹⁵

FILIIATION AND ALTERITY


 In the Greek genealogy of the concept of filiation, a maternal aspect immediately presents itself that contaminates the idea of pure lineage. The Judeo-Christian tradition appears to be exclusively focusing on the filiation between father and son. However, in Plato's *Timaeus*, the model of filiation based on the figure of father and son is supplemented by a maternal vessel or *the chora*, adding a principle that situates the most important aspect of engendering not in the relation of copying between the father and the son, but in-between, in the receptor in which the imprint of the father is made on the son.¹⁶ A deferral in the economy of lineage is imprinted already here, displacing the question of heritage from being a question of imprint to being a question of vessel or of place. As we will see in Glissant's own economy, place will replace imprint in his own resistance against filiation. But filiation is, and has perhaps never been, part of a projective lineage with universal ambitions.

Filiation, as depicted in Levinas' *Totality and Infinity*, breaks with the economy of reciprocity: it breaks with the reciprocity of giving and the gratitude of the receiver. Filiation is a concept in Levinas that implies the possibility of being both other than the father and one with father, not in terms of lineage descent, but rather in terms of an ethical relation. The son's oneness and separation from the father implies a kind of dialectics. The son both confirms the father's uniqueness as exterior to him, and is unique in his own right.¹⁷ To Levinas, this particular relation is important when we consider the question of temporality from an Abrahamic perspective. The son is the future, but cannot merely remain in the position of being a unique being. Abraham is also a brother, born both as offspring and as part of a brotherhood at the same time. It is in this

situation, part both of historicity's temporality and in the contemporary world of peers, that he will populate the world. In this situation, each and every one is a unique being, but also an integrated part of a people.

Levinas then explains that the biological model of filiation is not wholly contingent. It offers a certain way of looking at the experience of being unique and dependent on the continuity represented by the family at the same time, both on the maternal and the paternal side.¹⁸ Biology here offers a model, and yet the relations of biology will free themselves from biological limitations. In this way, these biological relations will serve as a model of history that has no fate, a history that is recaptured from a new point at each moment, from a novelty that continuity cannot strangle. The thread of history is here distinct, but it is not simply one of continuity, it is continuously broken through the individuation of the son and his necessary will to become himself. It is in this becoming that he may also pass into the fraternity where he is presented with the face of the other, assuming a position in which alterity engenders an ethical relation. To Levinas, the ethical relation in which I am situated through filiation does not come with any obligation, or even responsibility. It is primarily a description that has temporal and historical implications. What we see is the father of Abraham, releasing his sons and daughters in a world where they embark upon an Odyssey without hope of ever, like Odysseus did, returning home.¹⁹ This is an image that Levinas returns to time and again: the human subject may want to return to his maternal or paternal homeland, like Odysseus, but he cannot. In this way, he offers us a subject that is as archipelagic like that of Glissant.

Filiation, in Derrida's work, is a concept related to that of world, *monde*, or *mondialisation*, such as he conceives it from the Abrahamic tradition, in the vein of Levinas.


To Derrida, the Judeo-Christian idea of world implies a particular space and time. Therefore, he prefers the concept of *mondialisation* to that of globalization.²⁰ Such sharing implies certain rights, human rights. The Abrahamic notion of filiation allows us to conceive of the world in terms of brotherhood. Brothers share a world, through sharing a given space at a given time, creating a certain oriented history from that moment and that situation. We can conceive of concepts such as the rights of man through such an idea of shared world.

However, given the roots to be found in the Judeo-Christian and the Greco-Roman traditions alike, the very idea of a world is instituted as a form of hegemony. Filiation in this context, in the Abrahamic heritage inherited in the idea of *mondialisation*, the world or *monde* is not merely based on ideas of universality, or the idea that everyone shares the same world and participates in the same brotherhood. Brothers are brothers and not sisters. Fathers and brothers share the same lineage, mothers are containers. Certain individuals (the slaves, daughters, and non-believers) have no access to the brotherhood that has instituted the hegemonic order of the world in a different space and time are based on paternal lineage. Many are either obfuscated or excluded with regards to the hegemonic world of filiation they are supposedly sharing, and many are inhabiting worlds of their own, in a different space, and a different time, where filiation is not instituting the order of the governing hegemony.

On the other hand, the idea of world, the idea of sharing, and the idea of rights of man implicate a notion of universality which appears to be challenging the hegemony it has itself instituted. Filiation does not only serve a sense of time that is projective and goal-oriented. It serves a time of promise, messianic in tone, one model of sharing can never fully be substituted by another, better one. This leaves us

with a double task. Filiation must on the one hand be decomposed, and on the other rewired. The first task, to decompose filiation, “... would consist in never giving up – through cultural relativism or a facile critique of Eurocentrism, – the universal, universalizable exigency, the properly revolutionary exigency that tends irresistibly to uproot, to de-territorialize, to dehistoricize this filiation, to context its limits and the effects of its hegemony.”²¹ On the other hand, filiation must be rewired. This leaves us with a second task. The temporality of filiation, in Derridas sense, is a promise, and one must not give up “re-discovering, inventing this time in the sense of inventing as discovering what is already there potentially, namely, in this filiation itself, the principle of its excess, of its bursting outside itself of its auto-deconstruction.”²² What Derrida hopes for, in this rediscovery of the filiation of the Judeo-Christian heritage of mondialisation, is the re-invention of concepts such as rights of man, beyond the colonial, post-colonial, Neo-colonial etcetera situation, an Abrahamic filiation that is re-inventing itself, despite itself.²³

THE ROOTS OF THE PLANTATION


 hat we can see from Levinas and Derrida, then, is that filiation is not necessarily a form of temporality striving towards unicity, or the history emerging out of the concept of the One, the foundation we cannot question. In this way, Glissant’s critique of the tendency in the Greco-Roman, as well as the Judeo-Christian tradition to construe itself on myth and lineage appears to have missed its target. Filiation does not have the metaphysical dignity of identity, it is constructed, rather, on several levels of differentiation. In Derrida and Levinas, the temporality of filiation is inherently bound to a multiplicity of relations,

to the situation of being unique and linked to others at the same time, to being caught in an order of hierarchy and yet discerning the possibility of another kind of *mondiality* at the same time, where that hierarchy has vanished. And yet, there is something to be learnt from the writings of Glissant which Derrida and Levinas do not capture in their unwillingness to leave the grid of filiation.

The truth of filiation opens up, as we read Glissant, when we stare into the radical Fatherlessness that comes with the abandonment of slavery. The historical condition of the Caribbean cannot be described in any other way. With its territorial dissemination and with a history of conquerings, dissipations, slaveries, revolts, subjugations, there is no lineage to be accounted for. This is not to be regretted, although sadness, loss and a sense of catastrophe is part of its temporal sensibility. Most of all, the sensibility of time that is offered challenges the idea of an original *paternitas* to whom all others are affiliated. This means that space and time must be constituted otherwise. Rather than offering a radical reading of the notion of filiation, as Derrida does, for instance, Glissant uses the plantation as a model through which the space and the time of a culture of *métissage* can be thought. This is, to Glissant, not restricted to the Caribbeans. It is the structure in which Glissant sees the groundlessness of the modern world in general. It is also, in many ways, a structure in which a hope may dwell after all, after the liberating disasters of revolution and decolonization have taken place. If the plantation structures temporal sensibility, rather than the lineage instituted by the father, than the plantation institutes a radical absence of the symbolic law which has otherwise structured Western thought in its Abrahamic versions.

It is not possible to forget that the structure of the plantation is founded upon the existence of slaves, since the plantation is nothing but its slaves. It is an organization

formed in a social pyramid, confined within an enclosure, based on a slave structure. In this pyramid, a new social structure is engendered, and a new structure of the family, which will challenge the lineage of filiation for good. This can be seen in Glissant's reading of Faulkner, which he interprets as modern tragedy in whose work the importance of filiation is replaced by uncertainties, mixtures and piles. Uncertainties of fatherhood, mixtures of blood, intricate meshes of lineages, in short, a complicated structure of a kind of extended family that grows and duplicates itself like a rhizome rather than a line. The extended family is circular and meshed. There are no laws of filiation.²⁴ This means, of course, that there is no figure of paternity, no symbolic Father assuring the law. This means, also that we, contrary to what we may believe, may regard the plantation as the model which incarnates the (non-)ground of radical Fatherlessness, the true challenge against the model of filiation. It is a challenge that cannot be contained by the plantation. It has spread outside its confines, impacting the life in the world even after the colonial structure has fallen apart.

The Fatherlessness of the Caribbean is a state which has left its mark on the way in which naming is performed, according to the observations of Michael Dash.²⁵ The plantation slave is named by his master. The maroon, or the escaped slave, however, conquers his name. He is taken up in a collective, made part of a new community, His name emerges in and through a collective referring to a community, not to a self. Both aspects implicate a kind of fatherlessness. In the plantation, as well as in the life of the maroon, the lineage is broken. Both kinds of existence dwell in the mesh of double-lineages that will disavow the structure that relies on the law of the father. The literatures of the Americans and the Caribbean, then, are literatures based not on lineage but on forgetting, The stories of the

maronnage are oral, based on silence as much as tellings, there is no natural continuity forth or back. It is based on fragments and snatches. "The storyteller is a handyman, the *djobbeur* of the collective soul."²⁶ Based on forgetting, the literature of the *maronnage* does not present itself as exotic additions to the major literatures of the French and the Spanish. The literature is part of the process which has rewired the temporal and spatial sensibility of the European and African heritage alike: "What took place in the Caribbean, which could be summed up in the word *creolization*, approximates the idea of Relation for us as nearly as possible. It is not merely an encounter, a shock /.../ a *métissage*, but a new and original dimension allowing each person to be there and elsewhere, rooted and open, lost in the mountains and free beneath the sea, in harmony and in errantry."²⁷ The literatures that were created in the wake of the plantations, in the Caribbeans as well as in the Americas, must be read as important contributions to new forms of consciousness. The literatures created by Derek Walcott, Toni Morrison, or even Alex Hailey's *Roots*, have affected American culture. These literatures created an awareness of a roots-system, of a constitutive fatherlessness where imagination and fragmentation offer a rhizomatic structure of relations rather than patriarchal lineage. It is here that Glissant offers a true challenge to the contemporary scene of philosophy; neither Derrida nor Levinas have fully faced the empty place of the Father. Glissant, goes there, eyes open.


- 1 Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of relation*, translation Betsy Wing, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010, p. 47.
- 2 Glissant does not discuss the etymology of the word, but considers it a mode of legitimation in what he calls the Western world. Glissant, 2010, p. 47.
- 3 Dictionnaire de français 'Litttré' enligne, <http://littre.reverso.net/dictionnaire-francais>, accessed 31 July 2013.
- 4 Glissant, 2010, p. 48.
- 5 Glissant, 2010, p. 49.
- 6 Glissant, 2010, p. 52.
- 7 Glissant, 2010, p. 51.
- 8 Glissant, 2010, p. 52.
- 9 See for instance Tina Chanter, *Whose Antigone? The Tragic Marginalization of Slavery*, Buffalo: SUNY Press, 2011.
- 10 Glissant, 2010, p. 53.
- 11 See for instance Sigmund Freud, "The dissolution of the Oedipus complex," *SE*, 19: London: Norton & Company, 1979, pp. 171–179.
- 12 The symbolic status of the father is established already in *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan I–II*, translation John Forrester, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- 13 See Astrid Van Weyenberg: "Antigone as Revolutionary Muse: Fémi Ôsófisan's *Tègònni: an African Antigone*," *Journal of African Literature and Culture* 4: *A Widening Frontier*, 2007.
- 14 Fémi Ôsófisan, *Tègònni: an African Antigone*, Ibadan: Kenbim Press, 1999.
- 15 Glissant, 2010, p. 34.
- 16 Plato, *Timaeus*, translation R.G. Bury in *Loeb Classical Library*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005, pp. 49–58.
- 17 Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, translation Alphonso Lingis, Pittsburgh: Diquense University Press, 2002, p. 279.
- 18 Levinas, 2002, p. 278.
- 19 Levinas, 2002, p. 102.
- 20 See his text on "The University without condition" in *Without Alibi*, translation Peggy Kamuf, Stanford: Stanford University press, 2002, p. 203, 223.
- 21 See interviews with Derrida in Elizabeth Rottenberg: *Negations: Interventions and interviews*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002, p. 375.
- 22 Rottenberg, 2002, p. 376.
- 23 Rottenberg, 2002, p. 376.
- 24 Glissant, 2010, p. 58.
- 25 Michael Dash, *Édouard Glissant*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 88.
- 26 Glissant, 2010, p. 69.
- 27 Glissant, 2010, p. 34.

2

TRANSCULTURATION

**PROBLEMS OF
INTERLOCUTION**


**LISITT
LAGNADO**


 ith no question to be debated, there would be no intellectual life but only one informed by dumb lust or cultural industry. Problem formulation is at the origin of any reflection. This is what drives me to look for questioning signs in books, movies, and artworks. What can we say about the exhibition titled *The Spiral and the Square. Exercises in Translatability*.¹

Despite my aversion to using a personal tone, I cannot begin this text without stating that the problem of *translatability* means speaking of one of my most fundamental anxieties. I was born in Leopoldville, the capital of Belgian Congo, in a Jewish community, and listened to conversations in an Arab dialect used in the family, while at that time also being totally fluent in Lingala, a local language. Yet I owe my education to the French language. Then in 1974, when President Mobutu Sese Seko nationalized economic activities, my mother chose Brazil as our new destination and thus we migrated to a Portuguese system of representation, adding yet another language to an epic story of misunderstandings and conversions.

In this trajectory, each displacement brought a particular kind of uneasiness.² Besides the haunting threat of sudden expropriations that overnight reduced people to a state of penury, there were also disturbances of another, dietary order. But this is not the place to expound on a personal trauma. I want to advance the following question right away: How to move from the anorexic category to the laws ruling anthropophagy?³

The spirit and courage of verbal expression are largely based on the lack of pleasure in chewing and swallowing, as if the difficulty in ingesting food were compensated by vomiting intemperate words. Everyone knows how much a narrator's skills (and, therefore, his or her discursive power) depend on the mastery of a language. Suffering aside, verbal expressions remain related to the wish to exercise some kind of control.⁴ That said, a research on the word *charisma* will show the meaning of "gift" before that of "authority."

 hat can we say about a rule that foregoes the notions of *becoming* and *transformation*? The Portuguese language corrects me if I say: "I made a dream" [*fiz um sonho*]. In French, dreaming is something beautiful: *faire un rêve* also underscores production, active labor. The subject is not merely the receptacle of unconscious subjectivity; he or she produces the dream. In the French language, the one that sustains me, sickness and love are physical, emotional and moral situations with transfiguring powers. But in Portuguese, I cannot "fall ill" (*tomber malade*) or "fall in love" (*tomber amoureux*) – the only thing that I am permitted to fall from is a window ...

"*Only the mother tongue remains.*" This affirmation of Hannah Arendt becomes terrifying when oblivion pulverizes our supposed faculty to keep the origin intact (assuming that this invention would excuse its absence). On the verge of catastrophe, would a mother tongue really be the ultimate home? Would it be able to secure even a minimum of hope and resilience? Would everything be doomed to annihilation, *except the mother tongue*? The lack of assurance in this response justifies the experience of translation.

Here, I would like to share an article by Catherine Mavrikakis, “*La traduction de la langue pure: fondation de la littérature*” [Translation of the pure language: the foundation of literature].⁵ The author associates the notion of mother tongue to the myth of an ancestral home where life unfolds without constraints (because, in the beginning, there would have been that familiar breast full of milk...). She draws on work by authors like Henri Meshonnic and Pierre Férida. But whereas other scholars treat language like a product, Mavrikakis analyses it as production. She notes a disturbing point in poetry and philosophy: the appropriation of that which at first sight seemed so familiar is not at all a straightforward task. Mavrikakis recognizes a surreptitious threatening potential of the mother tongue to collapse and turn into ruins (*objet-ruine*). To give language back its sense of being a living structure restores its constructive character. Rather than as a law of survival, translatability comes across as a method, a creative method, especially when global language poses as a universal passport.



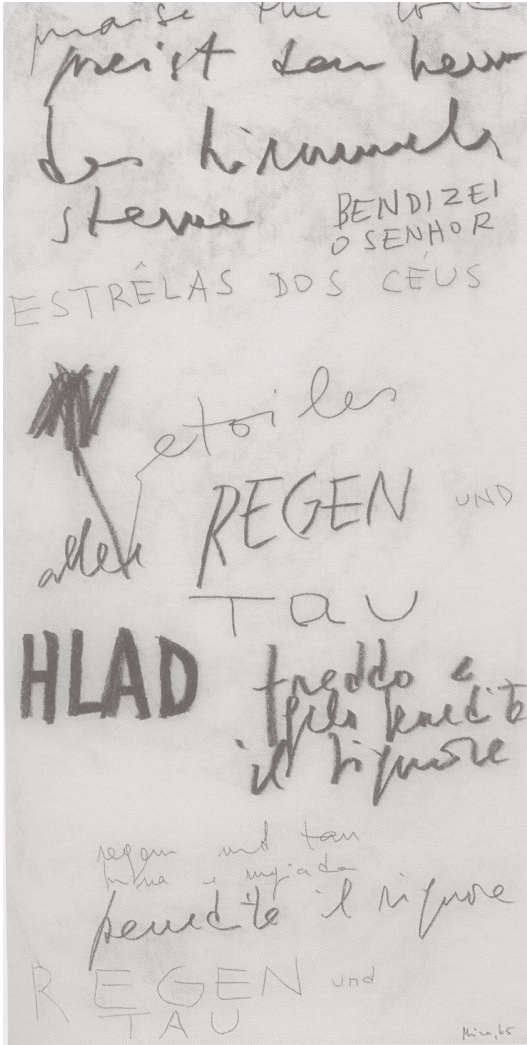
○ will now focus on Mira Schendel’s drawings between
 ○ 1964 and 1966 with the intention to add hypotheses
 ○ proposed to the exhibition *Exercises in Translatability*.
 I do this advisedly, considering that Schendel’s work
 is not in this exhibition. To this end, I reread the Masters
 degree dissertation that I defended in 1997 titled “Trans-
 parency and Writing in Mira Schendel’s Monotypes” and
 made adjustments of several kinds. I did not only translate
 it to English; I also made various simplifications in order to
 give the text a particular oral efficacy and I cut out several
 passages in order to adhere to the theme of the round-table
 connected to *The Spiral and the Square* exhibition.⁶

Those who have written an academic monograph know that the resulting text travels with some difficulty to the world outside academia. It is evident that the mission in this article coincides with one of the tasks Walter Benjamin assigned to the translator, namely: *how can we make a text survive?*

One chapter of my Masters dissertation analyzed the grounds and the implications of the belated reception of Schendel's work in Brazil. Would it be possible to explain the delay in her reception with the argument that as an artist, she remained a "European living in Brazil"? Another of my concerns consisted in investigating to what extent a current multiculturalist strategy contributed to the lack of interest in an *oeuvre* so distant from a Latin American aesthetic.

Suffice it here to remember how Hélio Oiticica's *Tropicália* (1966–1967), the environmental manifestation that included the *Parangolé*-capes and *Penetráveis*, attracted a romanticized reception in the voices of diverse Western interpreters (but not only those). After all, what did Oiticica actually mean by his statement that he was not "representing Brazil" in the 1970 exhibition *Information* at the New York MoMA? ("I am not here representing Brazil, or anything else; the ideas of representing, of representations, are over.") In fact, the aesthetic understanding of a good part of the interpreters stuck to the cliché of Latin American exotic spontaneity and did not understand what was at stake: an expansion of the field of institutional art.

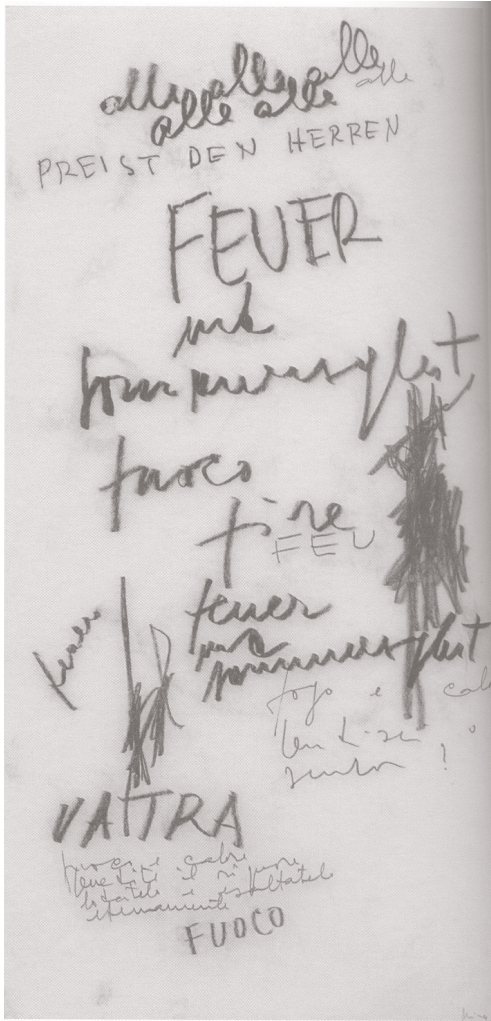
Instead the brand of "resentful" that was widespread in Brazilian intellectual circles – an obscenity following someone like Glauber Rocha⁷ – offered a mode of interpretation while also hiding the most emboldened face of cultural anthropophagy and its implied consequences. It took time for this critical perception of the program "beyond art" to enter the universe of anti-institutional artistic practices.



Mira Schendel, *Sem Titulo (Monotopias)*, 1965.

Oil, rice paper, 45×22,7cm. Collection Marcela and Israel Furmanovich, São Paulo.

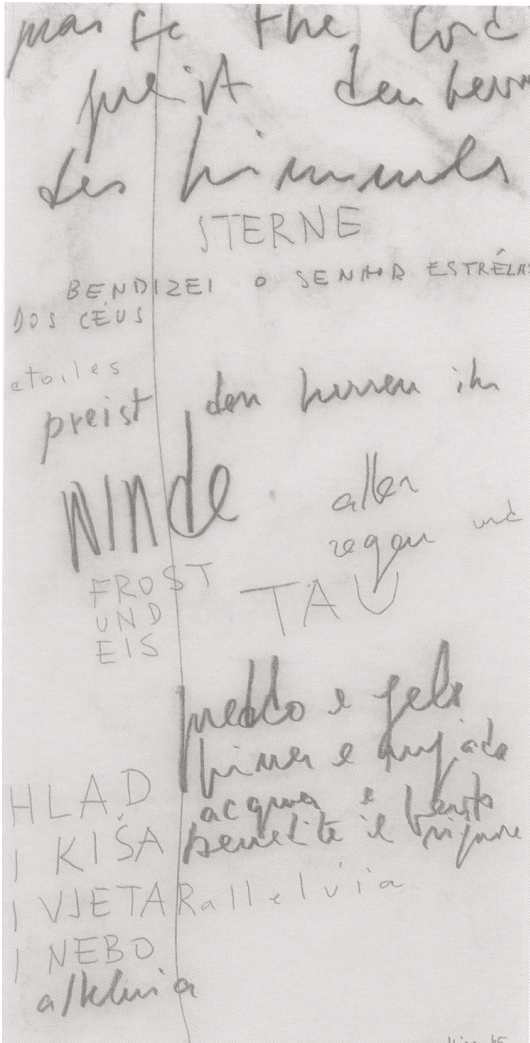
Image courtesy of Ada Schendel and Galeria Millan, São Paulo, Brasil.



Mira Schendel, *Sem Titulo (Monotopias)*, 1965.

Oil, rice paper, 44,5×22,4cm. Collection Marcela and Israel Furmanovich, São Paulo.

Image courtesy of Ada Schendel and Galeria Millan, São Paulo, Brasil.



Mira Schendel, *Sem Titulo (Monotopias)*, 1965.

Oil, rice paper, 45,5×22,9cm. Collection Marcela and Israel Furmanovich, São Paulo.

Image courtesy of Ada Schendel and Galeria Millan, São Paulo, Brasil.

Perhaps the most glaring case was that of *Ninhos*,⁸ read by many as if it were a metaphor for shelter and intimacy. Speaking of “institutional critique” today when critical reception looks favorably to demands for contemporaneity is thus not evidence of particular exegetical merit.

In the 1980’s, works endowed with immediately detectable local characteristics were more likely to prevail over those with affinities to international styles that seemed not entirely justified. Words have weight and measure. In praise of Mira Schendel’s *oeuvre*, Mário Pedrosa opts for the words “great transcendent art.” When addressing Oiticica, his choice of attributes is of another order: “anthropophagist in and of himself,” “the most Brazilian of all Brazilian artists.” And to speak of Lygia Clark, Pedrosa weaves an affinity with the atmosphere of a Brazilianist platform that refers to the symbolic importance of the construction of Brasília:

“Where are the Brazilians?” – they ask. For the provincial critics, that means – more anecdotes, more picturesque, more folklore. And then, being forced to recognize that Brazil has international modern Biennials, modern architecture, a Modern Art Museum in a spectacular construction as to the scale and boldness of its conception and design; that it has a very modern and brand new city being built in the interior of the country, then they *resign* themselves to alter their quiet little idea of that far-away country of South America, with its vast Amazon, its forests, parrots, Indians’ pirogues (!) and snakes *for the exciting*.⁹

This testimony allows to retrieve the legitimacy of the official debate on Brazilian architecture, which, among other discursive practices, relegated the creative impetus of Flávio de Carvalho to the status of eccentricity or “romantic revolution” (a euphemism with an effect equal to banishment) under the pretext that his work presented spurious influences

(read: of “European” origin). I draw attention to the word *relegate*: to banish, to expatriate. I find it interesting to imagine what would have happened, in terms of historical appraisal, if Carvalho’s 1927 project for the Palace of São Paulo’s State Government had been selected and built. Instead we would have to wait for an architect educated in Rome, Lina Bo Bardi, to present an eloquent defense of vernacular Brazilian architecture. If both Flávio de Carvalho’s and Lina Bo Bardi’s contributions had been understood as legitimate cultural manifestations of an anthropophagist symptom, how could they have been accused of not representing a “pure language”?

This is not a rhetorical question nor can it be answered here. The discussion on Brazilian modernity and identity is not only extensive but also fraught with pitfalls. All attempts to translate a country into images are disguised as educational tasks to ultimately diminish individuals, groups and peoples.

Even Guy Brett¹⁰ does not hide his irony when describing the devices used by Eurocentric discourse:

“*Magiciens de la Terre*” at the Centre Pompidou and La Villette in Paris (1989) which billed itself as the “first global exhibition of contemporary art,” the curator Jean-Hubert Martin expressed himself as “disappointed” to discover that Latin Americans have “Western” art networks like ours, with galleries, museum etc., and that they read *Artforum*. He expected to find something totally different and “other,” which in his words, would “renew our vision, rejuvenate our interest [*Art Press*, May 1989]. He therefore almost completely missed what was in fact of real interest.¹¹

To turn the table, what is the image of Mira Schendel’s *oeuvre*? For a period of almost twenty years Guy Brett paid no attention to her production and when he reestablished contact he wrote a number of reasons in a letter to the artist:

It's true that in the '70s and '80s I became very interested in the relationships between art and ideology, politics, history, as I still am – and I also felt closely involved in the efforts to extend art into new fields and media; installations, performance, participation works, video, photoworks and so on (experiments which have now become conventions).



Now about comparing the previous assessments of Mira Schendel's work with a quote from Haroldo de Campos, which illuminates the discussions of São Paulo's Concretist poets?¹²

[...] she has that great Materialist respect for the elements, which she evokes in her work, and, on the other hand, she has a fondness for writing. Her writing is not always Lettrist, sometimes it is not the letters or the words and her picture is already a poem – a poem-picture, a picture-poem.¹³

It bears reiterating that Mira Schendel's line not only evokes calligraphy but it confers thickness and corporeality to graphical signs. In this sense, Roland Barthes' term *écriture* [writing] offers a suitable gestation bed to ferment the poetico-philosophical meanings that the artist tried to concentrate in each one of her monotypes.¹⁴ Mira Schendel's definition of asceticism is revealing: "tantric asceticism is extremely sensorial and sensual."¹⁵ That is, she contests the common sense perspective that attributes to this doctrine an antagonistic approach to life. It is not about the absence of pleasure, but about knowing how to see the energy in latency, ready to hatch. The artist's rigor – in her work but also in discussions – together with her notorious adherence to the "ineffable" in Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-*

Philosophicus lamentably associated her artworks with an austere and cerebral language, and kept the levels of sensuality reserved for those who have a keen eye for materiality.



○ Is it possible to fix the precise meaning of Schendel's monotypes? The term itself only clarifies a technical aspect. What about the unusual amount of oil colors on rice papers each measuring around 46 by 23 centimeters, a field which we are not already done with? Apart from purely graphical punctuation marks and respiration signs (the full-stop, or the comma) and set theory, what is it that we get a glimpse of?

It is a homogenous yet diverse set. Early on her classifications attached nicknames to sub-groups: lines, architectures (U-shaped), and written letters. Moreover, the appearance of several languages (French, Portuguese, Italian) suggests that Mira Schendel was not searching for an ideal or exact match – mimesis, according to Benjamin – between original and translation. The artist refutes the thesis of a single language and with the same stroke the nostalgic quest for a source “lost, unique and sacred.” She embraces all ephemeral or deep residences, creating something like a homeland devoid of the functions of false comfort zone or petty consolation.

When language is considered as a live organism, it reveals as much of entropy as of expansion. In this perspective, the original and the translation are always in a relation of permanent discontinuity; a dissonance that supplies a formidably creative content. Because of this asymmetry, the sense of a crystalline origin is lost, but the possibilities of the *transient* and *unfinished* grow – fundamental attributes if the interpretation of the monotypes is to overcome formalist rigidity.

From within language, though outside any tension relief, Mira Schendel ceaselessly questioned notions of identity and alterity while also continuously challenging the intimacy problem. As a foreigner living in post-War Brazil, was there any “guaranteed” platform for her? This is difficult to say, especially given that while she searched for opportunities (and confidence), Brazil was in its turn wrapped in another quest: to define its own Avant-garde.



X he belated reception of Mira Schendel’s work coincided with the fact that it was at odds with international trends in the 1960s and 1970s, notably Pop art, Minimalism and Conceptualism. Even with the *Objetos gráficos* [Graphical objects], it is interesting to observe that the artist remained outside the systematization provided by art criticism. Her work neither “fits” Ferreira Gullar’s theory of the Non-object, nor so-called Kinetic art, notwithstanding Guy Brett’s goodwill attempt to integrate her in a movement or a style. Nor would Concrete poetry provide an appropriate designation, considering that the author/reader experience mimics the passage of time.

Mira Schendel teaches us a valuable lesson: repetition is not merely reproduction. There are different degrees of saturation, never identical, even in simultaneity. That is, there is no “front” or “back” side, nor “a” or “b” sides – all is a mystery. Just like life, artistic creation happens “here and now.” *Hic et nunc*. First today in the era of digital technology, a virtual depth is revealed in the qualities of acrylic, giving the “reader” a time-space experience of continuous present. The traditional physicality of a book sliced in two-dimensional sheets (front and verse) did not allow this. This is how Mira Schendel relates to the acrylic:¹⁶

- a. making the other side of the plane visible, and therefore negating that a plane is a plane;
- b. making the reverse of the text legible, thus transforming text into anti-text;
- c. enabling a circular reading in which the text is the immobile center and the reader is mobile. Thus time is transferred from the artwork to the consumer and accordingly time brings the symbol back to life;
- d. the transparency which characterizes acrylic is that lucid and deceptive transparency of the explained meaning. It is not the clear and trivial transparency of glass but the mysterious transparency of explanations, of problems.

It does not end with multilingualism; the monotypes claim a diaphanous mode of appearance in the world. So far nothing new. But proposing that the monotypes aspire neither to exhaustiveness nor to communication highlights two terms used by Walter Benjamin to describe precisely what a translation does not regard as an end. Mira Schendel intended to question the place of language and its modes of enunciation. Each word is called upon to function according to a very precise choice. To avoid discursive frivolity, Schendel drew on a weighty tradition of language. An avid reader of Heidegger, she intuited that *Zeit* does not translate into the term “time” without a confrontation with the semantics of each situation. The noun *Welt* appears in the company of *Mitwelt*, *Umwelt*, *Eigenwelt*; and the vertical bar of the letter “t” of *Zeit* has a disproportionate elongation the intention of which – clear in my reading – is to make a concept come to the surface. This is the concept of duration, one that does not allow itself to be represented.

Mira Schendel's family is one of poets who work with intuition as method and philosophy as sensibility. This permits me to say, without hesitation, that she belongs to the family of philosophers who intuit. I think that philosophy for her was a means and not an end. If this would be "non-knowledge," it would certainly be of a sophisticated kind. Besides Wittgenstein, she must have delved into Husserl's phenomenology, an author who establishes a bridge between solipsism and intersubjectivity. This exercise of rigor dispenses with – or at least aims to dispense with – the psychological fabric of the "little I." Just see how *Eigenwelt* is almost illegible beneath the thicker lines of *Welt* and *Umwelt*, a term designating the environment that surrounds us and threatens us from all sides. The word is a pigment.

"SENZA METAFORA"¹⁷



or the Italian language whose phonetics is more open, playful and sensory, Mira Schendel reserves playful and sensorial words such as *gioco*, *divirto*, *l'augùrio*, *qui qua*, *si sa*, *non si sa mai*... Its musicality recalls that language is physical and organic, and beyond the muscular organ necessarily mobilizes the palate, throat, teeth and diaphragm. Faced with a monotype music score punctuated by *aaa*, it becomes practically impossible to look without listening. The vowel "a" lets the air out through a half-opened mouth, to take on intonations of sighing, yawning or pleasure. And of course depending on the thickness of the line, whether it is thicker or thinner, gigantic or miniscule, capitalized, italicized or in Letraset, how many possibilities of emitting a sound... The growing clamor of an assembly of *aaaaaaaa*'s becomes "Alle" and "Alles," "all" and "the whole," and *Alle* is the metonymic cut for the

chant *Alleluia*, a melodic phrase that also brings to mind the Latin term *allegoria*.¹⁸

I regard all these monotypes through the allegory of the pilgrim. In Mira Schendel's work, seeking to abolish the linearity of reading, I find a discussion that is absolutely in tune with the work of Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica – even if they followed different paths. If there is a philosophical point of view uniting these artists it would manifest itself in the question of becoming and duration, better explained in works that negate totalizing narrative sequences. To this effect, anthropophagy serves as antidote to nostalgia for a negated language. In the survivor's stubbornness, the concept of *bricolage* repairs this loss.

The refusal to adhere to any one cultural foundation or a single ethnic community assumes the double role of legacy and horizon. "Pure language" is a toxin for life.

I know that I have left many questions open here.

Perhaps this is the best excuse to return to the problem.

I dedicate this essay to Rivane Neuenschwander with whom I ten years ago shared the anxieties couched in the philosophies of subject and language that were expressed in the text "*Atos de fala*," 2000.


- 1 This is a translated adaptation of a talk delivered on 13th October 2011 at a conference in relation to the exhibition *The Spiral and the Square. Exercises in Translatability*, Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm; curated by Daniela Castro and Jochen Volz and inspired by Osman Lins' novel *Avalovara* (1973).
- 2 Cf. "Clío, pátria," *Caderno SESC Videobrasil*, No. 5, São Paulo, 2009.
- 3 The beginning of this cultural problematic appears in the text "*Marepe, querido*," São Paulo: Galeria Luisa Strina, 2002.
- 4 How could someone born inside a troubled ex-Belgian colony, itself passing through many names (Congo, Zaire) in search of its assumed authenticity, turn away from the psychical implications of the unfulfilled promises of an independence revolution? Would it not be fitting to attribute part of what undermines a certain *joie de vivre* to the Equatorial tempests?
- 5 The Canada-based author Catherine Mavrikakis' texts can be found at a blog under her name; <http://catherinemavrikakis.com>, last accessed July 2013.
- 6 Lisette Lagnado, "Transparência e escritura nas monotipias de Mira Schendel," Departamento de Comunicação e Semiótica, Pontifícia Universidade Católica, São Paulo, 1997. Committee: Arthur Nestrovski (Supervisor), Celso Fernando Favaretto, and Suely Rolnik.
- 7 Glauber de Andrade Rocha (1939-1981), a Brazilian film director, actor and writer.
- 8 *Ninho [Nest]* is an invention by Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica, an experimental area where the visitors are invited to lay down and rest without any time restriction. They function as "non-repressive leisure places".
- 9 "'Cadê os brasileiros?' – perguntam. Para esses críticos provincianos, isso significa – mais anedotário, mais pitoresco, mais folklore. E depois, sendo obrigados a reconhecer que o Brasil tem Bienais internacionais modernas, arquitectura moderna, Museu de Arte Moderna em construção espetacular, quanto à escala e ao arrojo da concepção e do projeto; tem uma cidade moderníssima, novíssima em folha, em vias de construção no plano interior do país, então se *resignam* a alterar a ideiazinha tranqüila que afagavam sobre o longínquo país da América do Sul, com o seu vasto Amazonas, suas florestas, papagaios, piragos de índios (!) e cobras *for the exciting*." Mário Pedrosa, "Por dentro e por fora das Bienais," *Mundo, homem, arte em crise*, São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1975, p. 304.
- 10 Guy Brett is an English art critic and curator who started writing for *The Guardian* and *The Times*. Having travelled many times to South America since the 1960's, he played a key role for the comprehension of Latin-American artists through the publication of several essays on "Kinetic Art".
- 11 Guy Brett, "Border Crossings," *Transcontinental. An Investigation of Reality. Nine Latin American Artists*, London & New York: Verso & Ikon Gallery, 1990. Including the artists Waltercio Caldas, Juan Davila, Eugenio Dittborn, Roberto Evangelista, Victor Grippo,

- Jac Leirner, Cildo Meireles, Tunga, and Regina Vater.
- 12 In 1953, when Mira Schendel moved from Porto Alegre to São Paulo, non-figurative art was already established as a modern language. The Concretist ideas were in circulation since 1952, with the book-magazine *Noigandres* that was edited by Augusto de Campos, Haroldo de Campos and Décio Pignatari and that only lasted until 1962. In 1956, the *Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta* (Museu de Arte Moderna, São Paulo) consolidated the position of these poets and theoreticians.
- 13 [...] ela tem esse grande respeito matérico pelos elementos que convoca no seu trabalho e, por outro lado, tem o gosto pelos escritura. Esta nem sempre é létrica, às vezes não são letras nem palavras, e o quadro dela já é um poema – um poema-quadro, um quadro-poema. Interview by Sônia Salzstein in *No Vazio do Mundo*, São Paulo: Sesi, Arte 3 et al., 1996.
- 14 Roland Barthes, *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*, Paris, 1947–1953. I broached this question in: Lagnado, 1997, Chapter 3.
- 15 Jorge Guinle Filho, interview with Mira Schendel, "Mira Schendel, pintora," *Interview*, São Paulo, July, 1981.
- 16 a. torna visível a outra face do plano, e nega portanto que o plano é plano;
b. torna legível o inverso do texto, transformando portanto o texto em anti-texto;
c. torna possível uma leitura circular, na qual o texto é centro imóvel, e o leitor é móvel. Destarte o tempo fica transferido da obra para o consumidor, portanto o tempo se lança do símbolo de volta para a vida;
d. a transparência que caracteriza o acrílico é aquela falsa transparência do sentido explicado. Não é a transparência clara e chata do vidro, mas a transpârencia misteriosa da explicação, de problemas.
- Typewritten text found in the archives of the artist. Undated and unsigned.
- 17 Quotation from Mira Schendel's series of monotypes.
- 18 The word *allegory* comes from the Latin *allegoria*, a Latinization of the Greek ἀλληγορία (*allegoria*), "veiled language, figurative", from ἄλλος (*allos*), "another, different", ἀγορεύω (*agoreuo*), "to harangue, to speak in the assembly" and from ἀγορά (*agora*), "assembly". Cf. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allegory#Etymology>, accessed 7 2013.

FROM
OBJECTACTS
TO DANCETINGS:
'TRANSCREATION'
IN THE WORKS OF
ROBERT MORRIS,
HÉLIO OITICICA
AND LYGIA PAPE

ANDRÉ
LEPECKI

INTRODUCTION


 In the past decade dance has become a galvanizing mode for imaging and creating in the arts. Perhaps thanks to its essential qualities – ephemerality, corporeality, precariousness, scoring, and performativity – dance has been the art form that has most clearly harnessed and activated critical and compositional elements crucial to a politics of aesthetics in contemporaneity. Those critically and politically essential elements seem to have re-situated dance as one of the most interesting practices in the current artistic landscape, attracting some considerable attention from the fields of philosophy, political theory, visual arts, media studies, performance studies, and curatorial studies.

It is without surprise then, that we see dance becoming more and more prevalent in recent art exhibitions and venues, including the recent exhibition *Move: choreographing you* at the Hayward Gallery in London (touring of this exhibition included Haus der Kunst, München in 2011, Kunstsammlung NRW, Düsseldorf, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul, 2012), the presentation of a whole dance concert series at MoMA (NY) throughout 2011 in the context of the exhibition *Line*, and MoMA's dance series curated by Ralph Lemon in the Fall of 2012. We can think also of the exhibition *Danser Sa Vie* at the Pompidou in 2012, or the *retrospective* exhibition of Xavier LeRoy's work at the Tapiès Foundation, Barcelona, also in 2012. And last but not least, the commissioning and presentation of Sarah Michelson's choreography *Devotion*

Study #1 – The American Dancer at the Whitney Biennial 2012, which occupied the whole fourth floor of the museum, and which received the Bucksbaum Award.

Already in 1966, Yvonne Rainer had stated a “deep correspondence”¹ between the visual arts and dance. Allan Kaprow had foreseen the promises of this correspondence in the late 1950s, when writing about the paintings of Pollock.² As we will see in this essay, Robert Morris and Hélio Oiticica, independently from each other, and coming from very different visual arts traditions, not to mention social and national contexts, had affirmed both in 1965 how dance had been that element which allowed them to radically refigure the status of the object and of the image in their art. Half a century later, the rippling effects of this correspondence can be found in projects as distinct as Tino Sehgal’s *Instead of Allowing Some Thing to Rise Up to Your Face Dancing Bruce and Dan and Other Things* (2000), La Ribot’s *Panoramix* (2003), Trisha Brown’s danced-drawing series *It’s a Draw* (2003–ongoing), or Yve Laris Cohen’s *Duet* (2011). These and many other examples reveal how dance is a preponderant modality of thinking and creating art in contemporaneity. In this environment, where choreography finds itself in an expanded field, a rearticulation of the history of art in the second half of the twentieth century needs to be activated. What I would like to propose in this essay is a contribution to such an effort by looking at some key artists whose work informed the important “choreographic turn” that took place in the visual arts between 1958 and 1965. Examples of this turn can be found a little bit all over the world. For the purpose of this essay, I would like to emphasize the propositions made in that period by two important Brazilian visual artists (Lygia Pape and Hélio Oiticica) – their particular approach to dance offer an opportunity for theoretical and historical reevaluation of the current status of choreography within

the visual arts, as well as of the current status of the image in choreography. I will put their works in relation to the choreographic concerns of the North American Minimalist Robert Morris, whose own approach to objecthood was initially highly corporeal and whose approach to choreography inflected his later understanding of (Minimalist) objecthood.

It is, in these three specific cases, also a matter of *translation*. But only if we understand translation under a specific definition, which I have found in the extraordinary writings of Brazilian poet, critic, and one of the main proponents and theoreticians of Brazilian Concretism, Haroldo de Campos. I am referring to his concept of translation as *transcreation*, which de Campos saw as an investment of criticality, inventiveness, theorization, and openness to co-composition towards the act of translating. Translation is basically understood by de Campos as a critical-theoretical and artistic-concrete endeavor: a series of operations, or “transfers,” that “must be understood as creative and critical events that can create new perspectives on the source texts in question. It is a *transcreation*”⁴. Jesper Olsson, in an essay on de Campos’ poetry, notes how several “overlaps can be identified between concrete poetry’s exploration of the materiality of the medium and greater reader interaction (the reader is also a creative translator) and the participatory and body-oriented aesthetics explored by artists such as Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark.”⁵ However, these “overlaps” are to be seen less as inter-disciplinary efforts, or coincidental operations, but as different expressions of the same underlying project: to extract from a medium’s specific and concrete materials, unsuspected, dormant, or potential planes of expression and activation for that medium. This process of extraction and of renewed expressivity of what is already there, potentially, virtually real, is the diagrammatic operation of “transcreation.”

With our constellation of three (supposedly) visual artists (Pape, Morris, Oiticica) creating choreography at the end of 1950s and in the early 1960s, and a poet (Haroldo de Campos), theorizing also in the early 1960s a mode of translation that must set into motion acts of critical thought and acts of invention, let us begin our incursion into some choreographic, *transcreations* across images, poems, and objects.

LYGIA PAPE.
CHOREOGRAPHY OF THE NON-OBJECT
(CONCRETE BALLET [1958] AND
NEOCONCRETE BALLET [1959])



On February 23, 1958, a concrete poem appeared in the pages of the groundbreaking *Sunday Supplement* of the daily *Jornal do Brasil*. Written by the *Sunday Supplement*'s chief editor, Reynaldo Jardim, the poem was titled “Alvo-Olho” (“Target-Eye,” but also, and ambiguously “Eye-White”). Exemplary of the concrete poetry exploding in Brazil at the time (heavily influenced by the joint efforts of the young de Campos brothers and of Décio Pignatari in São Paulo, main names behind the theorization of the Brazilian Concretist movement in the arts, not only poetry) Jardim’s poem contained all the elements indicated in the manifesto “Plano Piloto para a Poesia concreta” (“Pilot Plan for Concrete Poetry”) published that same year in issue 4 of the influential São Paulo based literary magazine *Noigandres*. Signed by the de Campos brothers and Pignatari, the “Pilot Plan ...” proclaimed: “concrete poetry: product of a critical evolution of forms. Given as buried the historical cycle of the verse (predicated on rhythmic-formal units), concrete poetry starts by taking into account the graphic space as structural agent. Qualified

space: spatial-temporal structure, instead of mere timely-temporal or timely-linear development.”⁶ Let us keep in mind their definition of concrete poetry not as an exercise in signification, semantics, narration, verse, rhyme or rhythm, but as rigorous construction of a *structure* unfolding (in) space-time.

Five months after the publication of “Alvo-Olho,” on August 5, 1958, Reynaldo Jardim, again in the *Sunday Supplement*, invokes that poem in an article titled: “Ballet Concreto” (“*Concrete Ballet*”). The opening paragraph of Jardim’s text reads as follows: “Concrete ballet enjoys the same status, in the aesthetic field, as other concrete arts: construction plus, rather than construction-minus; in other words, constructing the building rather than constructing chaos by demolishing the building. A vanguard radically opposed to the *tachiste* avant-garde.” Jardim continues: “This is what we aim to do: to construct a *dynamic structure* on stage, one that creates, as it moves, a multiplicity of global forms capable of establishing plastic richness in motion through mechanical harmony, turning this mechanism of precise movements into the *ballet of ballet*.”⁷

We can see immediately how close the dynamic structure of *Ballet Concreto* is to the “spatial-temporal structure” of concrete poetry as defined by the de Campos brothers and Pignatari. With that text, Jardim was announcing, and carefully framing critically as well as aesthetically, the upcoming premiere (on August 11, 1958) of his collaboration with visual artist Lygia Pape, at Teatro Copacabana, where the dream of a concrete ballet would finally materialize. What I find interesting is how a poet, a critic and a newspaperman (Jardim), and a visual artist and graphic designer (Pape), both with no experience whatsoever in dance, and in a context of a literally non-existent dance avant-garde, under the flag of Concretism, and taking as a point of departure the concrete poem “Alvo-Olho,” would join forces to create a *choreographic* work. (Or, in Jardim’s mode

of saying choreography: “a ballet *of* ballet”). What is even more surprising (given the Concretists’ emphasis on the material autonomy of the aesthetic object, and given the importance they placed on structure as the basis for Concrete art) is how this particularly intriguing choreographic project departed not from an investigation of movement from within movement’s immanent, concrete qualities, but from a wish to *transpose* or *transduce*, a very specific “spatial-temporal structure”: the one embedded in Jardim’s “Alvo-Olho.” In other words: the wish was to *transcreate* Jardim’s visual poem. As Jardim wrote in his essay on the ballet: “In pursuit of pure theatrical reality, one sees the current attempts to present a concrete ballet (...) in which the text cannot, in terms of its own requirements, be subjected to interpretations of any kind.” Thus, “the audience will not see the poem on stage.” Rather, “they will see only the structure of that poem unfolding.”⁸ What links Concrete dance and Concrete poetry is that both are different modes of one same attribute: an unfolding structure, whose other name is, I suggest, and simply, *choreography*: that spatial-temporal abstract structure subjacent to all concretist efforts, regardless of medium.

Brazilian critic and poet Ferreira Gullar tell us, in his review of *Ballet Concreto*, also published in the *Sunday Supplement* of *Jornal do Brasil*, that it was the identification of a specific “rotational” structure in the poem itself that led to the desire to activate the poem as a ballet.⁹ Curiously, Gullar (who will write the 1959 “Manifesto Neoconcreto,” also published in the *Sunday Supplement* and co-signed by Jardim, Pape, Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica and other influential figures in Rio de Janeiro’s artistic scene), classified this choreographic event not in terms of its innovative contributions to the creation of a modern Brazilian dance, but rather as “a definitive mark in Brazilian Visual Arts.” As he wrote: “the world of colored forms gains life in order

to enchant a space which is no longer the same where, just a few minutes ago, dancers performed their turns.”¹⁰ Gullar’s statement echoes Jardim’s own affirmations, printed in the already quoted preview of the ballet, that the point of creating *Ballet Concreto* was not to make a dance – but rather to construct, rigorously, “the elements for a new world, and not use the elements of an ephemeral world.” In other words, the aim was to construct “a dynamic structure, one which creates, as it displaces itself on stage, a coordinated dance, which in itself is a moving creator of new structures.”¹¹ Thus, a necessary, even imperative choice: the Concrete Ballet would be one “*Without dancers*, since the goal is that it be efficient in its own right.”¹² This rigorous construction of a ballet without dancers Jardim called a “*ballet of ballet*.” In other words: a meta-ballet. And what else could a meta-ballet be other than pure *choreography*? It is choreography that is extracted from “Alvo-Olho.” And in a remarkable way, it is choreography that is also severed here from dance’s supposedly primary medium: the human body.

This is an intriguing moment, in the history of dance at large, but also in the history of Brazilian Concretism. It should be understood indeed as the activation of *trans-creative* forces. It is important to note how Lygia Pape, co-author of the piece, but certainly the main responsible for its plastic signature, was at the time working essentially, and intensely, with two media: printmaking and poetry (which eventually will become one, in her work). In a manuscript of 1958, titled “Theater-Poem. A sense of the whole” Pape paradoxically sets on the page some of her thoughts on the imperative for theater to destroy its own literary origins:

non-literary theater, self-contained, self-devouring
beast, birthing itself, devouring itself, and birthing again.

Dynamics-duration:

An inalienable, anti-interpretative dynamic structure, social in terms of perception and apprehension, but deeply solitary in terms of creation and accomplishment, even.

And states, point blank:

theater-poem = theater-duration¹³

We have to understand what exactly Pape means when she uses the word “duration.” She uses it not in its current, vernacular meaning of “an extended period of time” – but rather in the Bergsonian sense of the word. In other words, duration names an *intensive experience of fusion between subjectivity and objectivity*, between the plane of consciousness and the plane of matter. But, since for Henri Bergson, the plane of matter is first and foremost a plane of irradiation, it follows that any theater of duration (or dance of duration) would need to visually address the problem of light and of darkness. Indeed, and throughout Pape’s artistic life, her poetic-plastic-kinetic pursuit of duration meant to devise ways to reach directly the plane of matter. In her own words, this would happen thanks to a constant “digging away” the surface,¹⁴ a slashing or cutting of any surface whatsoever: paper, canvas, woodblocks, the stage’s proscenium understood as thick membrane, or even air.

It is curious how the assemblage *theater-poem-duration* proposed by Pape in this text, in this poem-manifesto (which according to her daughter Paula Pape was written very close to the premiere of *Concrete Ballet*)¹⁵, could find its materialization as a dance. But isn’t this also the force of *transcreation*: to extract critically and affectively structuring forces and elements and give them a new modality of expression? Watching the tapes of its sole revival to date,

under the direction of Lygia Pape herself, in 2000, at the Serralves Foundation in Porto, Portugal,¹⁶ it becomes very clear that it is indeed this theater of duration, this theater of light, movement and time, that *Ballet Concreto* allowed Pape to investigate *visually* – in her poetic pursuit for a new kind of (non-cinematic) “time-image.”¹⁷ And we can understand some choreographic options for Pape’s ballets. Guy Brett describes the *Ballet Concreto* in the following terms:

In Ballet *Neoconcreto 1* (1958), theatrical space was apparently emptied of all human figure, and the dancers replaced by colored geometric solids [cylindrical white columns and red rectangular columns]. These solids however, were invisibly moved from inside by dancers hidden inside, creating a slow and rectilinear choreography, of back and forth movements, crossings, separations and fusions between the shapes. In other words, the conventions of ‘live art’ were used to dramatize the dichotomy between geometry and the organic.¹⁸

If Rosalind Krauss, in her classic *Passages of Modern Sculpture*, noted how “a large number of postwar European and American sculptors became interested both in theater and in the extended experience of time which seemed part of the conventions of the stage. From this interest came some sculpture to be used as props in productions of dance and theater, some to function as surrogate performers, and some to act as the on-stage generators of scenic effects,”¹⁹ then we could say that *Ballet Concreto* still had “surrogate performers” (the columns) and it indeed was still concerned in generating “scenic effects.” In a sense, *Ballet Concreto* was choreographically quite traditional (in a review of the time, it is even mentioned that despite all its abstraction, the *Ballet Concreto* was still “repeating movements of traditional ballet”) – even if spectacularly minimal, and sometimes daringly empty.

In 1959, Jardim and Pape returned to the stage with a simpler and (for many critics of the time, including Gullar) much more successful *Ballet*. They titled this new choreographic collaboration *Ballet Neoconcreto*. The renaming marks also the rupture between the Rio de Janeiro concretists with the São Paulo group. This rupture is announced, on the pages of Jardim's *Sunday Supplement*, in the "Neoconcrete Manifesto" written by Gullar, and signed by Pape, Jardim, Oiticica, Lygia Clark among others.²⁰ In that issue Pape also publishes an essay titled: "Ballet. Visual Experience" ("Ballet. Experiência Visual." *Jornal do Brasil*, March 22, 1959).

In that essay a *Neoconcrete Ballet* is announced. And it becomes very clear that for Pape her new ballet should be *neither* a kinetic experience nor a corporeal one. Two of the elements intrinsic to dance's ontology in the aesthetic regime of the arts were discarded from the start. Instead, what mattered, once again, was to create and produce adequate structural conditions for a *visual experience* that was indeed, an experiential and *transcreative* event. What mattered was to reach the image from another angle, to cut through its optical surface in order to unleash its many potentials. What is fascinating is how *choreography* became the knife through which this cutting could be performed. Pape: "In short, ballet here would signify a dynamic presented on stage by one or more elements following a choreographic script with absolute unity: a synergistic phenomenon." She continues:

The *Neo-concrete* ballet develops within this space, in a succession of tensions and pauses and new tensions, with solids constructing and dismantling relationships in a controlled time-governed inventiveness, a factor that emerges, materializing the integration of mechanical movement (choreography) into the three dimensional artistic concept.²¹

Ironically, Pape's *Ballet Neoconcreto* of 1959 seems much colder and more mathematical, gestalt-oriented, and less organic, than its predecessor. In this sense, it is closer to concrete sensibility than to neoconcrete. Yet, it is surely the one where Pape's concerns with image and image renewal are more fully and more clearly actualized, in such ways that in *Ballet Neoconcreto* it is no longer movement that seems to be taking the upper hand, but a very precise unfolding of space-time aimed at revealing how any field of darkness is always a field of light. The spatial distribution of two large squares (one pink, one black with a blue stripe on top), not even remotely anthropomorphic; the use of a choreographic structure that no longer departs from a poem; and the radical planarity of this new ballet all coalesce to reveal a paradox which will be central to the development of neoconcrete painting in Brazil – which is the fact that all image is always full *and* empty at the same time.


It was a matter now of a visuality that should be understood (thanks to the neoconcretist rupture), practiced, constructed and experienced no longer as merely optical, but rather as a *fully embodied event*. This shift from passive perception to active sensation, from structural objecthood to eventual objecthood (where body and object are both perceived as modulating entities, open to co-constitutive becomings), would bring obvious consequences to the status of the image itself. As Pape would so clearly articulate, when writing about her 1959 *Ballet*: “The Neo-concrete experiment of energizing space, conveying equal value to positive-negative, gives us an organic integration: space between solids becomes form in a continuing logical development, lending it new meaning, poetic meaning even.”²²

This new meaning, even if “poetic” (think of Pape's investment at that time on her amazing *Book of Creation*), would now be radically different – the energizing of space would no longer have as its *target an eye (alvo-olho)* whose

sole purpose was to see the visible. Rather, its new aim was the creation, in chiasmatic intertwinement, of altogether new sensory organs capable to operate *through and with* invisibles. This new regime of the image, this new vision, is what another important Brazilian visual artist, Lygia Clark, seemed to have captured as she sat through the opening performance of *Ballet Neconcreto*. In a typewritten note, dated only “1959,” and titled “Vazio-Pleno” (“*Empty-Full*,” document preserved at the archives of Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro), Clark emphasizes a paradoxical aspect in the images produced by Pape’s ballet. She testifies to the peculiar event of sensing an “empty-full” at the core of the choreographed image, an “emptiness of the form” hovering between light and darkness, indeed a non-object revealed thanks to the motions of the two squares. What is this “empty-full,” which Clark will go on to search for throughout the rest of her entire career? She clarifies in her note: the empty-full is “The perception of the “form’s emptiness” in the neo-concrete ballet, in that instant when the square unit moved, and became clear and illuminated, *emptiness of itself cut in space.*”

It is precisely the production of this self-produced, or self-induced, emptiness that energizes Pape’s use of *choreography* as a *transcreative* means for renewed compositions of the visual. As she writes in the concluding paragraph of her essay “Ballet. A Visual Experience”: “Light turns solids and space itself into luminous structures.” Turning objects into non-objectal fields of light: the ultimate choreographic *transcreation*.

ROBERT MORRIS. CHOREOGRAPHY OVER THE OBJECT


 In his “Notes on Dance,” published in 1965, Robert Morris indicates some of the principles he had used when creating his “official” five dance pieces – starting in 1963 with *Arizona* and ending in 1965 with *Waterman Switch*. Explicitly acknowledging the influence of the work of Simone Forti upon his own approach to dance making, the question for Morris was of establishing how tasks and rules would take him to an understanding of “the body in motion.”²³ As he put it: “the challenge was to find *alternative* movement.”²⁴ However, for Morris, this quest for alternative ways of moving was neither about exploring “dance technique” nor embracing “chance methods.”²⁵ Instead, it was about “perpetuating structural systems.” In other words – the way to find alternative movement was through an exploration of *choreography* as a structural system of composition and mobilization. One of the procedures Morris devised to reach a satisfying alternative to moving was via the development of choreographic structures that would implement his notion of “problem solving” as “syntax.”²⁶ Thus, Morris’ early approach to objects in dance performance gained a very specific characteristic – one informed by the choreographic unfolding of problem solving as the expressive syntax of the performance. If, in the dance works by Simone Forti between 1960 to 1963, objects posed, through their sheer material presence, a field of *constraints* within which performers had to move or dance, overcoming or embracing the obstacles created by the objects (see for instance Forti’s “dance constructions” *See-Saw* [1960], or *Slant-board* [1960]), in Morris we find a different approach. As he states in “Notes on Dance”:

by the uses of *objects* that could be *manipulated* I found a situation which *did not dominate my actions nor subvert my performance*.²⁷

Let us stay a little longer with this affirmation and identify its main elements: 1) objects in Morris had to be open for *manipulation*; 2) objects would have to be devised and put into choreographic activation in such ways that their presence, materiality, and force would *not* dominate *nor* subvert Morris' performance. In his desire to arrive at discovering "alternative movement" through "structural systems," the emphasis on *object manipulation* as a way to prevent being "dominated" or "subverted" is, to say the least, intriguing. It would be enough here to remember how through manipulability, objects appear in Morris' dances under a kind of Heideggerian equipamentality (*Zuhandenheit*). As ready-to-hand, as ready to use, as manipulable and non-dominant nor subversive, we find a certain project for a *subjection of the object* in relationship to the artist's hand, organic extension of his will and intentionality. This subjection, we are told by Morris, is the necessary condition of possibility so that any structural choreographic situation he may create would not lead objects to counter the artist's intention or the choreographic structure devised. Let me advance right away, also in a Heideggerian way, that instrumentality as subjugation of the object, is precisely that which prevents objects to find their force (and dignity) as a concrete and mere *thing*. We are thus in a different zone than Pape and the Brazilian neo-concretists with their interest in the plane of matter and its singular specificities, even its wills.

If, in 1966, Yvonne Rainer would write in her famous essay "A Quasi Survey of some minimalist tendencies in the quantitatively Minimal dance midst the plethora, or an analysis of Trio A," that the aim of a renewed dance was to "be moved by some *thing*, rather than by oneself"²⁸

for Morris, in 1965, the task was of holding the object as something *moved by a self*. In other words, if the object was there at the site of dance in order to renew movement, it was only because it had been assigned the role of being an instrument (or equipment). Instrumentality was precisely that which prevented the object to initiate itself as an acting thing. Contrary to Yvonne Rainer, contrary to Simone Forti, Morris' early dances re-affirm the force of the self *over* the object as a main choreographic concern, so that what he called "tasks and rules" could not be subverted or distorted by an object's will.²⁹

Ironically, we could say that perhaps Morris was reacting against an early incident with an object he wanted to choreograph, in his first approach to a kind of dance performance for objects. I am referring to Morris' famous *Column* of 1961.

As is well known, Morris had been given seven minutes to participate in a longer program promoted by the Living Theater in New York City. He occupied that space/time thusly: curtains open to reveal standing at the center of a proscenium stage a grey-painted, 244 × 61 × 61 cm rectangular column. After 3 and ½ minutes the column falls, lying across horizontally. After another 3 and ½ minutes the curtains are drawn to end the "piece." But the fact is that when Morris made the column fall in a rehearsal the night before the opening, the object resisted. More specifically: it literally objected being the container of Morris' body. It was Morris' motions inside the column that would make it fall. But when hitting the ground, the column injured Morris. Apparently blood was shed. While performing, the object objected being made into a passive envelope for a mobile content. Rather, the object displayed its autonomy and will. Thus, on the night of the public performance, the column in *Column* was hollow – it had expelled its content, which happened to be its author's body. During the public

performance the next evening, the column eventually fell because of a wire mechanism that Morris had set up and that pushed the column at the right moment. But the image of minimal sculptures inhabited by a body (and by the body of the artist) remained central in Robert Morris work.

Thus, we need to move into a different direction, away from the question of content, and perhaps more into the question of surface matters and the activation of their *transcreative* forces and dynamics. Here, I suggest we follow the path of objects that expel from their objecthood both bodies and subjects, and place them out in the world side by side, as contents and as surfaces of nothing else than themselves. Here, some artistic propositions by another Brazilian visual artist contemporary of Morris and of Lygia Pape, could be of help. Indeed, Hélio Oiticica's main concept regarding dance and objecthood was not prevention of "subversion," nor the creation of an abstract structure, but what he called, in a portmanteau word (a neologism, by the way, highly influenced by the concrete poetry of his close friend Haroldo de Campos): "*Objectact*." Not surprisingly, in order for Oiticica to arrive at an *objectact*, a kind of *transcreative* force had to be activated beforehand.

HÉLIO OITICICA. OBJECTACT: DANCING (IS) THE THING.

It is at the threshold between objecthood, thingliness and political action that Hélio Oiticica's propositions on dance and its potentialities become of singular interest to a *transcreative* theory of choreography in the visual arts. Oiticica's approach to dance and objecthood derives not from a concern on manipulability, nor on intentional domination over the object (as in Morris),

nor even (and despite his affiliation both to concretism and to neoconcretism) from a desire to search for the revelation of hidden dynamic structures in the poetic-durational plenum (as in Pape). Rather, Oiticica's main impetus was to free the object from its confined, impoverished life as a passive target for contemplation. To free the object was, on one hand, to search for a new visuality. But this new visuality, for Oiticica, had to be deeply intertwined with the (political *and* aesthetic) notion of action. Thus object and act would fuse together into a new entity Oiticica would eventually call "*Objectact*." Through this concept Oiticica would find a way of renewing objecthood and image, and therefore to propose a new politics of aesthetic action, not via structured choreography, but via dance – and *dancing*.

The same year that Morris published his "Notes on Dance," Oiticica also jotted down his own observations on dance. As opposed to Morris' "rules or tasks" (denoting a concern with the choreographic), Oiticica was interested in the impact of improvised dance on his sculptural work. Oiticica saw dance expressing "the immanence of the act" which led to a "*new discovery of the image*."³¹ This capacity for dance to help the visual arts discover a *renewed visuality* was to become crucial not only to Oiticica's work, but to the development of the visual arts at large over the past half century. Significantly, Oiticica was not interested in theatrical choreography but in samba – along with its social, racial, corporeal and political grounds.

The importance of Oiticica to an expanded theory of the object derives from his discovery of an immanent potentiality in images and objects that could be fully unleashed by the affective and somatic experience of *dancing*. This movement towards dancing (as opposed to choreography as structure, or choreography as system of authorial control) can be followed in observations written by Oiticica as early as 1960. In a note of November 21, 1960, Oiticica advances with

the notion of something he called “color-time” to define his experimentations on multi-surfaced paintings. Indeed, it was the notion of “color-time” that led him to the discovery of an inevitable “transformation of the structure” of paintings. For Oiticica, a “color-time” formation is nothing other than the actualization of the concept of a “non-object.”³² This concept had been advanced by Brazilian poet and art critic Ferreira Gullar in his “Theory of the non-object” (1959), which encapsulated Gullar’s critical response to the work of another important Brazilian revolutionary of the image and its status, and Oiticica’s close friend, Lygia Clark. On the work of Lygia Clark, looking at the ways she was at the time interested in vacuoles in the object, Gullar wrote:

The expression “non-object” does not intend to describe a negative object nor any other thing that may be opposed to material objects. The non-object is not an anti-object but a special object through which a synthesis of sensorial and mental experiences is intended to take place. It is a transparent body, in terms of phenomenological knowledge: while being entirely perceptible it leaves no trace. It is a pure appearance.³³

The non-object unfolds a color-time that inevitably pushes the artist to explore and affirm the margins of pictorial and sculptural representation. What Oiticica found at those margins he first called “music.” But he quickly clarified he was using this term “not because the pieces generate counterpoint or eurythmics, akin to music, or have relations of this kind with it: musicality is not “lent” to the work, but rather it is born from its essence” – an essence Oiticica qualifies by using two highly performative words: “simultaneity” and “life-experience.” Four years later, in 1964, those performative characteristics of the

non-object gain a new name, this one to stay with Oiticica until his death: dance.

Dance – understood by Oiticica as the experiential movement of unfolding a plane of immanence within a field of non-objectal temporal-coloration – is the act that leads Oiticica to radically redefine what constitutes an aesthetic object. Through dance, sculpture and painting can escape from their objectality since now an object becomes any kind of “proposition for a new perceptual behavior, created through and in the ever increasing participation of the spectator, which in the end leads to the overcoming of the object as end of aesthetic expression.”⁵⁴ At the limit of this movement of thought, which is always actualized with an ever-increasing production of non-objects, what one arrives at is at Oiticica’s limit concept of “objectact.” And, with the objectact, we find ourselves very far from Morris – since the quest for a transformed perceptive behavior is seen “not as a search for a ‘new conditioning’ for the participant, but the *destruction of all conditioning.*” Destra-territorialization, deterritorialization or “experimental exercise of freedom” (to use the expression of the Brazilian critic Mário Pedrosa) of objectacts, against structured manipulations aimed at restraining the object’s power to subvert and distort an original intention ...

Dancing dancing dancing, overcoming, or rather, *transcreating* the object, passing through the non-object, the objectact, Oiticica will eventually reach the limit of objects and the limit of bodies. There, moving along this limit – which is not a boundary, but a zone of frictional exchange, of extreme excorporations and incorporations, a vibrational, vital surface where all possible interactions occur – Oiticica arrives not at an object, not necessarily at sculpture, but at what he called a *thing*. He gets there only through and because of dancing. As the limit of the limit of the body, as the limit of the limit of the object, the thing

is the objectact: its call always a proposition and never an imposition. Writing in the 1980s Oiticica is very clear on how this proposition is a calling that one must be prepared to listen to in order to follow it:

There is, as it were, an exploration of something unknown: 'things' are found, which are seen everyday but which one never thought to look for. *It is the search for oneself in the 'thing' – a kind of communion with the environment* (ah! how well dance achieves this! – the Mangueira rehearsal grounds [...]).³⁵

Anti-instrumentality always implies the concomitant dismantling of any notions of a "self" (understood here as a consciousness willing authorial authority over the world and its forces). Through dance, Oiticica found a thing-limit both in objects *and* in the subject, a thing whose force erupts from its capacity to be the experimental proposition of a renewed communion between thing and thing. In other words, a (dancing) thing is an objectact transcreating at the open limits of immanence.

- 1 Yvonne Rainer, "A Quasi Survey of some minimalist tendencies in the quantitatively Minimal dance midst the plethora, or an analysis of Trio A.Trio A," in *Minimal Art. A Critical Anthology*, Gregory Battcock (ed.), New York: E.P. Dutton, 1968, p. 169.
- 2 Allan Kaprow, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock," in *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, Jeff Kelley (ed.), Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- 3 André Lepecki, *Dance*, London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2012, particularly the "Introduction" and Chapter 1.
- 4 K. David Jackson, "Transcrição/ Transcreation: The Brazilian concrete poets and translation" in *Translator as Mediator of Cultures*, Humphrey Tonkin & Maria Esposito Frank (eds.), Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2010, pp. 128–129.
- 5 Jesper Olsson, "'In the Beginning was Translation': On Noigandres etc." in *Translatability*, Sara Arrhenius, Magnus Bergh & Cecilia Sjöholm (eds.), Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Förlag, 2011, pp. 130–131.
- 6 Augusto de Campos, Décio Pignatari & Haroldo de Campos, *Teoria da Poesia Concreta: Textos críticos e manifestos 1950–1960*, Cotia, SP: Ateliê Editorial, 2006, p. 215. Translation by the author.
- 7 Rynaldo Jardim, "Concrete Ballet," in *Lygia Pape. Magnetized Space*, Madrid: Museo Nacional Reina Sofia, 2011, p. 164. Own emphasis.
- 8 Jardim, 2011, pp. 164–165.
- 9 Ferreira Gullar, "Teoria do Não-objeto" (1959), in *Experiência Neoconcreta*, São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2007, n/p. Translation by the author.
- 10 Gullar, 2007, n/p.
- 11 Jardim, 2011, p. 164.
- 12 Jardim, 2011, p. 164, translation modified by the author. Unfortunately, the translations of these primary source texts in the Reina Sofia catalogue are filled with inaccuracies. The original essay by Jardim starts with the sentence: "Sem bailarinos porque pretende-se seja por si mesmo eficiente" (i.e., "Without dancers, because it aims at being, by itself, efficient..."). The Reina Sofia translation gives us: "Lacking commentary because it aims to be effective in its own right...." With "dancers" being replaced by "commentary" the opening sentence of becomes virtually incomprehensible.
- 13 Lygia Pape, "Theater-Poem. A Sense of the Whole," in *Lygia Pape. Magnetized Space*, Madrid: Museo Nacional Reina Sofia, 2011, p. 161.
- 14 Pape in Luis Camillo Osório, "Lygia Pape. Experimentation and Resistance," *Third Text*, Vol. 20, No. 5, 2006, pp. 571–583.
- 15 Personal communication with the author.
- 16 The revival was performed by Balletteatro do Porto, in collaboration with its artistic director, the Portuguese choreographer Né Barros. In 2012, the two ballets were shown again at SESC-Bom Retiro, in São Paulo, with direction of Paula Pape and Né Barros, and performed by local dancers.

- 17 I am thinking in particular of how Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, translation Hugh Tomlinson, London: Athlone, 1989, p. 100. Here, the concept of “peaks of present” seem fully relevant to express the delicate balance, in *Ballet Concreto*, between the “two types of chronosigns” Deleuze calls “aspects” and “accents.” Both are clearly present in *Ballet Concreto*.
- 18 Guy Brett, *Brasil Experimental. Arte/Vida: Proposições e paradoxos*, Rio de Janeiro: Contracapa Livraria, 2005, p. 144. Translation by the author.
- The reader will note that there is a discrepancy in the titles of the *Ballets*. Indeed, as published in the announcements, reviews, and programs at the time, the 1958 ballet was titled *Ballet Concreto*. Its premiere in August 1958 precedes by several months the secession between the Rio de Janeiro concretists with the São Paulo group, which took place in March of 1959. Marking this rupture, the Rio de Janeiro group issued a “Neoconcrete manifesto” published in Jardim’s Sunday Supplement of *Jornal do Brasil*. Pape’s 1959 new ballet, was thus premiered under the banner of the nascent Neo-concrete movement (Pape was one of the co-signers of the “Neo-Concrete Manifesto”), and its original title was *Ballet Neoconcreto*. Only recently, by the time of the reconstructions of the Ballets for the Serralves Foundation exhibition in 2000, that Pape decided to re-title both ballets as *Neoconcrete Ballet 1* and *Neoconcrete Ballet 2*. Retitling is an author’s prerogative. But for the purpose of historical clarity, I prefer to use the original titles, given that the ballets were first conceived, premiered, and discussed in 1958 and 1959 under two very different moments in the history of Brazilian concretism – and the original titles reflect the transition between these two moments. Indeed, to historically analyze the 1958 piece with a title that can only come into being after the 1959 rupture would be a gross misrepresentation of both work’s contextual contingencies, specificities and aesthetic concerns. It is also editorially awkward, as can be seen in the recent Reina Sofia catalogue of Pape’s work.
- 19 Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981, p. 204
- 20 The rupture derived from the Rio de Janeiro’s concretists critique of what was perceived as the São Paulo group’s dogmatic association with gestalt theory and mathematics as the sole basis for the creation of art. Their desire for structure was perceived by the Rio group as mechanical, cold, inhuman. The Rio de Janeiro group proposed instead a more vital approach to art making, and embraced explicitly the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Susanne Langer. Still interested in structure, this would be instead predicated not on the machine, but on the dynamics of the living organism.

- 21 Pape, 2011, p. 163.
- 22 Pape, 2011, p. 162.
- 23 Robert Morris, "Notes on Dance," in *Happenings and Other Acts*, Mariellen Sandford (ed.), London & New York: Routledge, 1995, p. 168.
- 24 Morris, 1995, p. 168.
- 25 Morris, 1995, p. 169.
- 26 Morris, 1995, p. 172.
- 27 Morris, 1995, pp. 168–169.
- 28 Rainer, 1968, p. 269.
- 29 We could thus see the importance of Morris' famous Duveen Galleries (currently Tate Britain) exhibition in 1971. It would be only then that Morris would allow objects to take the upper hand and to move people despite their "selves" – in the way Rainer had proposed in 1966. But, in the early 1960s, this potential had been overtly cut short by Morris. That "pandemonium broke out" during the short run of the show (as reported by the Times in 1971) and people got injured, prompting the early closing of the exhibition, is quite telling of the ongoing struggle between objects and subjects, which choreography always, somehow, addresses.
- 30 Brazilian art historian and philosopher Camillo Osório has seen Morris' *Column* as being in many ways concerned with the same issues of objecthood, kinetics and visually as Pape's *Concrete* and *Neoconcrete Ballets* (Osório 2006). Despite Osório's otherwise excellent essay, I could not disagree more with attempts at assimilating Morris' minimalism with Pape's concretism and neoconcretism. A much less nuanced, and rushed, attempt to approach Pape's *Ballets* to the early works of Morris can be found in Paulo Herkenhoff's dance-historically (very) problematic essay published in the recent catalogue for Pape's exhibition at the Museum Reina Sofia and the Serpentine Gallery (*Lygia Pape: Espacio Imantado*, Madrid: Museo Nacional Reina Sofia, 2011.). Particularly at the level of objecthood, kinetics, and materiality, the approximation proposed between *Column* and Pape's *Ballets* seems to me quite forced. Rather, I agree with Guy Brett when he writes, comparing specifically Robert Morris with Clark, Oiticica and Pape, that "the Brazilian artists had a different relation to the object" (Brett, 2005, p. 97. Translation by the author).
- 31 Hélio Oiticica, "Dance in My Experience. (Diary Entries). 1965/66," in *Participation*, Claire Bishop (ed.), London: Whitechapel & MIT Press, 2006, p. 105. Emphasis added.
- 32 Hélio Oiticica, "Appearance of the Supra-Sensorial" in *Hélio Oiticica*, Gand: Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon, 1996, p. 34.
- 33 Gullar, 2007, p. 90. Own translation.
- 34 Oiticica, 1996, p. 127.
- 35 Oiticica, 1996, p. 105.

RE-MEMBERING
A CRIME:
A REFLECTION
ON THE GALDINO
JESUS DOS SANTOS
MEMORIAL IN
BRASÍLIA

PATRICIA
LOREZO

O que se diz por sob as palavras é: um ser puro como este não merece ser extinto – mas será. / What is said between the lines is: a being as pure as this does not deserve to be extinct – but will be.

– ANTÔNIO PAULO GRAÇA: *Uma poética do genocídio*

INTRODUCTION

○ In a rather modest park, located between residential
○ blocks not far from the monumental axis in the rigid
○ plan of Brazilian Federal capital Brasília, a modest
memorial can be found. The people of Brasília colloquially call the park *Praça do Índio*, although the official name is *Praça do Compromisso*. Both names are given in remembrance of a crime that took place here in 1997. In the early hours of April 20, while sleeping at a bus stop next to the park, Pataxó Hã-hã-hãe leader Galdino Jesus dos Santos was set on fire by a group of upper-middle-class youngsters. While the perpetrators fled, witnesses managed to put out the fire and called for an ambulance. Galdino was brought to hospital, but died of his injuries. His memorial, designed by renowned Brazilian artist Siron Franco, consists of an iron plaque showing the silhouette of a man surrounded by flames. When I pass the park in May 2009 somebody has sprayed the dark iron with silver paint: *Índio também é gente, na FUNAI índio p/ presidente* (“*índios*¹ are people too, let FUNAI have an *índio* for president”).

FUNAI, *Fundação Nacional do Índio*, is the authority responsible for indigenist policy in Brazil.

In the murder of Galdino Jesus, the non-place of the *índio* in the city can be seen as expressed in a particularly brutal way. Traditionally, Brazilian indigenist anthropology has regarded indigenous identity and urban life as mutually exclusive, or at the least as contradictory. Only in the 1991 demographic census did “indigenous” enter as a category open for anyone identifying as such. Prior to 1991, official statistics of indigenous populations were solely based on FUNAI’s data of people living in indigenous *aldeias*. Moving to the city, one ceased to be an *índio*.

And yet the *índio* is visibly present in several Brazilian cities. In a speech held at the First Brazilian Congress for indigenous scholars, researchers, and professionals in Brasília 2009, Terena spokesperson Lisio Lili highlighted how in Brazilian cities, through various urban monuments, tribute is paid to an imaginary *índio* at the heart of national formation. In these monuments the *índio*, remembered in bronze or concrete, is always situated in a mythic past, never in the present.²

The Galdino memorial, however, is different. The stylized silhouette in the iron plaque is devoid of any indigenous attributes; he could be any man. The memorial is raised not to remember a mythic past, but to remember a contemporary crime. Still, given its purpose and given the fact that the design is made by one of Brazil’s most prominent artists, it stands curiously anonymous. Its place is a city, Brasília, which is in itself a monument over modernist architecture and urban planning. Brasília was built as part of an ongoing and repeatedly rearticulated project of populating the inlands and integrating the nation with its claimed territory.³

What place for a murdered man, and what place for the *índio*? What and who is being *re-remembered* in the *Praça do Compromisso*?

The word *remember* derives from Latin *rememorari*, re + *memor* (mindful), to call (back) to mind. Curiously, this calling back to mind can also be (mis)read as the joining together of severed limbs (from Latin *membrum*): the *re-membering* of what has been dismembered. In this essay I wish to try out an interpretation of the Galdino memorial as a dis-membering and re-membering of the *índio*, taking departure in how the *índio* is imagined in relation to history and nation in Brazil.

SOME HISTORICAL REMARKS ON THE *ÍNDIO*, THE COLONIAL PROJECT AND THE NATION



Galdino Jesus dos Santos had travelled to Brasília to participate in the events surrounding the *Dia do índio* – day of the *índio* – and to bring the grievances of his community concerning invasions on their traditional land. The struggle of the Pataxó Hã-hã-hãe takes place in a local context of histories of violence and dislocation in the northeastern state of Bahia. Although groups like the Pataxó Hã-hã-hãe are struggling for land, popular notions of the Northeast as a place where *índios* are long gone, are not uncommon. The Northeast being the first part of Brazil subjected to Portuguese colonization, its *índios* are often supposed to have been extinct.

The notion of the *índio* as incompatible with colonial as well as post-colonial society thus also forms the context in which Galdino Jesus acted as a community leader; the contradictory place of the *índio* in a national imaginary. As Alcida Ramos among others has pointed out, the *índio* has played a key role in the articulation of a Brazilian nationalism from the 19th century onward, representing a distinguishing mark indigenous to Brazil and differentiating it from Portugal.⁴ There is a paradox in that, on the one hand,

the *índio* is at the heart of national formation. But on the other, every demarcation of indigenous land is in present public debate met by the argument of it being a threat to national sovereignty.

What is this threatened nation? The word nation derives from the Latin *natio*, to be born. And who is more “born” in Brazil than the *índio*? Brazil itself, however, was born out of a colonial project whose transformation into a nation-state was, as Antonio Carlos Roberto Moraes notes, marked by having a territory before having a people. A territory is demarcated; a people is yet to be formed.⁵ Various projects of populating the *sertões*, the inlands, have been carried out. Today, it is the Amazon that stands as the emblematic image of the non-fulfilment of the nation: Imagined both as the last resort of the *índio* and frequently described as a “demographic void” requesting a population.

Through this notion of an Amazonian wilderness the *índio* is also encompassed in a global modern/colonial narrative of development and primitiveness.⁶ I should accordingly not be surprised that the notion of an Amazonian void echoes also in my local scholarly context. For as I sit in my office at a university located in a northern periphery of Europe, news about the Amazon reach me through the university website. Brazilian scholars together with researchers from my own university have discovered archaeological remnants of an Amazonian society said to be of “surprising” size and level of advancement. The findings are treated as a late vindication of Francisco de Orellana, who journeyed up the Amazon River in the mid 16th century. A subsequent era would treat the reports of densely populated areas and towns that Orellana’s expedition found along the river as mere fantasies. The Amazon, later travellers would tell, was a wilderness populated by wild beast, and by people almost as wild.

What is presented as “surprising” reflects the boundaries of the possible in a certain regime of knowledge. Indeed, neither the old reports from Orellana’s expedition, nor the recent findings by archaeologists in the Amazon, fit into an image of a primeval Amazonian wilderness. We should keep in mind here, that an area is often envisaged as empty in preparation for emptying also in practice. The emptiness is in this case constructed on at least two levels: as a lack *of* people, and as a lack *within* people. As Walter Mignolo has pointed out, at the time of Orellana’s expedition, difference was mainly understood as a spatially related lack of Christian faith that would be overcome through the spreading of salvation. But salvation also had a temporal dimension. About the same time as renaissance intellectuals placed the “Middle Ages” outside of meaningful history,⁷ the Americas were conceptualised as a “new” world, in which history in any more meaningful sense had only begun with the Christian inclusion of the Americas in the universal history of salvation.⁸ With the increasing secularisation of time during the 18th century, the “barbarians” and “heathens” came to be relegated to a primitive, less developed contemporary past. Whole regions were emptied of history in what Johannes Fabian has called a “denial of coevalness.” Difference came to be understood as distance in time.⁹

Faith and time as two possible devices of separation, characterizing the *índio* by his/her lack. The Portuguese colonial project was situated in these European narratives carrying universal claims and overwriting the local histories encountered in colonial expansion. Portuguese grammarian and chronicle writer Pero de Magalhães Gândavo coined the rhyme *sem fé, sem lei, sem rei*, referring to the observation that the Tupi language lacked the letters F, L and R. The Tupi were said to lack the letter F because they had no sense of faith (*fé*), L because they had no law (*lei*) to obey, and R since they knew no king (*rei*).¹⁰ Through these

lacks, crown sovereignty over indigenous populations was legitimised.

Although the subjugation of indigenous populations was rarely questioned in itself, already from early colonization there was intense debate on methods. This specifically concerned the forms of indigenous labour, since Pope Paul in 1537 had declared the *índios* to be human beings with souls, and that they should be treated accordingly for their salvation.¹¹ For the colony, the *índio* was labour. For the church, also a soul to save. In the mid 18th century, the colonial government of Marques de Pombal created an official indigenous policy with the aim of civilizing the *índio*. The monopoly of the Catholic missions was broken, and the *índio* became encompassed within a civilizing project that would later be translated by the republic – instituted in 1889 – into a “nationalising” of the *índio*. However, already prior to independence in 1822, the *índio* had become part of growing nationalist consciousness. Since there were no grandiose ancient civilisations in Brazil on which to fall back, the slot available for the *índio* in this imaginary was that of the noble savage.¹² This noble savage was elaborated in 19th century Romantic literature and art, as in José de Alencar’s famous indigenist novels *O Guarani* (1857) and *Iracema* (1865).

Characteristic of the romantic *índio* is that s/he is placed in the past, at the early days of conquest, rather than in any present. On the eve of Brazilian history, this *índio* fulfils a meaningful destiny through self-sacrifice. The *índio* is the one who dies so that the nation will live.¹³ There is, in these narratives, a strict gender code. As in Alencar’s *Iracema*, a new mestiço race emerges, always from the encounter between a European male and the indigenous womb.¹⁴ Although Alencar’s present was far from devoid of conflicts between indigenous populations and settlers, in the romantic nostalgic portraits of the past heroism, suffering and death of the *índio* no place is left for an *índio* in the present.

The long gone *índio*, as Antônio Paulo Graça shows, thus come to work as a device for looking away from a violent present of which one does not wish to be reminded.¹⁵

We can turn, here, to Benedict Anderson's reading of Ernest Renan's classic text *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* Anderson points to Renan's remark about the need to forget. There are, Renan tells us, violent pasts that "we," in order to form a nation, must forget – precisely so that we can be reminded that we have forgotten. This "forgetting" is, thus, a sort of agreement by which we together ensure that certain past atrocities are all forgotten. Paradoxically, then, they are remembered *as* forgotten, acquiring the function of "reassuring fratricides." Renan explicitly mentions the night of Saint-Barthélemy, a massacre distant enough in time to already have the status of a mythic memory. It is, Anderson remarks, no coincidence that Renan is silent on more recent massacres, as for example the crushing of the Paris Commune. This still "real" memory would be much too painful to be "reassuring."¹⁶ I will suggest that what is at stake in the relation between the Brazilian *índio* and the nation is precisely this paradoxical forgetfulness, where the forgotten is possible to utter, while the still remembered must be kept silent. The *índio* is at the heart of national formation, but only insofar as no continuity is admitted between the noble *índio* of the past and the violence suffered by *índios* in the present.

For if romanticism placed the *índio* in the past, the state still had to confront the *índio* of the present. And, of course, the indigenous populations had to confront the state. During large parts of the 19th century, intense debates took place between those who envisaged the civilizing of the *índio*, and those who promoted their removal and/or extermination. Transporting itself into republican times, this debate would motivate the creation in 1910 of a specific state organ for the implementation of indigenist policy: *Serviço*

de Proteção aos Índios, SPI (replaced by the FUNAI in 1967).¹⁷ SPI was given the task of “pacifying hostile tribes” and assimilating them as “national (rural) workers.” SPI’s goals were articulated in a spirit of positivist humanism, but the assumption that the *índio* had to disappear was as strong as among those who promoted physical extermination – only, it would happen through assimilation.¹⁸ A peaceful perishing, as it seems.

If there has been a commonplace assumption that the *índio* will disappear, something of him/her is left in the popular image of the *caboclo*. This vague term usually refers to a “civilized” or “integrated” *índio*, an in-between being. Drawing again our attention to the lack, Saillant and Forline see the *caboclo* as first and foremost signalling a void. The *caboclo* is the detribalized *índio* with no access to the exoticism of the romantic *índio*. Rather than a descendant of the defeated, the *caboclo* is the very manifestation of defeat. As such, according to Saillant and Forline, it is in the *caboclo* rather than in the *índio* that we find the inversion of national identity.¹⁹ The category itself builds on the imagined opposition between being *índio* and being Brazilian, reproduced in FUNAI’s reluctance to recognize as *índios* people not living in *aldeias*.²⁰ In the words of Ramos, the *caboclo* is “the embodiment of the paradox in the civilizing project: the effort to wipe out Indianness while closing the doors to their full citizenship.”²¹

THE (UN)NATIONAL ÍNDIO AND THE QUESTION OF LAND

- In the 1950s, Darcy Ribeiro, Nestor within Brazilian anthropology, predicted that the *índios*, through contact with national society, would be so deculturated
- that they would lose their ethnic identities and be

reduced to “generic *índios*.” But since Ribeiro’s sombre prediction, we have seen an intense political mobilisation among indigenous peoples as well as processes of ethno-genesis that have contradicted the cultural void prophesied by Ribeiro.²² The movement and land claims of the Pataxo Hã-hã-hã and the grievances Galdino Jesus was bringing to Brasília, are part of these processes.

How does the notion of a mythical *índio* ancestor at the heart of the nation relate to contemporary indigenous mobilisation?

Ramos sees it as something of a paradox that while the indigenous populations in Brazil, as reported in national censuses, are only a very small fraction of the population as a whole (less than 1%), the *índio* continues to occupy such a powerful place as a symbol of nationality. For Ramos, “indigenism,” as a set of ideas and ideals concerning the *índio* and his/her relation to the nation, has served a similar function for Brazil as orientalism has done for the West. There is, however, an important difference in the way that indigenous peoples themselves participate in the construction of indigenism; *Índios* and Brazilians, after all, live in temporal and spatial contiguity, within the same nation-state.²³

I would like to add another difference. While the Orient, for the West, has been the both exotic and barbarous other, the *índio* is not only the other but also an intimate part of the construction of a national self. The *índio* thus occupies an ambiguous position of other/sameness that is not least constitutive of much of the argumentation critical of demarcation of indigenous land. Ramos herself takes the case of politicians critical of demarcation, frequently professing to having *índio* blood in their veins, and thus evoking the *índio* of the past as opposed to the *índio* of the present.²⁴ For a telling example we can look at PCdoB (*Partido Comunista do Brasil*) deputy Aldo Rebelo’s polemical book *Raposa-Serra do Sol: O índio e a questão nacional* from 2010, a book

with a front cover representing the *índio* by Albert Eckhout's 17th-century painting *The Dance of the Tapuias*, an exotic motif from the eve of conquest. Rebelo, who is one of the loudest critics of demarcation of indigenous land in the Brazilian political elite, introduces his argument by reminding the reader of the role of the *índio* in the making of the nation. This is done with the help of *índio* heroes of the past who resisted colonization and preferred to die rather than accept captivity.²⁵ However, in his critique of contemporary struggles for indigenous land, a temporal discontinuity in his narration is introduced. The heroic indigenous resistance of the past, rather than being continuous with indigenous resistance in the present, is contradicted by it. Contemporary indigenous organisations appear as a threat to the front cover *índio*, that is, the exotic fetish of Brazilian nationalism.

Benedict Anderson's definition of the nation-state as an imagined community, exercising sovereignty over a delimited territory, is useful here.²⁶ The nation-state is demarcated and defined in relation to other nation-states; the legitimacy of its limits presupposes another state making legitimate claims on neighbouring land. This gives the particularist nation-state a peculiarly universal claim; it does not recognize any other legitimate political subjects than other territorial states and their representatives.

This state therefore encounters a difficulty in relating to populations that are not understandable within its logic, as is the case with various indigenous populations around the globe. The continuing presence of these "non-integrated" or "uncivilized" people within a territory supposedly controlled by the nation-state, puts its legitimacy as such in question. In order to formulate a critique that goes beyond the modern state, Giorgio Agamben emphasises the secondary character of the opposition between friend and enemy in Occidental political thought. The real fundamental division originates in the sovereign act that creates the

conditions for the political in the first place: the separation between a politically qualified life (*bios*) and bare life (*zoe*).²⁷ Bare life corresponds to the state of nature, as developed by early modern thinkers such as Hobbes and Locke. It is a state beyond any politically qualified society. In other words, it is human life deprived of that which marks it as specifically human.

If we understand the Occidental image of the *índio* as a product of this logic, we can also better understand the sense of void in this image, the absence of that which qualify a life as part of the politically created human world. The long tradition of viewing indigenous people as part of nature rather than culture (in Brazil not least expressed in the term *silvícolas*, used for example in the 1973 indigenist legislation still in force), should be seen in this perspective.²⁸

The *índio*, standing at the threshold of inner and outer, is both at the very foundation of society and is what threatens its existence. Opponents to demarcation of indigenous land frequently depict the reserving of land for *índios* as an emptying of the land, an absence of the nation-state and consequently, an opening of the land to the interference of others (states, international NGOs etc).²⁹ The imagined opposition between the *índio* and urban life is now easier understood. For life not (yet) politically qualified, cannot be thought of as part of the city of men, of the *polis*.

THE ONE WHO WAS NOT WHO HE SEEMED TO BE



he history of indigenous peoples in Brazil is strongly marked by displacement. It was land conflicts that brought Galdino Jesus dos Santos to Brasília, the national seat of power. So, let us now return to the *Praça do índio*. Looking at the Galdino memorial, there are no signs,

no explanations. The motif itself is strongly stylized, with a lack of stereotypical indigenous attributes common in the sort of monuments criticized by Lili. The *Praça do Compromisso* stands, at least if considering official texting, in relative silence.

When the crime here took place, it received much media attention and publicly expressed indignation. One could ask: If the *índio* is generally seen as belonging to another time and as in the process of disappearing from the present, why did the death of one particular *índio* provoke such an outcry? It is a question meant to be naive, not offensive. After all, when violence against *índios* happens in peripheral areas or at the frontiers of expansion, the tolerance towards and/or denial of the crimes seems much greater. Nine years before Galdino was killed, his brother was murdered in the same prolonged conflict over Pataxó land. This murder passed practically unnoticed in national media. Another even more telling example of an atrocity receiving far less media attention than the murder of Galdino is the 1993 assault on the Haximu Yanomami community in Roraima. Twelve people, including five children, were killed by *garimpeiros*, gold-panners, in one single attack.³⁰

The comparatively large amount of attention given to Galdino's death becomes even more intriguing when we take into account that he was killed in an act of misrecognition. The perpetrators claimed that they did not understand that the man sleeping at the bus stop was an *índio*; they believed him to be a beggar. This justifies repeating the question above, but from another direction. Violence against poor and homeless people, not seldom with fatal outcome, is a nearly everyday experience in Brazilian cities.³¹ So why, again, did the murder of Galdino Jesus dos Santos provoke such strong reactions, when other murders do not?

I will return to this question. But first, I wish to reflect on how the patterns of movement of the bodies involved,

are already an expression of certain colonial and class relations. Galdino Jesus dos Santos was a community leader who had travelled to Brasília with the grievances of his people over a land conflict in southern Bahia. We can note, firstly, that he did not stay at one of the upper- or even middle-range hotels in the hotel sector; he stayed in a budget hostel that had contract with the FUNAI. When he arrived at the hostel on the night before April 20, the landlady, blaming the late hour, did not let him in. Moreover, Galdino moved about on foot, not in a rented car or a cab. Displaced in the city that night, he found himself sharing the fate of Brasília's homeless and went to sleep at a bus stop.

The five young men who committed the murder, on the other hand, moved by car. They were returning from a party when they spotted the sleeping man and decided to "play a joke" on him. The car affected the speed with which they could get to a gas station, buy ethanol, return to the sleeping man, pour the ethanol over him, set him on fire, and – most important of all – quickly leave the place. However, the car also enabled a witness to provide the necessary information to identify the perpetrators.

Galdino was misidentified as a beggar, a *mendigo*, a person without identity but whose visibility as such was provocative enough to motivate the crime. The perpetrators, on the other hand, moved about as identifiable individuals, and this eventually led to their arrest. The fact that they were all upper-middle-class youngsters, children of the ruling elite, triggered an intense debate on the importance of class in Brazil's judiciary system. In her masters thesis on the media coverage of the crime, Ana Paula Freire has shown how mainstream media – represented in her sample by the daily newspaper *O Globo* – strongly emphasized the class background of the perpetrators. The victim, on the other hand, was decontextualized. He was a man without

place, a condition that in itself contributed to provoking the crime. What Freire manage to show is that what is lamented in the news coverage, what is made the object of indignation, is not so much the violent death of Galdino, as the fact that five boys of “good” families could commit this hideous crime. What is managed in the media coverage is a crisis in middle-class self-understanding.³² This is in sharp contrast with how the crime was understood among indigenous groups and indigenist NGOs. Here, the murder was yet another incident in the long history of violence against *índios*, and Galdino was made a martyr in the struggle for land.


Managing this middle-class crisis included the creation of a historical discontinuity between the fate of Galdino and collective indigenous experiences in Brazil. Freire provides several examples of how this discontinuity is preformed. On April 22, the newspaper *O Globo* published an editorial that firmly stated that the murder of Galdino “obviously” should *not* be understood as part of the “tragic history” of indigenous people in Brazil. For the “young criminals” simply did not know he was an *índio*. The following day, on April 23, the news section of the same paper wrote in the lead how “the anniversary of the discovery of Brazil turned into a day of tears” for the relatives of Galdino.³³

The articles perform a sharp break between the crime (a “mistake”) and the colonial history of the *índios*. The symbolic charge of the time and place – Galdino was murdered between the *Dia do índio* on April 19 and the “anniversary” of Brazil on April 23, he was murdered in the immediate proximity of the seat of power, and he was struggling with displacement both in Bahia and in Brasília – is denied meaning. However, one could also read the lead of the news feature as a symptom, in the Freudian sense, of this denial; would it not make sense, from an indigenous

perspective, to regard every April 23 as a day of tears? After all, this was the day of a historical event that initiated what would become a whole series of invasions of indigenous lands, a series of invasions that has not, by any means, reached its end. Indigenous organisations and indigenist NGOs, in contrast to *O Globo*, saw a clear continuity between the exposure to violence of Galdino's sleeping body and the experience of exposure to violence that is part of indigenous history as well as indigenous contemporary everyday experience in Brazil.

Let us again return to the park. The naming of the park, its being made a memorial, is a continuation of the strong reactions to the murder of Galdino, and also a plea for us to remember. But what should we re-member? And what should we dis-member in the practice of re-membling? The park is named *compromisso*, signalling reconciliation. But what we are urged to remember is a brutal murder. Where do the conditions for reconciliation lie? There are, it seems, two scandals present in the murder of Galdino, one open and one hidden – or rather, suppressed. The open scandal is the fact that boys of “good” families could commit this hideous act. However, the suppressed scandal – urgently pushed aside by the breaking of any continuity between colonial violence and the murder of Galdino – is that of an *índio* being openly killed by members of the hegemonic class. Brasília, as the utopian modern city, is in itself a trope of civilised Brazil where acts such as these should not happen. Metonymically, Brasília stands for Brazil and Galdino for the *índio*, the perpetrators for the modern Brazilian and the victim for the excluded member of modernity. In a sense, the killers acted precisely like the historical explorers, the *desbravadores*, taming (by fire) the uncivilised element in the cityscape.³⁴ The murder of Galdino touched on a painful trauma of the constitutive logic of the nation.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS


 In his study of state indigenist policy, Lima explores how national myths, historiography and indigenist policy together have suppressed histories of violence. Narratives are created in which the Brazilian people originate in the harmonious miscegenation of three races; Brazil was discovered rather than invaded; the *índios* were not conquered, but pacified.³⁵ More importantly, by constructing the assimilation of the *índios* into the dominant society (labelled “national”) as inevitable, other possible histories are silenced, *even* as violence is denounced. The very language used to denounce the dramatic history of colonization suffered by indigenous people, works as a double-edged sword, something Ramos captures when she calls Ribeiro’s concept of the “generic *índio*” the “intellectual creation of a prophesied catastrophe.”³⁶

In a similar manner, John Monteiro detects in Brazilian historiography a silence surrounding the presence and participation of indigenous peoples. This silence is produced by an all too commonplace assumption that the beginning of Brazilian history meant the end of the *índio*. In Monteiro’s words, “most historians treating indigenous subjects seem to cling to the belief that the best they can do is to add another chapter to what has amounted to a chronicle of extinction.”³⁷ In denouncing what at the same time is declared inevitable, a production of innocence takes place, one of the main components of what Graça has called a “poetics of genocide.”³⁸ Graça’s concept has similarities with Renato Rosaldo’s “imperialist nostalgia”: it is the act of mourning that which one has oneself condemned to death.³⁹ In the words of Ramos:

Brazil needed the Indian but only the fictionalized Indian, the redeeming ectoplasm of troublesome flesh-and-blood Indians who needed to die in order to populate the conquerors’ imagination.⁴⁰

However, there are two sharply contrasting experiences here that are nevertheless interdependent. The nostalgic act of mourning is an affordable posture in either the metropole or where the colonial society is already firmly consolidated, sensing itself to be at a safe temporal and spatial distance from the colonial violence on which it rests. At the frontiers of expansion, the language is harsher: The “demographic void” must be filled, the land colonised, the remaining *índios* civilized and made “productive.”

The Galdino memorial at the Park of Reconciliation stands in anonymous silence. But the unofficial sprayed silver text covering the memorial points to this silence and makes it scream. The statement that “*índios* are people too,” already implies the possibility of uttering the contrary. The continuity between the death of Galdino and the violence against indigenous peoples following land invasions, is once again drawn. While the name *Praça do Compromisso* imposes silence on the traumatic implications of Galdino’s murder, the spray-painted text cries out against the violent subtexts.

Why did the death of Galdino Jesus dos Santos provoke such an outcry? Analysing the fictionalized *índio* in 19th and 20th century Brazilian literature, Graça offers us a possible answer. He presents us with a catalogue of artistic depictions of extinction in the past, a disappearance that has always already happened, or is at least inevitable. Thus is produced the innocence of the present.⁴¹ But to secure this innocence, the disappearance of the *índio* has to be kept in a mythic past, where it, in Anderson’s words, can take on the character of a “reassuring fratricide.”

In that sense, Galdino’s burned body is scandalous precisely in that it transports the brutal violence that should have been kept in the past into the present again. When believing they attacked a beggar, the perpetrators – all from the hegemonic upper middle class – unintentionally made

suddenly visible the trauma of a denied constitutive violence; they brought this violence into the heart of the city, into the present. In the light of this, the name *Praça do Compromisso* becomes a vain appeal that we (whoever is included in this “we”) should remember Galdino so that we might once again forget.

The research for this text has been carried out within the program *Time, Memory and Representation – Transformations in Historical Consciousness*, funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond. The Royal Society of Arts and Sciences in Gothenburg has generously contributed with travel funding.

- 1 I have opted not to translate the term *índio* into English, since its connotations are rather different than in the Anglo-American usage. The term was reappropriated by the Brazilian indigenous movement in the 1970s and 1980s, and, as Ramos remarks, infused with political agency (Alcida Ramos, *Indigenism: Ethnic Politics in Brazil*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998, pp. 5–6). It is therefore a term of self-reference among indigenous groups, at the same time as it can refer to a colonial and exoticist idea of what an *índio* is or should be. This duality of the term should be kept in mind.
- 2 Lisio Lili, “Essa civilização não tem o que ensinar,” *Anales: Nueva Época*, No. 13, 2010, pp. 237–242.
- 3 James Holston, *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasília*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989.
- 4 Alcida Ramos, *Indigenism: Ethnic Politics in Brazil*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998, p. 66.
- 5 Antônio Carlos Roberto Moraes, *Território e história no Brasil*, São Paulo: Annablume, 2008, p. 94.
- 6 For the relation between the local and global narratives, see Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges and Border Thinking*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- 7 Walter Mignolo, “The Enduring Enchantment (Or the Epistemic Privilege of Modernity and Where to Go from Here),” *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 101, No. 4, 2002, p. 940.
- 8 Ramos, 1998, p. 16.
- 9 Mignolo, 2000, pp. 283–284; and Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.
- 10 John Monteiro, “The Heathen Castes of Sixteenth-Century Portuguese America: Unity, Diversity, and the Invention of the Brazilian Indians,” *Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 80, No. 4, 2000, pp. 703–704.
- 11 Antônio Paulo Graça, *Uma poética do genocídio*, Rio de Janeiro: Topbooks, 1998, p. 86.
- 12 Monteiro, 2000, p. 710.
- 13 Graça, 1998, p. 146.
- 14 Ramos, 1998, pp. 67–68. The objection could be made that in the early days of the colony, depicted in these novels, there were very few European women in Brazil. The point is, however, that even when a romantic relationship between an indigenous male and an European female takes place, the writer never lets it become physical. Graça discusses this in his reading of *O Guaraní* and *Iracema*, Graça, 1998, pp. 33–52.
- 15 Graça, 1998.
- 16 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London & New York: Verso, 1991, pp. 200–201.
- 17 Monteiro, 2000, pp. 712–713; Ramos, 1998, p. 156.
- 18 Antônio Carlos de Souza Lima, *Um grande cerco de paz: Poder tutelar, indianidade e formação do Estado no Brasil*, Petrópolis: Vozes, 1995, pp. 113, 308; Ramos, 1998, p. 155.

- 19 F. Saillant and L. Forline, "Memória fugitiva, identidade fléxivel: caboclos na Amazônia," in *Devorando o tempo: Brasil, o país sem memória*, A. Leibing and S. Benninghoff-Lühl (eds.), São Paulo: Mandarin, 2001, p. 147.
- 20 Saillant and Forline, 2001, p. 150.
- 21 Ramos, 1998, p. 77.
- 22 Ramos, 1998, pp. 119–120; Cristhian Teófilo da Silva, "The Astonishing Resilience: Ethnic and Legal Invisibility of Indigenes from a Brazilian Perspective," *Vibrant*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 2007.
- 23 Ramos, 1998, pp. 4–7.
- 24 Ramos, 1998, pp. 110, 178.
- 25 Aldo Rebelo, *Raposa-Serra do Sol: O índio e a questão nacional*, Brasília: Thesaurus, 2010, pp. 27–29.
- 26 Anderson, 1991, p. 6.
- 27 Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998, p. 8.
- 28 Graça, 1998, p. 102; Ramos, 1998, p. 51.
- 29 Rebelo, 2010.
- 30 Ana Paula Freire, "Notícias de um crime no mundo civilizado: As mortes de Galdino Pataxó," Unpublished Master dissertation, Niterói: Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2004, pp. 15, 90.
- 31 Ramos, 1998, pp. 289–291.
- 32 Freire, 2004, p. 126.
- 33 Quoted in Freire, 2004, pp. 102, 123.
- 34 I thank Cristhian Teófilo da Silva for valuable contributions to this argument.
- 35 Lima, 1995, p. 60.
- 36 Ramos, 1998, p. 277.
- 37 Monteiro, 2000, pp. 717–718.
- 38 Graça, 1998, p. 26.
- 39 Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. London: Routledge, 1993, pp. 69–70; Ramos, 1998, p. 84.
- 40 Ramos, 1998, p. 285.
- 41 Graça, 1998, p. 147.

**ART, GEOGRAPHIES
AND VALUES:
THINKING SÁMI
CONTEMPORARY ART
ARCHIPELAGICALLY**

**CHARLOTTE
BYDLER**



Anders Sunna, *MEE*, photo of graffiti portrait of Nils Nilsson Skum in a stairwell, Umeje/Umeå, Sweden, 2006. Courtesy of Anders Sunna. Copyright: the artist.



In the artist Anders Sunna's homepage, I saw a black and white photo of a young man wearing a graffiti painter's mask strapped over nose and mouth. He was half turned away from the camera-eye, as if he just stepped aside to show what he has sprayed. The beholder's viewpoint is thus located at the artist's shoulder fixing a companion's gaze at the wall. There, in front of the artist, was a life-size stencil graffiti profile portrait of a man wearing a Sámi costume. Only the man's features would identify him as the iconic Swedish Sámi artist pioneer Nils Nilsson Skum (1872–1951). I would not expect that the art world outside the indigenous Sámi population in Sweden or elsewhere recognise this homage. Nevertheless the oblique gesture is a good point of departure. It highlights how precariously cultural products work as common ground between cultural producers – I will call them “artists” here – and audiences (a category that includes amateur interpreters as well as professional critics and art historians) in between contemporary art worlds and Sámi communities. There are no given standards of exchange between poetics and artistic value, or between traditional aesthetics and an institutional art concept.

Hopefully, it is not presumptuous to use this fragile connection to turn to Sámi contemporary art with inspiration from Édouard Glissant's (1928–2011) archipelagical thinking. The visual relation between painter and portrait forms a text, a complex set of meanings induced from interpretation of material traces, inferred tools, spaces and makers.

This forms an art historical link that supplements but also destabilizes the sanctioned national art history text. For this end, I need to contextualize the images of Sunna and Nilsson Skum. And the universal claims of a particular art history must be criticized.

Contemporary art may be comparatively un-rooted and open to producers who are opposed to art world privileges based on institutional or social filiation. But as suggested by the wink between Sunna, Nilsson Skum, and the audience; art history lends itself to insiders' complicit games of reference. This is a trick of the trade where the artist poses with a test of his own skills at the same time as he inscribes himself in a tradition. But the matter is complicated firstly by the fact that no text helps recognition of Nils Nilsson Skum and Anders Sunna in this photographic picture. Secondly, affiliation is not open to everyone equally. In order to see Nilsson Skum as a forebear of Anders Sunna, it is necessary to know about the drawings and paintings that were particularly identified as Sámi art for exhibitions and art markets around the Nordic countries; and also to acknowledge Sunna's Sámi identity. Moreover this is no ready description of the event before I turn to describe its place; hardly a permanent installation in recognition of Nilsson Skum's achievements to the public. Sunna's spray stencil portrait is graffiti and hence an illegal trace of the there-and-then presence (the passing here-and-now), giving it lasting form before he absents himself. The place of the event is also extended to the mobile internet world, provided with electricity and computer access. Digital reproduction is also employed in claiming contemporary art world territory – albeit with disputed success.

In what follows I will briefly compare contemporary art as an institution where tradition is part and parcel of the concept, with what we can call different Sámi art traditions. In these cases institutionalization plays a tricky part

as both a platform and a limitation for art production. Diverse situated practices and conceptual spaces intersect in Anders Sunna; the ones usually thought of as contrasting traditional and contemporary, the internet and gallery spaces, rural art production and urban art worlds. One trace of these trajectories is the size of his canvases that are never larger than fitting the back space of his car. I pick up the materiality of such traces, since they are also vital to Glissant, in order to learn something about the erring and concerns that life in the archipelagic world require.

Glissant describes archipelagic thinking as *métissé*; creolised and mixed, shifting.¹ He distinguishes it from – however not as in contrast or in opposition to – what he calls continental thought; that which produces systematic knowledge and grand theories. Thinking archipelagically about the world instead gives a complex collection of details. It renders totality through the minute parts of the world that are also clearly parts of a larger compound, like the stones on the river bed. Glissant’s worlding of creative work is compelling: a worldview in a particular’s perspective. Just like Sámi contemporary art: a world that is related to “contemporary art” as well as to what is “Sámi.” It is between markets and interpretations, on common ground that is certainly not shared equally.

CONTEMPORARY ART, ETCETERA



Contemporary art thrives in an ecology comprising higher art education, curatorial networks, collectors, markets and fairs, media, exhibition spaces, etcetera. In everyday language, contemporary art has itself turned into a common ground, a commonsensical way of assuming that what is found on the international art markets encompasses that which is contemporary art on this planet

today. Parts of this nourishing environment of grants and professional positions that support many producers, distributors and consumers have become so identified with material collections and buildings so that the institutional nature of contemporary art looks as if it were physical. Contemporary art is an institution in the social sense. But it exceeds syllabi of formal training programs, approved by boards of higher national art education, and application forms for grants that are vital to make a living as a contemporary artist.² Membership in the contemporary art world is to an equally large degree passed on between peers' networks, locally and globally. I have elsewhere looked at how networks like studio residency programs or higher art education administrate and facilitate individual participation.³ However the vital things are presence and active participation, not the formal framework. The relevance and links that come with sustained engagement are part and parcel of tradition.⁴ The individual's place in emerging history is not an effect of formal approval or the artist's signature in writing. Contemporary (as well as modern) art is not severed from, but incorporate, tradition.

How to place Sámi contemporary art in relation to Sámi communities and contemporary art? Not in terms of linguistic roots, that is for sure. "The root is monolingual. [...] Relation rightfully opposes the totalitarianism of any monolingual intent."⁵ Sámi contemporary art exists through a series of relationships where contemporary art and a Sámi community coexist and to some extent share a poetic making, exposure, language use and values. "Relationship (at the same time link and linked, act and speech) is emphasized over what in appearance could be conceived as a governing principle, the so-called universal 'controlling force.'"⁶ This loss of universals is difficult but not entirely harmful, since it gives "the possibility of dealing with 'values' no longer in absolute terms but as active agents

of synthesis.”⁷ As Celia Britton has pointed out Glissant’s non-essentialist Relation is located on the level of cultural imaginaries. The decolonizing project requires subjects ready to take action as community, in relation to existing communities’ values.⁸ And Sámi art communities struggle not least with the ethnic marker that distinguishes artists in the first Sámi artists’ dictionary (*Sámi dáiddárleksikona*) published in 1993.⁹

By analogy, contemporary Sámi artists dwell between the Sámi/indigenous cultural imaginaries, and art professionals in the international contemporary art markets, national education, and museums. The impersonal meritocracy of professional training is often taken as a fundamental difference between artist-artisan guilds or “traditional art” existing earlier or in parallel with the academies, where skills and master status was passed on within families or through affiliation with workshops. Yet there are overlaps, suggesting that they are indeed not as systematic as it may seem. Acclaimed artists of any stripes may teach in higher education, which makes today’s contemporary art worlds less radically different from former versions tied to state education privileges, such as the national art academies in several European countries.

DÁIDDA AND DUODJI



eginning in the 1970s, Sámi art education was fit into a national higher art education track in Norway. The existing concept of *duodji*, traditional Sámi crafts, was accompanied by neologisms like *dáidda* that is derived from *taide*, Finnish for *art*. Does this mean that tradition was discontinued, or even corrupted? This is a complicated argument but to simplify, the new practices were institutionalized and passed on both inside national

education systems and beyond, in informal context. Cultural policy including state support for the arts enhanced meritocratic instruments for judging quality. In contrast to formal aesthetic education, Maja Dunfjeld's work on South Sámi ornamentation in *dáidda* and *duodji* traditions brings out the practical and often non-verbal passing on of aesthetic skills and meaning.¹⁰ She distinguishes three kinds of traditional aesthetic knowledge: *skills* that teach the practical mastery of a craft or trade; *tacit knowledge* that privileges firsthand experience of things or phenomena but that is frequently articulated in aesthetic discourse through metaphors or analogies; and finally *descriptive or positive knowledge* that can be stated and discussed as attributes."¹¹

As was mentioned above, the *Sámi dáiddárleksikona* (1993) codified and performatively brought forth a conceptual institutionalization. It recognized and included artists with informal training yet if it also used institutional standards from formal training when dubbing someone who is self-taught an "autodidact" or "master", while also referring to "traditional art". From the perspective of formal training, recognition as "autodidact" and "master" artist is tied to peers' networks and beyond those circles it is only honorific. In the new lexical classification, the world of *duodji* is further subdivided into four contemporary categories. The first, *álbmot duodji*, derives from Sámi for "people" or "nation" (*álbmot*) and refers to sloyd produced in homes or in Sámi milieux generally. The second is *ehpiid duodji* or applied arts, crafts or sloyd. Third is *duodji/dáidda*, applied arts or crafts leaning towards art, and fourth and final is *dáidda/duodji*, applied arts transformed into contemporary expressions. These taxonomical strictures should reveal how much the institutionalisation of *duodji* puts at stake.

Overlaps between formal education and traditional knowledge occur frequently, which is evident not least

in Anders Sunna's work. His stencil graffiti on the wall is of course not *duodji*. From the perspective of the Sámi artists' dictionary, such images hover between *dáidda* and contemporary art and invent different kinds of common ground. The resumé posted on his homepage states that he was born in 1985 in Kieksiäisvaara, and lives and works in Ubmeje (the Sámi name for the city which is Umeå in Swedish).¹³ This artist's biography begins with the preparatory Umeå Art School (2004–06) and continues with the Bachelor of Arts programme at the Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design in Stockholm (2006–09), but it does not mention informal or traditional training. This is unsurprising since formal training is what counts to be eligible for stipends and grants on the Swedish public art scene. All the same, Sunna's homepage as well as the online graduation show catalogue foreground his Sámi identity in other ways that wrap formal training in expectations of informal traditional craft skills.

History as context or pretext for artistic work often turns into abusive poetics. This is also a risk when I cite a note that Sunna wrote to introduce his work for his Bachelor of Arts graduation show in 2009:


My art is based on my own experiences, my family, reindeer husbandry and Sami history. My art is politically oriented and differs from 'ordinary' Sami art, which paints a picture of the Sami as a beautiful, peaceful and carefree people who are considered a little exotic.

I want to emphasize reality as it is, including the prejudices and oppression to which I and many other Sami are exposed every day. In each work I mix tension, various messages and strong events. The more you look at a work the more you discover.

I want to touch people with my art. I want you to be interested in the Sami – Sweden's own indigenous population – and to think about what their living conditions are like today. People know too little about the Sami, and this leads to prejudices and hatred. People do not know who we are.¹⁴

The activist candour is unusual in a contemporary art context. Yet sometimes violence results in cultural recognition. In 1979, a massive protest formed in the north of Norway against the decision to exploit the river Alta for a power plant, and the police stepped in against the sitting protesters. One protester lost an arm and another was expelled. The conflict went to court. This event is also a milestone in the institutionalization of Sámi art in Norway. *Dáidda* and contemporary art was institutionalized in Samisk kunstnerforbund. And there was the *Maze-joavku*, the Masi group, formed by several artist-activists with higher art education who mobilized for the defense of river Alta. The collective settled in the north to situate their aesthetic practices independently of Norwegian metropolitan institutions.¹⁵ These artists, like earlier generations, received their higher art education in Denmark. A younger generation has continued the institutional critique from a self-identified Sámi position in establishing aspects of higher artistic education in Romsa/Tromsø. Tradition continues into art history and offers points of attachment for Sámi contemporary art. Thus Anders Sunna's imagery inhabits the ground between contemporary art and *duodji*, never entirely recognised nor satisfactorily accounted for in tradition. The mix is a mongrel, a bit of both. Conflicting visual histories are claimed for recognition in public space. Sunna's work relates materials, iconography, forms and practices into new imaginary relationships.

MONGREL TRADITIONS, ARCHIPELAGIC CONNECTIONS


 In Sweden, national minorities are by and large absent from what can be regarded as official survey representations of art history found in introductory textbooks. In some cases the Sámi figure as objects of representations. As artistic producers, the Sámi may be mentioned in typically ethnified and often de-historicized section on applied textile or silver arts.¹⁶ Modern and contemporary intersections of *duodji* and art, *dáidda*, have been neglected in national display, too. The acclaimed Sámi *duodjar* Lars Pirak is represented in the Nationalmuseum collections with ptarmigan-shaped saltcellars in pewter, but these are among the thousands of objects that are not on show. As a national project, art history rarely gives serious scholarly attention to minoritarian, local or regional art traditions. Labelled folk art, ethnological or ethnographical artefacts, these may be referred to expertise within the domains of Nordiska Museet or the Ethnographical Museum (Folkens Museum). Traces of languages and customs, aberrant visual metaphors and material metonymies are lost among the named events that represent Swedish art history in a carefully bred national chronology.

A fundamental tenet in the official representation of art's history links individual artworks to art history in the sense of amending it, and aiming for the future, if not eternity. The latter sense imply masterworks made to last that should be maintained as well-kept monuments. Ecological or ethical aesthetics often claimed for Sámi contemporary art as well as life style, instead assigns value to ephemerality; praising a house left to decay when it has served its function. The place where remains are left may be more significant than the material traces. Links to authority, history and tradition reside in the making of objects, mastery

of materials and conditions for crafting; as well as in sensual-aesthetic appreciation of their use and display.

Glissant's criticism of cultural life under French colonial rule in fact also applies to the situation of Sámi art in Sweden up to today. In both cases, colonial administration is a form of violence that discontinues material as well as immaterial cultural practices and traditions. Many who identify themselves as Sámi do not speak a Sámi language or wear Sámi costume due to school regulations and pressure from older peers.¹⁷ Religious symbols and instruments, especially the images marking holy places called *seiti*, or drums used in spiritual communication, were systematically destroyed by Christian missionaries from the 17th century on. Today, where religious symbols and objects figure, sources are often academic publications and museums.¹⁸ Lineage and unbroken tradition are unaffordable luxuries. Yet the search for roots is ubiquitous and the anti-colonial or post-colonial critiques that seek stories of origin easily turn into essentialist projects.¹⁹ For practical reasons, traditions that were privileged knowledge transmitted within a lineage are openly accessible. Still rights to particular Sámi ornamental patterns and reindeer marks belong within a family.

Some contemporary Sámi artworks nod to signify such "tradition" in choice of antlers or spare wooden parts for material, iconic forebears, coeval peers, use of ornamentation, or drum iconography; but other stray from traditional decorum of ornament and material combinations. There is certainly no cipher, code or path to universal translatability in this exchange. Contemporary art invents itself, and to defend their legitimacy self-designated contemporary artists can claim that which Glissant called opacity, the irreducible difference which is also the "guarantee of participation and confluence."²⁰

Édouard Glissant's poetics of relationships, of relating, or relation generates terms for the functional sense making

in forced as well as willing meetings between disparate lives. It extends far beyond the author's immediate situation in Martinique and descendants of a diverse range of island settlers, colonizers and persons transported as slaves from Africa and across the Atlantic.²¹ The traces of historical injustices can neither be taken away nor be righted. Yet traces remain, vague marks in the present left by voices and actions, knowledge irretrievably lost. Collected and partially translated, these are fragments or details of an inaccessible whole.

History is certainly no ally for art makers in the "periphery" since it charts the heritage (or worse: false claims to heritage), routes and strategies that depend on closeness to state machinery and functionaries. Indeed the fragments of Sámi art in Swedish art history surveys testify to give history a colonial substructure that we also find in Glissant's novels, poetry, and political-poetical criticism. Yet knowledge of history is often felt as necessary for self-knowledge and agency. The novel *Le quatrième siècle* represent its subjects' sense of identity as connected with historical events.²² This may seem like a privileged inherited subject position, but in fact the multiple voices in the narration say something else.²³ By analogy, interpretations and production of artworks offer no single source, value, or powerful truth; only communities who exchange such ascriptions. This brittle web of communication often mistranslates or more properly over-translates into new meaning. Intertextual references and adaptation become an index to (inter-) community relevance and value.

The international focus of the international contemporary art world (here defined as a set of institutional art-specific practices held together by national higher education, international markets and systems for display and discursive exchange) separates it from artistic practices that circulate among more narrowly localized groups. But it would be a mistake to identify international contemporary art as a more

universal concept than contemporary Sámi art. Art history as surveyed offers the same detail with promises of a larger totality.

Glissant for his part confronts the task of forming a sense of community among the descendants of slaves from several countries and colonizers, grounded in Martinique itself instead of holding on to bonds that tie this department across the Atlantic to the metropolitan France. The Sámi on the other hand are divided vertically between four nation states – Sweden, Norway, Finland and Russia – and horizontally cut through by several languages.²⁴ Although present in the early history of the North, the Sámi relation to the Swedish modern nation state is complicated. Property rights and cultural rights among have been disregarded when national commercial and political interests clash. The Sámi are recognized as a Swedish indigenous people but discrimination continues.²⁵ Whereas Martinique's relation to France follows a colonial paradigm through revolts and decolonization to insertion into the French nation state as one of several over-seas domains, the Swedish nation state extended to the north without confronting Sámi claims to territorial sovereignty. In order to tax the population, the Swedish crown demanded that national borders be respected by (semi-) nomads too. Presently, Swedish Sámi enjoys limited autonomy. Since 1993, the elected representatives in the Sámi Parliament (*Sametinget*)²⁶ form the state authority for administration of cultural and internal Sámi affairs. Sweden has yet to live up to the UN document.

Art worlds are social, the ideals and practices they encompass even form an ecology. The metaphor stresses adaptability and flexibility, and openness to the surrounding worlds rather than systemic autonomy. This is also the basis for speaking of a poetics of relation; of several voices. It is not unique to Anders Sunna's or Glissant's Martinican Creole worlds. Material aspects are not separate from the

meaning of artworks. Instead knowledge of the relative permanence and stability of aesthetic arrangements of, for example, wood, discarded-found objects, or properties and behaviour of pigments and whatever things used as support; gives meaning. By analogy, if houses are not torn down but left to nature to reclaim them, the consequences are part of land art, minimalism, but also what I hesitantly call Sámi contemporary art. In a similar sense, Anders Sunna's urban stencil graffiti is a non-sanctioned, or even illegal, and nomadic aesthetic expression in a circulation space where state-sanctioned contemporary art dominates – but not exclusively. Art's circulation space is an ecological system where the protean marginal always morphs and finds escape routes. In fact, modern and traditional – two determinations that are often used as opposite positions – merge in the space between institutional aesthetics and activism. This forms the point of entry to the negotiation of contemporaneity. This contemporaneity does not only refer to the date of fabrication, it is the poetic-aesthetic negotiation of the present on an art scene. We should ask: whose is this particular contemporaneity, and who claims the international?

Finally, how could art history be collected and composed from polyphonous sources? Is it even plausible that several value standards and interpretations could govern processes of inclusion and exclusion? I believe that Glissant refers to such relational aspects of value in the poetics of relation. Creolization, the process by which a people becomes something else, and changes material and spiritual ways of existence, describes how colonized and subjugated people have to live in such incompatible value systems. Instead of searching for the root and development, material and spiritual aspects of an artwork can join differences, like a sea connects islands. Indeed Glissant extended the relevance for archipelagic thinking to people all around the world.²⁷ This makes perfect sense when we locate Sámi traditions in relations of exchange and together with contemporary art.

- 1 Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, translation Betsy Wing, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997, pp.34, 92.
- 2 I want to make a point in distinction to e.g. Arthur C. Danto's definition of art as well as his art world concept, George Dickie's institutional theory of art, and Niklas Luhmann's conception of art as a social system. I will not dispute the usefulness of his artworld concept or critique of the institutional art theory but Danto's definitions were formed by experiences and artistic communities that were perhaps more homogeneous than what can be assumed in the present. See, e.g.: Arthur Danto, "The Artworld," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 61, Issue 19, Oct. 15, 1964, pp. 571–584; *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981. Danto claimed in 1997 that he had not radically changed views since then; Arthur C. Danto, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997, p. 195. Danto also notes that George Dickie's institutional theory of art is another essentialist definition, published first as "Defining Art," *The American Philosophical Quarterly*, No. 6, 1969, pp. 253–256. See also concerning Dickie's subsequent modifications of his theory: Steven Davies, *Definitions of Art*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991. The institutional view of art is also of great merit, but a detailed survey of socio-historical specialization is problematic. See e.g. Niklas Luhmann, *Art as a Social System*, translation Eva M. Knodt, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000. I think these all are only partly useful since they claim the right to both include and disregard poetics that they are not familiar with. I find it unconvincing to claim to know ordering ideas of a poetic world or social institution if the term "x" or "art" is defined by values and practices that belong to a community that does not recognize the authority of the other. The conceptual-practical specialization that a modern and contemporary art world or art system is said to have is not necessarily found among producers and consumers (and certainly not products, but that does not affect the argument). There is neither global consensus nor a globally circulating signifier that allow the anchoring of such "x" discourses. On the other hand, if not included under the designation "art," where would "x" producers, practices, values and products fit? Suffice it to say that complex relationships tie artistic practices to the rest of the world.
- 3 Charlotte Bydler, *The Global Art World, Inc. On the Globalization of Contemporary Art*, diss., Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2004.
- 4 Charlotte Hyltén-Cavallius, *Traditionens estetik: Spelet mellan inhemsk och internationell slöjd*, Stockholm: Carlssons bokförlag, 2007, pp.20–25.
- 5 Glissant, 1997, pp. 15, 19.
- 6 Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays* introduction and translation J. Michael Dash, Charlottesville:

- The University Press of Virginia, 1999, p. 14.
- 7 Glissant, 1999, p. 16.
- 8 Celia Britton, "Introduction," *The Sense of Community in French Caribbean Fiction*, Liverpool: The Liverpool University Press, 2010, p. 8. In this context, Britton identifies similarities but also distinguishes Glissant's use of the "lieux-communs" from Jean-Luc Nancy's description of human existence as being-in-common. See Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. xxxviii.
- 9 Synnøve Persen (ed.), *Sámi dáiddárleksikona, Samisk kunstnerleksikon*, Karasjok: Sámi Dáiddaguovddás/Samisk kunstnersenter, 1993.
- 10 Maja Dunfjeld, *Tjaalehtjimmie – Form og innhold i sørsamisk ornamentikk*, Snåsa: Saemien Sijte, 2006.
- 11 Maja Dunfjeld, "Samisk ornamentikk. Hva er ornamentikk og hva er samisk ornamentikk?," pp. 201–205, in *Människor i norr. Samisk forskning på nya vägar*, Peter Sköld (ed.), Umeå: Vaartoe – Centrum för samisk forskning, Umeå universitet, 2008, pp. 203–204.
- 12 Persen, 1993, p. 11. The lexicon was published by Samiske Kunsteres Forbund (Sámi Artists' Association), an association of Sámi artists in Finland, Norway and Sweden, founded in 1979 on the initiative of Nils Aslak Valkeapää among others, and after the establishment in 1978 of Samisk Kunstnergruppe in Máze/Masi.
- 13 Anders Sunna, artist's homepage, <http://anderssunna.com/>, last accessed 10 October 2012. Swedish society is remarkably unwilling to acknowledge Sámi presence through use of existing Sámi place names. In the 2010s, these words are traces that just begin to enter the Swedish nation-state's maps and dictionaries in the form of new knowledge.
- 14 Anders Sunna, Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, online graduation exhibition catalogue, (Stockholm: 2009), <http://www.konstfack2009.se/bachelor/bafa/anders-sunna/>, accessed 20 June 2009.
- 15 Swedish-Sámi artists were also part of this movement. For instance, *dáidda*-artist Britta Marakatt Labba, born 1951 (in Idivuoma, outside Giron/Kiruna) to a family of reindeer herders, has for many years lived and worked in Badje-Sohppar/Övre Soppero. After higher education in arts and crafts at Göteborg University (graduated in 1978) she joined the *Máze-joavku*, or Masi group, named after the place where the artists settled just north of Kautokeino. In 1979 she co-founded SDS, Samisk Kunstnerforbund with Synnøve Persen and several other artists. See institutionalization described in: Hanna Horsberg Hansen, *Fortellinger om samisk samtidskunst*, Tromsø: Davvi Girji, 2007, pp. 53–72.
- 16 Sámi presence in Swedish art history is limited, and by and large a no-names history of collective traditions. See e.g. the paragraph on Sámi silver work ("Samesilver") collected in the tradition and


- innovation-theme ("Tradition och förnyelse. Konsten i bondemiljö" pp. 520–535) in Sten Åke Nilsson, "1700-talet efter den karolinska tiden," pp. 406–577, in *Konsten i Sverige del 1*, Sven Sandström (ed.), Stockholm: Norstedts, 1988, p. 535. Nilsson quotes curator at the ethnological Nordiska Museet, Phebe Fjellström, *Lapskt silver*, Uppsala, 1962, p. 143.
- 17 Up to 1956, speaking or writing Sámi was prohibited in Swedish schools. Informants claim that it took up to ten years before Sámi actually entered the formal education system. Helena Carlsson, *Same och lapp – i tid och otid*, Skellefteå: Ord och visor förlag, 2006, p. 217.
- 18 Hans Ragnar Mathiesen foregrounds the importance of collections and academic publications for the "unbroken line" that connects arctic or Sámi religious symbols. For example, the acclaimed Norwegian Sámi artist Iver Jåks (1932–2007) developed his relation to Sámi visual traditions through academic studies, and Swedish pioneering Sámi artists Johan Turi and Nils Nilsson Skum both resorted to the collection of artifacts associated with Sámi religion like drums and seiti (that are used for devotional focus and may appear in diverse forms; as tree figures as well as natural formations) at the Nordiska museet in Stockholm. The Swedish ethnologist Ernst Manker who worked for the Nordiska museet and collaborated closely with Nilsson Skum, and Turi, published two monographies: *Die Lappische Zaubertrömmel I* (1938) and *II* (1950). Hans Ragnar Mathiesen, "Iver Jåks og bruken av samiske symboler," pp. 98–103, in *Ofelas Iver Jåks Veiviseren*, Bjarne Eileretsen et al. (eds.), Tromsø: Universitetsbiblioteket i Tromsø, Ravne-trykk No. 28, 2002, pp. 101–110.
- 19 Glissant admits this is so; in "Errantry, Exile," he discusses ways to legitimate a perspn's value and presence in relation to inexhaustible *relations* instead of the *roots* that attach her to a place, a country. Glissant, 2010, pp. 11–22.
- 20 Glissant, 2010, p. 191. The notion of *opacity*, so important in Glissant's writing, is unpacked for Swedish readers in Christina Kullberg, "Introduktion," Édouard Glissant, *Relationens filosofi, Omfångets poesi*, 1990, translation Christina Kullberg, Göteborg: Glänta Produktion, 2012, p. 13.
- 21 "Ultimately, [Glissant's novel] *Mahagony* can be seen in terms of the agony of rebirth and survival. It is the theme and the very image of the 'gouffre-matrice' that is elaborated in Glissant's most recent book of essays *Poétique de la relation* ('Poetics of Relating') which appeared in 1990. A 'poetics' here implies not a political manifesto or a polemical text but an imaginative reflection on the notion of *relation* in the sense of cross-cultural relating, intra-cultural relating and relating through narrative or storytelling." J. Michael Dash, *Édouard Glissant*, Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- 22 Celia Britton brings this forth in her analysis of the theme of

- community in Caribbean fiction, where Glissant is one prominent case. Britton, 2010, pp. 51–52.
- 23 In the novel *The Overseer's Cabin*, translation Betsy Wing, Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 2011, Glissant creates four families and follow them through several generations of men and women. The personal stories are intertwined not only with each other but also with the colonial powers and descendants, the Martinican landscape, the Atlantic, and overseas France. In the essays collected under the title *Caribbean Discourse*, 1999 (*Le Discours antillais*, 1981), *economical* and political contexts wrap the colonial history in a present that offers no privileged access to agency or subject position. Again the plural subject positions, here offered by the diversity of shorter texts, provide a means to describe contemporary Caribbean artistic work and politics from many viewpoints.
- 24 Sámi languages belong to the Finnish-Ugaric family and comprise at least twelve languages, of which many are spoken by very few. The three major Sámi languages in Sweden are North Sámi, Lulesámi, and South Sámi. For an introduction, see Ante Aikio, "An essay on substrate studies and the origin of Saami", in *Etymologie, Entlehnungen und Entwicklungen: Festschrift für Jorma Koivulehto. Mémoires de la Société Néophilologique de Helsinki*, 63, Hyvärinen et al. (eds.), Helsinki: Société Néophilologique, 2004, pp. 5–34.
- 25 The exhibition *Sápmi*, opened in 2007 at the Stockholm ethnological Nordiska Museet does not make any general references to common conflicts in wall texts and labels. Instead such conflicts are expressed by informants' in recorded accounts; several people tell about exposure to hate speech especially in the north of Sweden and one man states that he does not feel like a Swede. Author, visit to *Sápmi* exhibition 10 May 2011.
- 26 The Sámi Parliament official home page, <http://www.sametinget.se/english>, accessed 7 October 2012. For references to operational and structural problems with the Parliament that is both an elected assembly where reindeer owners form an influential group and an authority, see: Carlsson, 2006, p. 221; and *Samefolket*, No. 4, April 2012, thematic issue on the Sámi Parliament.
- 27 Glissant, 1999, footnote 2, p. 19, includes the Sámi (referred to as "Lapps") in a long list of ways of transplanting people in nation states over the world.

THE
PHANTASMATIC TOMB,
O≡ METHODOLOGY
AND SCHMUTZ
IN INTE≡CULTU≡AL
T≡ANSLATION

MA≡TIN
SVENSSON EKST≡ÖM

1

“ am the King’s claws and teeth 予王之爪牙,” says a soldier in the ancient Chinese poem “Minister of War,” and the misogynic narrator of “Gazing Upwards” from the same collection claims that “The woman has a long tongue / it is a steppingstone to evil 婦有長舌，維厲之階。”¹ These are, if taken literally, monstrous statements: how can a man be another man’s “claws and teeth,” or a woman’s tongue a “steppingstone”? According to what logic does the human mind allow such bizarre fusions and leaps and, conversely, how have such turns of phrase been explained in different times and traditions?

Stanza five of “Dignified,” also from the canonical *Book of Odes*, builds upon a similarly extra-ordinary use of the word “flaw” (*dian* 玷), but here the monstrous word is embedded in a context that indicates both its function and its interpretation.

The flaw in the white jade
can still be polished
The flaw in these words
cannot be worked upon

白圭之玷
尚可磨也
斯言之玷
不可為也²

It is easy, also for a reader far removed from the original poem in time, space and cultural setting, to paraphrase this stanza. The poet stresses the importance of exactitude in language, saying that an hurtful or clumsy or insensitive utterance does damage that can never be remedied, in contrast to the flaw that, although it mars the jade, can be polished away by a skilled craftsman. Likewise, with reference to the line with which we started, “I am the King’s claws and

teeth” may be understood as an abbreviation of the statement “As a soldier, I stand in the same relationship to my King as the claws and teeth do to an animal: we are the means of defense.” Thus, these instances of poetry translate inter-culturally with perfect ease.

It seems equally easy to describe the linguistic and rhetorical workings of the above stanza. In the first line, the word or graph *dian* 玷 (which I translate as “flaw”) refers to an imperfection in a piece of jade. In the third line, however, the same word refers to an imperfection in language, and the rhetorical gravity of the stanza derives from this shift in, or extension of, *dian* 玷. Jade and language are similar to the extent that they both may contain defects, but also different in that those defects have different consequences. Moreover, the graph *dian* is written with the “jade”-classifier (the component of a Chinese character that indicates its semantic meaning), which indicates that “flaw-in-jade” was considered the primary meaning of *dian*, and that the poet thus consciously applied – or, indeed, mis-applied – a word belonging to the cognitive domain of jade to the domain of language.³

But let us inject a measure of uneasiness into our smug analysis, and ask ourselves how the Chinese thinkers of the classical age (ca. 500–200 B.C.) described and conceptualized this linguistic phenomenon, this semantic shift from “flaw-in-jade” to “flaw-in-language.” We now enter an area fraught with methodological difficulty. Is early Chinese poetics analyzable, at least partly, in Aristotelian, or Platonic terms? If we – Western readers of the earliest Chinese poetry in the 21st century – describe it in terms of the metaphorical, we must investigate the larger philosophical system of which Aristotle’s concept of *metaphora* was a part, and compare it to statements about what we may call “indirect,” “shifting” or “figurative” language in the classical Chinese philosophical discourse.

Let us therefore contextualize.

2

On January 30, 1748 a certain Benedictus Svenonius – or Bengt Svensson, as he was known before he entered the clergy – submitted a dissertation to Lund University called *De praerogativis imaginariis literarum Chinesium*. That Svenonius, who had been to Canton twice in his capacity as a priest in the service of the East India Company, chose to write his thesis “on the imaginary advantages of the letters of the Chinese” is interesting for at least two reasons. It testifies to a general change in the perception of China in the mid eighteenth century, and we may compare it to Leibniz’ famous suggestion that the sagely Chinese should send missionaries to Europe, rather than vice versa. For Svenonius, by contrast, China was a backwards culture, stifled by an impractical and unintelligent writing system. Secondly, Svenonius not only criticizes the culture and the writing system of the Chinese. By speaking of the “imagined” or “imaginary” (*imaginarius*) advantages of the Chinese, he also attempts a critical analysis of the contemporary academic discourse, suggesting that the favourable opinion of China was, at least in part, driven by illogical, dream-like phantasies about the Chinese, rather than a will to a rational analysis of an other culture. Benedictus Svenonius, in other words, addresses the question of methodology in intercultural translation.

I have argued elsewhere that Svenonius’ account of the Chinese writing system is itself full of phantasmatic misrepresentations and misunderstandings, and that his dissertation therefore is simultaneously a critique of the “academic imaginary” and an example thereof.⁴ For our present purposes, however, let us turn to page nine of *De praerogativis* (Figure 1), where we find the earliest Chinese characters printed in a Swedish book. The four characters 德肋百固, which should be read from right to left and pro-

德 力 百 百

§. VI.

Ad prodigiosam hanc characterum multitudinem si voces vel vocum semina exigas, eadem iusto pauciora invenias. REIMMANNUS Hist: Phi: Sinensis, cujus testimonio nuper sum usus, 330 tantum voces Chinesis lingvæ tribuit, quæ omnes monosyllabæ, & significationis, accentuum & tonorum varietate innumeris hisce characteribus respondent. In Gram. Sin. p.5. affert hæc omnia termina T. S. BAYERUS, ubi numerum 350 conficiunt. Infinitæ igitur characterum voragini hæ paucæ voces sufficere debent: & auctor est FOURMONT in *lingvæ Sinarum Mandarinicæ Grammatica*, unicam ducentis sæpe respondere characteribus. Si tamen eæ ex moribus Europæis æstimandæ; potius in syllabarum quam vocum loco sunt habendæ, nam ex his etiã nostri orbis nomina conficiunt, ut ex illis, quæ in §. V. allata sunt, patet. Et quoniam singulæ syllabæ Chinesium significationæ sunt, suisque characteribus gaudent, ad unicum Europæum vocabulum efferendum, non raro tres, quatuor, aut plures characteres requiruntur, qui etiã integrum aliquando, nativis suis notionibus, periodum absolvunt. Sic enim cel. in rebus Chinesibus COUPLET Chinesis ore nominatus, *Cu-pe-le-re* vocabitur, quibus syllabis hæ quatuor re-

spondent literæ

德 力 百 百

significantes, & corroborantem centum costas virtutem. Quæ igitur Europæi paucis verbis & minimo spatio complectuntur, ea Chineses longiori mora circumscri-

B

bunt,

Figure 1

nounced approximately *gu-bo-lei-de*, illustrate, according to Svenonius, the impracticability and innate stupidity of the “letters of the Chinese.” These are the four graphs with which the Chinese wrote the surname of the French proto-sinologist Philippe Couplet (1623–93), and Svenonius ridicules the semantic excess that is the result of the Chinese practice of using graphs whose pronunciation approximate the non-sinitic name or word they represent. Instead of simply representing the syllables – the *sounds* – that make up the French name “cou-p-let,” these four graphs, in addition, form the nonsensical, gibberish sentence “corroborating one hundred rib virtue.”

What interests me most in this context, however, is the typography, graphic design or visual imprint, of page nine. The Chinese characters are clumsily composed and almost illegible. They cut through, and disturb, the flow of the rational academic discourse and the alphabetic script in which it is expressed. In this manner, page nine becomes an emblem of how China in general, and Chinese writing in particular, inserts itself into the Western scientific discourse as a distorting and disturbing alien presence. Unwittingly, Svenonius has created a perfect illustration of the “academic imaginary” and its relation to China.

3

Almost two hundred and fifty years later, another Swede bearing the same patronym publishes a short essay in the leading morning paper *Dagens Nyheter*. He is asked by the kind and enthusiastic editor to provide an illustration for his discussion of early Chinese poetry and poetics, and the Western interpretations thereof. He spends many hours in the Fine Arts section of the library of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities before finally opting for a painting of

Tao Yuanming (A.D. 365–427). It depicts the great poet sitting outdoors, drinking wine and composing poetry, and our hero thinks the image cleverly illustrates the tendency to describe Chinese poetry as unpremeditated and spontaneous, and the Chinese poet as a medium for natural, cosmological forces rather than as a skilful wordsmith.

But when the essay is finally published – on April 1, 1995 – the editor has chosen a very different illustration (Figure 2). Inserted at random in the text are five large, ill-written Chinese characters which, read together, form the phrase *dongfang de fandan*. The young sinologist is nonplussed, discombobulated, and spills out his morning tea on the newspaper. He then laughs long and hard, because the page in front of him is a masterpiece of irony. Whilst the text problematizes Western stereotypes of China, the layout of the page bluntly conveys two typically Occidental misconceptions: that Chinese graphs are exotic ornaments but semantically meaningless, or (vice versa) that Chinese characters are *inherently* meaningful, possessing a mysterious value that lies beyond semantics. What is worse, to the person knowledgeable in the “letters of the Chinese,” the five characters 東方的飯店 scream out ORIENTAL RESTAURANT, suggesting that what unconsciously drives the Westerner’s analysis of China is a visceral, but intellectually shallow, orientalist urge for exotic food. After catching his breath, the sinologist telephones the editor, who promptly informs him that *Dagens Nyheter* “has the entire Chinese alphabet in the basement.” The quiet Saturday morning has transmogrified into a Borgesian short story.

When juxtaposed, the page from *Dagens Nyheter* and page nine from *De praerogativis* are painfully similar. To the reader without knowledge of Chinese, the graphs appear as blobs that either adorn or disrupt the text, or both. To the reader who knows Chinese, they contradict and subvert the critique – common to both Sons of Sven – of the imagined,

Konsten att översätta himlen till kinesiska

Martin Svensson om hur kristna boktävler förvarades till kinesisk poesi

Att översätta kinesiska texter till svenska är en konst. Men det är inte bara språkets komplexitet som gör det svårt. Det är också den kulturella skillnaden som gör det svårt. Det är också den kulturella skillnaden som gör det svårt. Det är också den kulturella skillnaden som gör det svårt.

Förstapriset i den kinesiska boktävlingen är en bok om himlen. Den är skriven av en kinesisk författare som heter Li. Den är skriven på kinesiska och den är skriven på kinesiska.

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Figure 2

phantasmatic assumptions of China that overdetermine the sinological discourse. I have claimed that Svenonius' analysis from 1748 is saturated by the same kind of phantasms that he criticizes, but the pressing question is, is this true also of the later article? Was the editor's substitution of illustrations in fact a stroke of genius, unconsciously designed to reveal the ever present epistemological dangers of sinology, and the lowly urges of the translator? Was it a desublimation of the lofty enterprise of knowing China, locating it to the stomach rather than the intellect?

Sinology is comparative – as does any hermeneutic endeavour aimed at a tradition with linguistic, intellectual and cultural habits far removed from the observer. For example, that

the character *shi* 石 may be translated by the English words “stone” or “rock” without any serious loss of information is obvious, but if we turn to more complex linguistic, textual or cultural units we must be more cautious. If we translate *shi* 詩 as “poetry” we must take into consideration the differences that obtain between Graeco-Roman and Chinese conceptions of rhymed or metrically bound or ritualized language – what we would instinctively call “poetry” – and compare what the ancient sources say about the origin, function and formal qualities of *shi* and *poiësis*, respectively. And like Chow Tse-tsung and Jesper Svenbro, to mention but two eminent scholars, we may explore the etymologies of *shi* 詩 and *poiësis* (“fabrication, creation, production”) for further clues to what those words were used to conceptualize. The sinologist, in other words, is always and everywhere in danger of being misled – “phantasmalized” – by superficial similarities between Chinese and Western terms, concepts and discourses.

Let us, with our intercultural sensibilities thusly honed, return to ode 256. Concerned with the methodological problems inherent in sinology, François Jullien has claimed that “figurative meaning [*le sense figuré*] cannot be conceived of independently from a certain view of the world.”⁵ Like ourselves, Jullien stresses the need to contextualize, and not hapahazardly impose Western categories and terms upon what at first glance appears to be their Chinese counterparts. In other words, we cannot understand early Chinese literature or poetics until we understand the larger discourse (and the worldview implied therein) of which it was a part. How, then, did Chinese thinkers of the classical period explain the double use of the word *dian* 玷 in “Dignified”? Perhaps the most convincing and seductive answer comes from Pauline Yu, whose methodological stance is very similar to Jullien’s, and who in a 1981 study says that

the connections between subject and object or among objects, which the West has by and large credited to the creative ingenuity of the poet, are viewed in the Chinese tradition as already pre-established.⁶

When Yu talks about the “creative ingenuity of the poet,” she tacitly refers to Aristotle’s concept of *metaphora*, and his claim that only a person with ingenuity (Gr. *euphuia*) can “perceive the likeness” (*to homoion*) between things that are, or appear to be, different.⁷ Thus, the hypothesis that Yu is advancing is not that there were no “metaphors” in China – a bizarre and hyper-Orientalist idea, suggesting that the ancient Chinese mind and language was radically different from, let us say, ancient Greek or modern Chinese. Rather, Yu is saying that there could be no Aristotelian conception of a linguistic “transference” (*metaphora*) in early China, since the classical thinkers subscribed to the notion of a correlative cosmology, and thus assumed that all objects and events are naturally and spontaneously related.

Let us re-read:

The flaw in the white jade	白圭之玷
can still be polished	尚可磨也
The flaw in these words	斯言之玷
cannot be worked upon	不可為也

According to Yu and Jullien, the likeness between jade and words – or between an animal’s claws-and-teeth and the King’s soldier – was assumed to be an extralinguistic and pre-textual fact, and not an invention by an “ingenious” poet who perceived an underlying likeness between two discrete objects, and “transferred” the word flaw from the linguistic and cognitive realm of jade to that of language. The word *dian* 玷 in the third line is thus not a trope (i.e. a conscious “turning” of a word or phrase). Instead,

when the author speaks of a “flaw in these words” he or she merely reports, in literal language, on a correspondence that is already “out there.” Hence, to explain the double use of *dian* 玷 in terms of metaphoricity would be a methodological error, a categorical mistake, an imposition of Occidental terms onto a Chinese system of thought.

5

With Jullien, sinology assumes a new typography. As we see in figure 3, taken from Jullien’s *Un Sage est sans idée*, the Western discourse on China is no longer marked by an alien presence. Instead of the awkward graphs which disturb the analysis of China and hinder the eye’s movement over the page, we find parallel columns into which the most salient features of the two cultures are identified, itemized and dichotomized. There is no longer any *schmutz* in the intercultural discourse.

6

The inclination of the above scholars to contextualize and historicize is truly admirable, and they have contributed greatly to our understanding of the Greek and Chinese traditions. (My own work could not have been conceived without them.) Yet, there is something slightly odd about their conclusions. The Greek and the Chinese traditions appear as the *symmetrical* negations of each other. The West is Metaphysical and China Cosmological. The Western philosopher is an obsessive taxonomizer who strives to define and determine once and for all the identity of all things, whereas the Chinese thinker cherishes the constant transformations of all things. Western poetry is the result of a brilliant poet’s

calculations and rhetorical skills, whereas Chinese poetry is the spontaneous result of a flash of inspiration. Western poetic imagery is often metaphorical, whereas Chinese imagery is always literal.

The ambition to find a decisive dividing line between the East and the West – what we may call comparative literature or philosophy at the macro-level – yields results that strike me as being too neat, too devoid of intercultural *schmutz*. A key methodological question concerns Jullien’s and Yu’s top-down approach, namely the assumption that early Chinese language philosophy and literary theory is always and everywhere derivative of correlative cosmology. Conversely, we may ask ourselves if Aristotle’s *metaphora* is in all aspects inseparable from the thought pattern that we call Metaphysics. Let us therefore begin anew: how did early Chinese thinkers and commentators conceptualize the curious fact that a word like *dian* 玦 suddenly has two meanings, or a man is said to be another man’s claws- and-teeth, or a woman’s tongue a steeping stone? I will propose an answer that is quite different from those above, and also propose an alternative to the methodology of these grand macro-level projects.

To anticipate myself, I argue that we find in early Chinese texts a very sophisticated view of artistic or ritualistic representation, and that a comparison with “the Greeks” is not only illuminating but also indicates several points of convergence between the two traditions.

7

In the tenth book of the *Republic*, Socrates argues that a craftsman, such as a couch-maker (*klinêpoios*), does not make “the being (*to on*) but rather something that is like the being, but not being (*ti toiouton hoion to on, on de ou*).”

Philosophie	Sagesse
– S’attacher à une idée	Être sans idée (privilegiée) sans position arrêtée sans moi particulier tenir toutes les idées sur le même plan
– La philosophie est historique	La sagesse est sans histoire (on ne peut écrire une histoire de la sagesse)
– Progrès de l’explication (démonstration)	Variation du propos (la sagesse est à ressasser – à « savourer »)
– Généralité	Globalité (chaque propos du sage dit toujours le tout de la sagesse, mais chaque fois sous un angle particulier)
– Plan d’immanence (coupant le chaos)	Fonds d’immanence
– Discours (définition)	Remarque (incitation)
– Sens	Évidence

Figure 3

– Caché parce qu'abscons	Caché parce qu'évident
– Connaître	Réaliser (<i>to realize</i>) : prendre conscience de ce qu'on voit, de ce qu'on sait
– Révélation	Régulation
– Dire	Il n'y a rien à dire
– Vérité	Congruence (congru : qui convient parfaitement à une situation donnée)
– Catégorie de l'Être du sujet	Catégorie du procès (cours du monde, cours de la conduite)
– Liberté	Spontanéité (<i>sponte sua</i>)
– Erreur	Partialité (en étant aveuglé par un aspect des choses, on ne voit plus l'autre : on ne voit plus qu'un « coin », et non la globalité)
– La voie conduit à la Vérité	La voie est la viabilité (par où « ça va », par où c'est « possible »)

Figure 3

Let us read a fuller quote:

What about the couch-maker, didn't you just say that he does not make the form (*eidos*) – which is what we call that which is couch (*ho esti klinê*) – but any old couch?

So I did.

Well, if he does not make what is (*ho estin*) then he does not make the being (*to on*) but rather something that is like the being, but not being.⁸

The context, as we know, is Plato's attack on poetry in particular, and mimetic art in general. In other words, Plato is here not first and foremost developing his theory of the eternal forms. The concept of *eidos* is instead a strategy in his attack on mimetic art, and poetry in particular. The bedmaker makes a sofa, and the mimetic artist re-presents it. What the artist depicts is not the form, nor is it a sofa that can be sat in; instead the mimetic artist depicts the *appearance* of a thing, what Plato calls *phainomenon*, and that appearance is defective, one-sided and thus misleading.

We thus seem to arrive at a dualism – a conventional sinological dualism at that – of the metaphysical West and the pragmatic China: for Chinese thinkers of the classical age misleading appearances are the result of errors in perception and can thus easily be corrected. Truth for the Chinese thinker is simply the coincidence of reality and perception, whereas for the Western philosopher, Truth equals Being (*to on*), which is not so easily reached.

But again, it is important not to stop at this point, and simply conclude that the Chinese were “ontologically poor,” as it were. We should press on to unravel a greater complexity. It is my contention that at least part of early Chinese poetics is eminently analyzable in Platonic terms, and, indeed, even goes one step further. It out-Platos Plato, so to speak – and turns the object of Plato's criticism and

anxiety into an aesthetic, or ritual, principle.

Let us first, at least in passing, note that the word *phainomenon* is not restricted to a metaphysical terminology. Because in another famous passage, Plato talks about the appearance (*phainomenon*) of a stick immersed into a water container: the stick looks broken but is not.

One and the same objects, to those looking at them in and out of water, [appear] bent and straight, respectively, and concave and also convex, due to the sight being led astray by the colours, and every kind of this disorder is evidently in our mind. Attacking this flaw in our disposition, stagepainting and jugglery, and all other such machinations, are nothing short of witchcraft.

True.

Now then, have not measuring and counting and weighing also shown themselves as a delightful helper? Therefore, the appearance (*phainomenon*) of bigger or smaller or more or heavier does not dominate us, but rather rational conjuring and measuring and weighing⁹

Here, Plato's attack on mimetic art does not rest on the notion of *eidōs* but is entirely independent of a metaphysical terminology. Indeed, the truth of the stick immersed in water – i.e. that it is not broken – is attainable through “rational conjuring and measuring and weighing.” And there is no reason to suppose that a Chinese thinker of the fourth, third or second century B.C. would think that an individual misled by the appearance of a thing could not arrive at a correct interpretation through such “rational” measuring – or simply by moving closer to the deceptive object. In other words, *phainomenon*, as the term is used in this passage, could very well have been used by a classical Chinese thinker.

In book 10 of the *Republic* Plato also speaks of *phantasma*, which is a more specific species of the *phainomenon*. If *phainomenon* refers to the appearance of a thing in a neutral sense, *phantasma* is a term with clearly negative connotations, and may be translated as “distorted appearance.”

In a later dialogue, the *Sophist*, Plato defines the concept in greater detail. The *Sophist* is largely a dialogue between a protégé of Socrates called Theaitetos and a figure called The Stranger (*Xénos*). At the very beginning, Socrates introduces the core problem of the entire dialogue: what is a true philosopher? and, conversely, what is a sophist?

He qualifies his question in the following way:

For these men – I mean those who are not in outer shape (*plastôs*) only but really philosophers – appear disguised in all sorts of shapes, thanks to the ignorance of the rest of mankind [...] and they seem to some to be of no worth and to others to be worth everything. Sometimes they appear disguised as statesmen, and sometimes as sophists, and sometimes they may give some people the impression that they are altogether mad (*manikos*).¹⁰

Socrates’ point is the following. Because people in general are ignorant, true philosophers appear to them not as philosophers but as sophists, statesmen or madmen. Socrates says that he would like to ask the Stranger what opinion people in his state have in this matter. Having thus introduced the topic, Socrates and Theodoros fall silent, and the rest of the text is a dialogue between Theaitetos and the Stranger, in which the Stranger pushes Theaitetos to come up with increasingly precise definitions of the nature of the Sophist.

The dialogue is thus to a large extent an attempt to come to terms with, to conceptualize, the figure of the Sophist.

To this end, Theaitetos and the Stranger invent many analogies, one of which is of particular interest to us, since it connects both to the *Republic*, and to a passage in the *Xunzi* to which we soon shall turn, and to the question of the relationship between original and copy.

What is so irritating about sophists? The underlying problem is that the sophist – walking and talking like a true philosopher – is uncannily and annoyingly similar to the real thing.¹¹ The sophist, in other words, is a second-rate imitation of the *echt* philosopher, and thus blurs the distinction between the two. It is the notion of the imitator and of image-making that Stranger chooses to pursue in the following passage, in his struggle to conceptualize the sophist.

First, he divides image-making into two different classes, one good and one bad.

I see the likeness-making art (*eikastikên*) as one part of imitation. This is met with, as a rule, whenever anyone produces the imitation by following the proportions (*paradeigma summetria*) of the original in length, breadth, and depth, and giving, besides, the appropriate colour.

Yes, but do not all imitators try to do this?

Not those who produce some large work of sculpture or painting. Because if they reproduced the true proportions of beautiful forms, the upper parts, you know, would seem smaller and the lower parts larger than they ought, because we see the former from a distance, the latter from near at hand.

Certainly.

So the artists abandon the truth (*to alêthes easantes*) and give their figures not the actual proportions but those which seem to be beautiful (*doxousas einai kalas*), do they not?

The Stranger then proceeds to name the two kinds of image-making:

Now then, what shall we call that which appears, because it is seen from an unfavorable position, to be like the beautiful, but which would not even be likely to resemble that which it claims to be like, if a person were able to see such large works adequately? Shall we not call it, since it appears, but is not like, a *phantasma*?

Certainly.

And this is very common in painting [...]

And to the art which produces appearance, but not likeness, the most correct name we could give would be "phantastic art," would it not?

By all means.

These, then, are the two forms of the image-making art (*eidôlopoiikês*) that I meant, the likeness-making (*eikastikên*) and the phantasmatic (*phantastiskên*).¹²

A work of art that is huge and designed to be seen from a distance – such as the gigantic statues made to be viewed from the harbours in ancient Greek cities – are by necessity disproportional. The head and torso, for instance, must be disproportionately large in order for the statue to *appear* proportional to the spectator in the distance. This is phantasmatic representation. For Plato (ventriloquizing through the Stranger), the *phantasma* is an abomination, because it distorts the original while *appearing* proportional. The *phantasma*, as opposed to the icon, is thus a lie, a falsification, a perversion of Truth. From a distance, the phony, eye-pleasing phantasmatic work of art actually functions better than the iconic one, since the *phantasma* is made with consideration for the spectator. Likewise, from a distance, viewed by people who are ignorant and short-sighted, the sophist appears more sincere, profound and attractive than the real philosopher.

This is simultaneously a question of perspectivism: if the spectator changes his position and closes in on a phantasmatic statue or painting he or she will realize that it perverts

the truth. For Plato, there are thus two kinds of image-making, the icon which respects the true proportions of the original, and the phantasm which distorts them, and he uses the latter as an analogy of the sophist. And, again, the truth of the phantasmatic object has nothing to do with an eternal form. It is attainable simply by shifting positions.

Let us now read Plato with Xunzi.

10

It is my contention that Plato's concept of *phantasma* may be used in a fruitful exchange with a certain strain of early Chinese thinking about perception, language and rhetoric. In the "Discourse on Rituality" ("Li lun 禮論") chapter of the *Xunzi* 荀子 there appears a long passage of great beauty and of great interest for philosophy and aesthetics, namely Xunzi's analysis of the ancient burial rituals and the construction and decoration of tombs.¹³

The "Discourse on Rituality" is Xunzi's high-strung reply to the attack on Confucian funeral rituals by the Mohists. This group of philosophers criticized the extraordinary lavishness of the prescribed obsequies, and argued that a three year mourning period for each parent is detrimental since it deprives society of much of its work force. The Mohist critique moved Xunzi to explain, in great detail, the composition, function and psychological necessity of Rituality (*li* 禮) in general, and the funeral rites in particular.

The passage is poetic, dense – and therefore ambiguous – and quite possibly (as so often with the Xunzian textual corpus) slightly corrupted. Translation, not least from the classical Chinese idiom into a Western language, is always an interpretation and a trade-off between conceptual clarity and faithfulness to the idiom. In the rendition below,

I try to maintain the terseness of the original, while providing more detailed interpretations in the main text.

The mourning rituals	喪禮者
ornament death with life,	以生者飾死者也
represent in a grand way life	大象其生以送其死也
in sending off the dead	
Therefore:	故
as dead as alive	如死如生
as departed as remaining	如亡如存
end and beginning being one	終始一也

The fifth and sixth lines are intriguing, and warrant our attention. The word *ru* 如 means “like, as, as if,” which suggests that the mourning rites take place in a space – symbolic or ritual – where the limits between life and death have been suspended. Toward the end of the essay,

Xunzi uses a very similar wording to explain the rationale behind the ritual sacrifices. He says that one should “serve the dead like [or ‘as if’] one serves the living, serve the departed like [as if] one serves those present 事死如事生,事亡如事存.” A commonsensical interpretation is that Xunzi calls for total sincerity in ritual offerings: one should be every bit as generous toward the dead as one is toward those alive. But if we read “as if” for *ru* 如 we arrive at a very different notion of the death rites, with Xunzi saying that one should sacrifice *as if* the dead were alive, thus implying that the basis of ritual activity is not sincerity but pretence, acting, posing – “als-ob.” It is impossible to decide between the two readings, since the word *ru* cannot be further contextualized here, but it is not unthinkable that Xunzi consciously aimed for this ambiguity, describing the ritual space as one where not only the distinction between life and death, but also that between sincerity and insincerity, has been dissolved.

What interests us primarily in this context, however, is the notion of *da xiang* 大象. *Xiang* functions as a verb, meaning “depict,” “represent” or “be a sign of,” and *da* either means “on a grand scale” or “in outline.” Despite the brevity and ambiguity of the passage, we thus gather that the mourning rituals ornament the realm of death with (objects or events from) the realm of the living, and involve a representation (grand or in broad lines) of life or, more specifically, of what used to be the everyday life of the now deceased.

The “Discourse on Rituality” continues with a description of how to act when a person has just expired – that is to say, at the very moment when the living body has transformed into a corpse, into an uncanny thing that bears the resemblance of, but is not, the man or woman the mourner mourns.

When life has just ceased	始卒
wash the head and bathe the body	沐浴
tie the hair in a knot, trim the nails	髻體
put food in the mouth	飯嗆
This represents the practices of the living	象生執也

Again, the crucial word is *xiang* 象, but it is difficult to know the exact nuance that Xunzi had in mind, *imitation* or *representation*. The former suggests a denial of death (perhaps induced by shock, since another, roughly contemporaneous source speaks of the “chaotic” state of mind of the surviving spouse), whereas the latter suggests a cooler, more ritualized and distanced re-enactment of the everyday habits of the living.¹⁴

Then follows a certain formalization of, and distancing from, the principle “as in life, as in death”:

If you do not wash the hair	不沐
then comb it with a wet comb	則濡櫛三律而止
exactly thrice	

If you do not bathe the body then wipe it with a damp cloth exactly thrice	不浴 則濡巾三式而止
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In the next passage, the principles of “imitating the practices of the living” (象生執) and “serving the departed as the living” are turned (*fan* 反) into their opposites.

Fill the ears and put on the jade ear-covers feed with raw rice put dry bones in the mouth, this being a reversal of the practices of the living	充耳而設瑱 飯以生稻 嗆以槁骨 反生術矣
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In the construction of the tomb as a representation of the deceased’s life, and of the opposition between life and death, this a pivotal moment: it is a turning, a reversal, a negation. Xunzi contrasts faithful representation, or imitation (*xiang* 象), with “reversal” (*fan* 反). Although we should beware anachronisms, this can certainly be described as a profoundly rhetorical moment. As Xunzi describes it, there occurs at this point a sharp deviation in the progression of the ritual, and from now on Xunzi is concerned with the significance of the rites for the mourner, not the dead. As he later says, the mourning rituals serve to “emphasize (or ‘reduplicate’) the grief” (*zhong/chong ai* 重哀), making a latter-day reader associate to what Freud called a work-of-mourning.

Put on the underclothes, wrap them around thrice Put on the broad belt but do not tighten it with a belt-hook Put on the face-cover	設褻衣襲三稱 緝紳而無鈎帶矣 設掩面，僂目
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and cover the eyes	
Tie up the hair but	髻而不冠笄矣
do not put on hat or hairpin	
When you write their name	書其名,置於其重
and put it upon the coffin's lid	
the name should not be visible	則名不見而柩獨明矣
but only the the casket	

Then comes is a long, detailed inventory list of the quotidian objects – rendered strange and unhomely – with which the tomb should be filled. It is, in other words, a catalogue detailing how this ritualized “reversed representation” should be carried out.

As for the sacrificial objects:	薦器則
the hats are helmet-shaped	冠有釐而毋緹
but lack ribbons	
the clay drinking vessels	甕無虛而不實
are empty and not filled	
there is a bamboo mat but no bed cover	有篔席而無床第
The wooden objects are left uncarved	木器不成斲
The clay objects are not shaped	陶器不成物
into [functional] things	
The bamboo articles have no interiors	薄器不成內
The wind instruments are all present	笙竽具而不和
but not of the same pitch	
The string instruments are strung but	琴瑟張而不均
not in tune with each other	
The chariots are buried but with	輿藏而馬反
the horse facing the wrong way	
announcing they are not used	告不用也
All things of the living enter the tomb	具生器以適墓
representing an alternation in route	象徙道也
Sketchy and unfinished	略而不盡

having appearance but no use	貌而不功
The chariot is hurried into concealment	趨輿而藏之
but metal and leather accessories, reins and horse-belts do not enter	金革轡鞞而不入
making clear that it is not used	明不用也
Representing an alternate route and explaining not being used,	象徙道又明不用也
this is all done in order to emphasize/ reduplicate the suffering	是皆所以重哀也
Thus, the objects of the living have pattern but no function	故生器文而不功
the objects made for the grave have appearance but no use	明器貌而不用

Xunzi adds:

This is what the Hundred Kings have in common	是百王之所同
what unifies antiquity and the present	古今之所一也
no one knowing whence it came	未有知其所由來者也
Thus, as for the the tomb, in shape it represents a house	故墳壘其貌象室屋也

It is, as I have suggested, possible to read Xunzi with Plato, or vice versa. Although the two texts are rooted in different contexts and constructed for widely different purposes, they overlap in their discussion of artistic or ritual representation, and in their descriptions of uncanny objects. The sacrificial objects with which the tomb is furnished are not disproportional, but they are nonetheless phantasmatic and non-iconic in that they are made to *appear* as real objects while not being so. However, there is a great difference in the attitude toward these *phantasmata* in Xunzi and Plato: what the latter detests the former exploits.

For our purposes, the passage is important for the follow-

ing reason. In Plato's *phantasma* and in Xunzi's phantasmatic funerary goods there exists a *gap* between appearance and actuality, between copy and original. For Plato this is greatly disturbing, not only because the *phantasma* misrepresents reality but also because the *phantasma* there-by presents something that has no existence, that is not. For Xunzi, by contrast, the gap or difference between original and copy is of crucial importance, since it makes the phantasmatic object *speak*, the object *announces* (*gao* 告) or enlightens or explains (*ming* 明) something. By breaking the vessel, the person who follows the Rituals makes the vessel speak, turns it to something that transcends its everyday existence as a utensil. The destruction of an object, or the deprivation of its essential feature, is thus a rhetorical strategy.

In both cases, it is a question of perspectivism. For Plato, the truth-seeking person may move closer to the phantasmatic object, and thus reach its truth. For Xunzi's mourner, the phantasmatic gap between outer appearance and the brokenness of the vessel is the very core, or centre, of the ritual object. From afar the thing on the slab bears a human shape and looks like a living person; up close one realizes that it is a corpse. The broken utensil helps the mourner conceptualize, come to terms with, death.

Ironically, in both the *Sophist* and in Xunzi's analysis of the death ritual, there is an element of genuine and proportional mimesis. The *phantasma*, as we know, is *itself* an iconic representation of the sophist in that both appear to be the genuine article but are not. In a similar manner, although Xunzi does not explicitly say so, we must understand the construction of the tomb with its phantasmatic objects as an iconic representation of the uncanniest of all objects, namely the *corpse*, which precisely has form but lacks content, which has shape but no use, and retains the appearance but not the being of the person the mourner

used to love. Through mundane objects rendered useless by not being perfected, the funeral rites reproduce the confusing and painful experience of viewing the corpse. Therefore, we should understand the entire burial ritual, as Xunzi analyzes it, as a conceptualization of the reality of death.

Let us make an additional note. Even though he disapproves of it, Plato fully understands the logic of the *phantasma*: in order for a gigantic statue to appear truthful and proportional it *needs* to be disproportional. The reason why Plato feels so uncomfortable about the *phantasma* is that it is not like the original thing, and thus is not True. This could be taken as evidence of the difference that obtains between Chinese thinking and Western “metaphysical” philosophizing: the Chinese calmly accept appearances for what they are, whereas Platonism always neurotically searches for the Truth that underlies the appearances.

However, I think this dichotomy is incorrect, and that there is a fundamentally paradoxical attitude toward false appearances – both condemning and celebrating – in the Chinese tradition, as evidenced by what I elsewhere call *similitude*.¹⁵ The particular strain of early Chinese thought that I am investigating is certainly most aware of the difference between original and copy, and between what a thing or event is and what it appears to be.

12

The insight relevant for an investigation into early Chinese poetics is *not* that Eastern and Western thinking are separated by an ontological gulf that renders the notions of *similitude* and *phainomenon* (or *shi* and *poiesis*) fundamentally incompatible. Instead, what we should seize upon is that Plato’s description of mimetic art contains an element

that overlaps almost entirely with an important topic in early Chinese thinking, but that *similitude* and the phantasmatic play vastly different roles in Plato's and Xunzi's respective analyses of artistic or ritual representation. Plato's condemnation of poetry as an activity that caters to man's innate stupidity differs greatly from the celebration, in Mr. Lü's *Annals* or in the *Xunzi*, of *shi* as a ritual and ethical activity.

The priority, as I see it, is not to find large, overriding intercultural similarities or differences, but to read texts so that they are mutually illuminating, which means that widely different traditions, genres and themes sometimes converge, sometimes diverge, without any definitive rules. Compared with the methodology devised by Pauline Yu and François Jullien, this is a micro-level, detailed-obsessed, meandering, *schmutzy* form of intercultural translation. That the sinological discourse, as evidenced by Benedictus Svenonius, risks being permeated with phantasmatic distortions is an occupational hazard, one that always should be reckoned with, but not avoided through a method that presumes a neat division between East and West.

13

Let us re-read.

The flaw in the white jade	白圭之玷
can still be polished	尚可磨也
The flaw in these words	斯言之玷
cannot be worked upon	不可為也

What happens if the top-down interpretational model (“figurative meaning cannot be conceived of independently from a certain view of the world”) is substituted with a

model drawn from Xunzi's analysis of ancient burial rituals, which first and foremost is an analysis of what and how the ritual objects signify, thus in effect being a rhetorical or hermeneutical analysis? Xunzi describes the underground tomb as a tremendously precise, pre-meditated and complex arrangement, made to imitate (*xiang* 象) not only the house inhabited by the living but also, I suggest, the corpse itself. On a smaller scale, the funerary goods repeat this two-layered imitation: they imitate the household goods used by the living and, when the viewer realizes that they are broken, the corpse. This, like Plato's *phantasma*, involves perspectivism, since if the viewer moves closer to the object in question he or she will detect that it is broken.

Let us now turn to the rhetorical *technique* implied by Xunzi's analysis of the phantasmatic tomb. If, let us say, a food vessel is left intact it remains an ordinary, quotidian object, but when it is broken and decontextualized – i.e. placed in the tomb – it transcends its existence as a utensil and starts to “announce” (*gao* 告) or “explain” (*ming* 明). Xunzi's hermeneutical analysis hereby provides us with an alternative interpretational model for the weird, double uses of *dian* 玷, “claws-and-teeth,” and “steppingstone.” Rather than stating a likeness between jade and speech in literal language, the poet of “Dignified” – in analogy with the construction of the tomb out of broken or half-finished goods – consciously *manipulates* and *decontextualizes* the word or graph 玷 *dian*. The stanza itself accounts for this procedure. The first two lines define the primary sense of *dian* 玷, and the last two lines decontextualize it, identifying a likeness but also a difference between jade and language.

Xunzi's reading of the defective grave goods is merely one counterexample to Pauline Yu's and Jullien's model, but it connects to a larger, yet mostly ignored, theme in classical Chinese language philosophy and commentaries

in which the manipulation of words is conceptualized in terms of lies, mutations and illusions. Xunzi's analysis, as read through Plato's *Sophist*, provides an addition to this series of terms: the mutated word is a broken utensil, a corpse, a phantasm, whose rhetorical power resides precisely in the moment of confusion it creates.

- 1 “Qi fu 祈父,” ode 185 and “Zhan Yang 瞻卬,” ode 264. *Shijing* 詩經 is a collection of 305 poems from approximately 700–500 B.C. The sequential numbering of the *Shijing* poems follows Bernhard Karlgren’s *The Book of Odes* (Stockholm: The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1950). References to the *Shijing* are to *Shi sanjia yi ji shu* 詩三家義集疏, ed. Wang Xianqian (Rpt; Taipei: Mingwen, 1988). For a translation of the *Shijing*, see Karlgren, *The Book of Odes*. For Xunzi, references are to *Xunzi jijie* 荀子解集, ed. and annotation Wang Xianqian 王先謙 (Peking: Zhonghua, 1988). All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.
In the present text, I have retained the logic, if not the format, of an oral presentation. Some passages overlap with passages in earlier works, such as “Illusion, Lie, and Metaphor: The Paradox of Divergence in Early Chinese Poetics,” *Poetics Today* 23:2 (2002), “Inscription and Re-reading – Re-reading the Inscribed: A Figure in the Chinese Philosophical Text,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* (BMFEA), vol. 74 (2004), pp. 101–37, and “Does the Metaphor Translate?” *Culture and Dialogue*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2011.
- 2 “Yi 抑,” ode 256.
- 3 Even if one hypothesizes that the jade-radical was added to an primitive version of *dian* (written as 占) at a later stage, it shows that the people who formed or reformed the Chinese written script thought of “flaw-in-jade” as the primary meaning of *dian*. A variant of this graph, written as 剗 with the *dao* 刀 (“knife”) radical, appears in the *Shuowen jiezi* (second century B.C.), glossed as “deficiency” (*que* 缺). This further proves our hypothesis, since “flaw” is here associated with knife, or with the damage inflicted by a knife, but not with language or words.
- 4 “Editor’s Preface: Orality – Inscription and Their Fantastic Intersections.” *BMFEA* 72 (2004), pp. 5–13, and “Beinaidiketesii Siweinuoniusi yu shiba shijie Ruidian hanxuezhongdi “xueshu xiangxiang” (Benedictus Svenonius and the “Academic Imaginary” in Swedish 18th Century Sinology), *Kuawenhua Duihua*, April, 2007, pp. 110–116.
- 5 *Le Détour et l’accès: Strategies du sens en Chine, en Grèce* (Paris: Grasset, 1995), p. 157.
- 6 Pauline Yu, “Metaphor and Chinese Poetry,” in *Chinese Literature, Essays, Articles, and Reviews* (CLEAR), Vol. 2, No. 2, July 1981, p. 224.
- 7 Aristotle, Poetics 1459a. See also my “Does the Metaphor Translate?”
- 8 *Republic*, 10.597a.
- 9 10.602c–d.
- 10 *Sophistes*, 216c–217a. Translation modified from Harold North Fowler, *Theaetetus, Sophist* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, (1921) 1977).
- 11 Cf. here the figure of the sophistic “village worthy” (*xiang yuan* 鄉原) in the *Mencius*, “Jin xin B 盡心下.” See my “The Value of Misreading,” *BMFEA* 76.
- 12 235d–236c.


- 13 *Xunzi jijie*, pp. 368–71. I analyze the same passage, from a slightly different perspective, in “Illusion, Lie, and Metaphor.” I refer the reader to the very important analysis, unknown to me at the time that I wrote “Illusion, Lie, and Metaphor” but which confirms it, by Hermann-Josef Röllicke in his *Selbst-Erweisung: der Ursprung des ziran-Gedankens in der chinesischen Philosophie des 4. und 3. Jhs. v. Chr.* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1996). I discuss Röllicke’s interpretation in “Inscription and Re-reading.”
- 14 “The spouse is at this moment in a chaotic state of mind, therefore the chamber [where the body lies] is curtained off, and the curtain removed only after the first dressing of the corpse is completed 夫婦方亂,故帷堂,小斂而徹帷.” *Liji 禮記*, Tangong shang 檀弓上, *Shisanjing yijishu*, *Liji* Vol. 1, Peking: Peking University Press, 1999, p. 234.
- 15 *The Treasure and the Corpse: Early Chinese Poetics, a Re-reading* (forthcoming).

3

NEW WAYS OF
CONCEPTUALIZING
GLOBALIZATION

LEVINAS AS
TRAVELING THEORY

JOHN
DABINSKI


 In the reflections that follow, I would like to draw out a series of impressions. With those impressions, I want to ask a simple question: what does it mean to move Emmanuel Levinas' thought across borders of time, place, and history?

On the one hand, this is a very idiosyncratic question, one obviously set by my own interest in opening up new venues for conversation of Levinas' work on the ethical and its fraught relation to politics and the political. My own starting-point for this question lies in a simple observation: at the very same moment Levinas conceived alterity as a form of resistance, the global south developed the very same sort of motifs, beginning with theorists like Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon in the 1940s and 1950s, and now continuing in the work of Gayatri Spivak, Patrick Chamoiseau, Homi Bhabha, Édouard Glissant, and others. What are we to make of this convergence of languages of difference? It is interesting to note that these languages emerge, in many cases, in France's former colonies, leading to struggles that, for many French theorists, defined an entire generation. Where was Levinas in these conversations? Let us be frank: he was absent and largely silent. So, it is up to us as readers to put Levinas into conversation with other notions of the other. And, as we proceed into that sort of conversation, what are we to make of the inevitable divergences simultaneous with any convergences?

Now, that only describes something of the origins of my own concerns. On the other hand, and really in complement

to this first condition, contemporary European philosophy *in general* is in need of a confrontation with the global other, which is something literary and historical studies have taken much more seriously. As race and racism emerges as a leading problem for most of the humanities and human sciences, philosophy has predictably been slow to ask questions of the other Other. How does the question of racial difference transform philosophy and our understanding of philosophical problematics? If we begin to take this question seriously, Levinas is an important, fecund figure for such a confrontation – a claim I hope to make clear in the pages that follow. Problems of race, racism, and the legacies of colonialism in postcolonial geographies are no longer simply issues for historiography and transformative politics. Philosophy *has* been engaged with these issues in the global south, across all of those postcolonial sites, for many decades. The question is who has listened to that engagement and who has been put in question by that tradition. As philosophy in the Western tradition slowly starts to engage with race, racism, and colonialism's legacy, in large part, at this point, through the translation of deconstruction in the work of Spivak and Bhabha, something new about the philosophical endeavor is revealed. This further engagement, however, cannot just be a matter of curiosity or good will. Rather, and this is crucial, Western philosophy has been entangled with such questions for five centuries. Colonial racism was a total project. The entirety of the West gathered to underwrite conquest and enslavement, from science to literature to religion to, yes, philosophy. So, just as colonized nations and peoples are beset by the problem of how to decolonize themselves, I would say that Western philosophy – in the very same way Paul Gilroy says about political institutions and habits in *Postcolonial Melancholia* – is in need of its own decolonization.¹ Decolonize the colonizer. Have we begun to seriously think

through this problematic, whether in politics, culture more broadly, or, in my concerns here, philosophical thinking?

Of course, the larger problematic of decolonizing philosophy is beyond the scope of the present reflections. However, I want to begin with the notion that Levinas' work is an important space for such a discussion for the very reasons indicated above. Levinas' emphatic and, with all due caveats, *systematic* treatment of the problem of difference suggests a certain intimacy with questions of anti-colonial thinking. If empire is a political, cultural, and economic practice of the same, of the enforcement of uniformity and measure, then surely the surmounting of the same with difference is promising for anti-empire thinking and theorizing. And yet Levinas' thought is also wholly European in its origin and orientation. Levinas' few forays into considering the culturally and geographically different are largely occasions for critique of the Levinasian text, not affirmation of its politically revolutionary qualities. His comments on the Chinese, Africa, Palestinians are all familiar and, for most of us, completely embarrassing. So, we are left instead with a suggestion, an indication, and maybe an imposed promise: there is something *important* about Levinasian thinking that exceeds the text and the cultural habits of its author.

Acting on that promise – that is, delineating its conditions and possibilities – requires the movement named by my title: Levinasian thinking must *travel*. Levinasian thinking must *travel*, by which I mean the central ideas of Levinas' texts – the other, difference, diachrony, responsibility, and so on – must be relocated in time, place, and geography. The full meaning, however transformative, of that travel must be registered. With the term *travel* or *traveling theory*, I am of course here invoking Edward Said's famous essay on the term.² As we shall see, Said underlines all of the crucial terms of movement and, while he does not pre-determine any of the consequences of traveling theories,

he does name the moments of inception and movement in precise, helpful terms. Given Levinas' prominence – a prominence that is both increasing and widening across the humanities and social sciences – it is time to pause and consider the economy of moving his work across borders. If those borders are also the borders between former colonizers and postcolonial subjects, then, I hope, we can begin to glimpse what it means to undertake the decolonization of Levinas' thought – and perhaps, more broadly, contemporary philosophy in the European tradition.

What, then, does it mean to think Levinas as a traveling theory? Let me begin with a different example.

In his now-famous essay “Critical Fanonism” (1991), Henry Louis Gates makes a compelling, if controversial, claim about the appropriation of Frantz Fanon's work. Fanon, Gates claims, has become less a theorist of a place and a moment than a diagnostician of a generalized colonial and postcolonial condition – less the Martiniquan who left for Algeria, more the general theorist of anti-colonial struggle.³ With that simple claim, Gates seizes upon that moment in which a thinker becomes a fantasy object, rather than a theorist located in a time and place, concerned with a set of problems or crisis to which his work aspires to be a productive response. In postcolonial theory, Fanon has played that role perfectly. His militant rhetoric, his advocacy for multiple forms and levels of anti-colonial violence, and his moving descriptions of the internalization of the anti-black racist gaze – all of this gathers to a name and text, which is then re-rendered as a generalized text about very different, very particular cultural and political conditions of colonial (and post-colonial) life. There is a crucial element of fantasy here. In this re-rendering, Gates argues, Fanon becomes a man without geography, a man without place, which, in turn, generates a theoretical sensibility that understands the

colonial-postcolonial condition as a common consciousness and political conscience. Gates writes:

Fanon's current fascination for us has something to do with the convergence of the problematic of colonialism with that of subject-formation. As a psychoanalyst of culture, as a champion of the wretched of the earth, he is an almost irresistible figure for a criticism that sees itself as both oppositional and postmodern. And yet there's something Rashomon-like about his contemporary guises. It may be a matter of judgment whether his writings are rife with contradiction or richly dialectical, polyvocal, and multivalent; they are in any event highly porous, that is, wide open to interpretation, and the readings they elicit are, as a result, of unfailing symptomatic interest: Frantz Fanon, not to put too fine a point on it, is a Rorschach blot with legs.⁴

Gates' response to this Rorschach blot is a methodological proposal, not a declaration of intellectual territory. The proposal responds to appropriations of Fanon's work, yes, but also, by extension, to any appropriation of a critical thinker. Gates proposes a general *historicization* of Fanon, which attends to both the period and geography of Fanon's work. What if Fanon were to be read and theorized as a Caribbean thinker or, at most, a thinker of the black Atlantic – and it remained so? How would that impact our reading of appropriations of Fanon by theorists outside the black Atlantic, such as Homi Bhabha and Edward Said? Gates raises a point of caution. Perhaps the thinker retreats from the grandeur of a global claim.

When I read Gates' essay and his register of the Fanonian moment – a moment that was real and powerful in the 1990s, no doubt – I cannot help but see the current moment in much the same light. Emmanuel Levinas' work, with its ethical hyperbole and emphatic articulation of the

singularity of otherness, has slowly, but importantly, widened its appeal, moving from phenomenology to deconstruction to religious studies to, now, any variety of radical (or even very conservative) politics and theoretical engagements with alterity in postcolonial theory, Africana theory, and so on. The question of the other is a porous question, and does not hold fast to any one place. Nor should it. After all, the encounter with otherness has determined, in so many ways, the trajectory of the last five centuries-plus, telling stories of violence, subjugation, trauma, survival, and beginning again. The question of how that otherness transforms into a strategy for resistance, confrontation, and perhaps even historical responsibility brings Levinas' work into a strange, new, and challenging prominence. This is no easy translation, for Levinas was always through and through a European – for quite some time, a European in a very particular sense, with such locality and specificity that the meaning of his first magnum opus, *Totality and Infinity*, did not register its full effect for decades. It can be difficult to remember this time-span. Levinas' work did not make an initial splash. Instead, it had a small, minor effect, one that was overwhelmed by a re-introduction of his thought, in the 1980s and after, that fundamentally transformed philosophy with its enigmatic notion of the ethical and the deconstructive relation between ethics and politics. What does it mean, then, that Levinas' work is suddenly appealing outside the small corner of French philosophy that was situated for so long, like Levinas himself, between the existentialist fad of the 1940s and the post-structuralist explosion(s) post-1968? What is so appealing about Levinas' work? And what would it mean to put Gates' ethics of suspicion into play in this context?

Perhaps because of this delay, and how readings have been informed by later developments in French philosophy, Levinas' work has been just the sort of Rorschach test Gates

sees in Fanon's work. Receptions of Levinas are often as much reinventions as they are close textual studies. Indeed, the very word "other," that word by which Levinas' legacy has (rightly or wrongly) been defined, allows so much projection. The other names the human other, who is made other by a wave of cultural and political forces that live from the creation of otherness as the source, by way of contrast, of any identity claims whatsoever. The other also names a sense of obligation; responsibility springs from the inherent violence of the relation to the other, whether that violence is in the gaze itself or in a cluster of practices that marginalize, subjugate, and exploit. Levinas' work addresses all of these moments of the formation and ethical and political economy of the other, but with very specific conditions and under a fairly restricted set of terms. Like Fanon's diagnosis of colonialism, Levinas' work comes from a particular place and is infused with a particular kind of cultural and historical experience. I am not sure that Levinas scholarship has fully appreciated this particularity, preferring instead (as is typical of so much Western philosophy) the casual language of generality and the "as such," but it comes into particular focus when Levinas' texts are treated like a Rorschach test. When someone *outside* the particular place, culture, and history sees in Levinas' work something a bit *foreign*, the provincial character of that work is suddenly all the more visible, even if only by contrast with the gaze-from-the-outside. To wit, when Bhabha hints at a resonance between his notion of hybridity and the Levinasian subject as interrupted, the difference between a philosophy rooted in migration (Bhabha) and a philosophy rooted in a difference internal to place (Levinas) becomes a difference that makes a difference. Or when Judith Butler identifies resources in Levinas' thought in theorizing the fragility of the object of war or the marginalized sexual body, there emerges a simultaneity of a very

Levinasian idea and a notion of embodied specificity that is outside Levinas' commitment to the non-worldly character of the Other. What are we to make of these sorts of moments of encounter with Levinas' texts? Is the Rorschach character of his work a point of criticism – whether of his work's invitations of such an open gaze or of those who would project a fantasy upon the text – or an occasion for opening new horizons in Levinasian thinking? If we conclude the latter, that this is an occasion for new forms of thinking ethics, politics, and alterity, then we have to raise the issue of traveling theory. Moving Levinas' texts from generalized Rorschach test (a concern inspired by Gates) to an open theory capable of moving across borders threatens to irreversibly alter Levinasian ideas. So, the question again: what is at stake, generally, in traveling theory? And what is at stake in traveling Levinasian theory?

The question of a theory that travels is at once a question of loss and nourishment. Said's essay "Traveling Theory" underscores just this simultaneity and, in that underscore, he articulates with exceptional clarity just what it means to move a theory across time, culture, and political borders. Every theory has a beginning, a point of origin, which takes place in what Said calls simply "a set of initial circumstances."⁵ What is a circumstance? And how does a theory root itself in those circumstances? For Levinas, the problem of the Other has a complex, though geographically bound set of initial circumstances. A good amount of secondary literature has been dedicated to this complexity, drawing out Levinas' debt and transformative appropriation of everything from early Talmudic texts to classical phenomenology to French Catholic thought to the wandering, provocative critical readings of ethics, alterity, and politics in Derrida's work. What about the geography of this idea? The idea was born *somewhere*. We have perhaps paid too little attention to this geographic circumstance, even as the site

and cultural-political boundaries of Levinas' thought lurks in the background of so many readings of his work: the Jewish diasporic experience, the strange and complicated relation of the Judaic and Christian traditions, modernity, the Shoah, and the sad, terrifying matter of what remains of Europe after two catastrophic wars in the first half of the twentieth century. We have certainly thought through *those* initial circumstances. Or most of them. But we have not yet fully reckoned with the critical role played by Europe in Levinasian thinking.

This gets us a bit ahead of ourselves. Let us stay with Said for a moment more. The second stage of a traveling theory is the first moment of transfer. A theory makes its initial splash. Or, in the case of Levinas, there is a small bit of attention, no big splash. The splash comes later in an emerging moment, a moment in which what was a foray into a new set of ideas becomes suddenly relevant again, renewed, increasingly significant. Despite its very significant criticisms, I think we can see this very sort of thing in Levinas scholarship around Derrida's "Violence and Metaphysics."⁶ Derrida's review was written just after the publication of *Totality and Infinity*, of course, but the full force of the review – how it captured the crucial terms of any theory of difference, put conceptual challenges to Levinasian ethics, and so on – only registered itself as Levinas' work re-emerged as an enigmatic, yet key part of the emerging post-structuralist movement in the late-1970s and early-1980s. This frame of an emerging post-structuralism, which placed a forgotten, and surely dismantling and destructive, sense of difference at the heart of Western philosophy brought Levinasian thinking into a new prominence. In many circles, this continues to be the prominence of Levinas' work. He brings to a generally deconstructive sensibility a sense of the ethical, of the inter-human as intrigue and transformative connection, and so,

as Levinas put it, drawing on both Socrates and Blanchot, the fine risk in the swirl of difference.

What, then, is the next moment of travel for Levinasian thinking? In these first two moments of travel – a first instantiation, linked to place and time, and the second moment of re-emergence in a rather friendly, if at times critical, *milieu* – Levinas' work worked over familiar terrain. To be sure, Levinas' own understanding of his work oscillates between the modest claim of continuing a quiet tradition, carried from Plato to Plotinus to Augustine to Descartes, in the West and the more typical *francophonie* assessment of a first thought, thought for the first time, unprecedented, and a saving gesture in the midst of so much destruction. Both assessments are true, of course. The West has always been fascinated with excess and the limits of thought. The onto-theological tradition, as Heidegger put it, has always been simultaneously a totalitarian (in Levinas' sense) and an anarchic orientation, concerned as much with containing the possible as it is with marking finitude in the starkest terms. At the same time, Levinas' turn to fragility, rather than sublimity, marks something very different. G-d or something like it no longer functions, in Levinas' work, as the *too much* for thinking, but rather the too little or too remote that nonetheless holds the deconstructive, supplemental power of pulling all identity into the abyss of difference. Levinas' claim in his work in and after Otherwise than being is profound and alters (or promises to alter) the landscape of philosophy. If ethics is first philosophy, and ethics is about the movement of the weak and fragile to the center of the world, then the meaning of first philosophy – the grandest claim we might make as thinkers – lies not in our capacity to capture and contain the world, but in our vulnerability to the world. (The world, that is, conceived as the interhuman.) The Other, that site of deconstructive difference, does not make first philosophy possible because

of a centered and central *power*, but, instead, first philosophy proceeds from the inability of subjectivity – the fantasied center *par excellence*, the site of epistemological and ontological pretensions to absoluteness and power – to know and to be in the face of the face.

And so we should not be surprised that Levinas' work has come to have a certain appeal in what we might call, very broadly, theories of subalternity and subaltern resistance. The problem of difference and how difference is not simply *produced by*, but is also, and even foremost, a site of resistance to totalizing conceptions of the world lies at the heart of much of postcolonial theory from the past sixty years. From Fanon's *the wretched* through Spivak's *the subaltern* and many other iterations, the postcolonial has been concerned with resistance from the first position of difference, rather than demands for recognition of sameness, for a number of decades. So, Levinas' work would appear – and has proven in a cluster of suggestive readings – to be a fecund place for engagement.

This kind of engagement, however, requires a very different sort of travel for Levinasian theory. Said's description of the first two moments of theory-travel keep theory in the familiar, altered only by shifts in time and intellectual climate. Levinas' work spans such an interesting climate, of course, beginning with the emergence of phenomenology in France and concluding in the high moment of post-structuralist theory. In that span, Levinas' work *fits*; his intellectual sensibilities are in many ways optimized in both movements. In a geographic register, Levinas' work is *native* to the trajectory of European philosophy. The subsequent travels of Levinasian thinking pose very different challenges. Said writes:

Third, there is a set of conditions – call them conditions of acceptance or, as an inevitable part of acceptance, resistances – which then confronts the transplanted theory or idea, making

possible its introduction or toleration, however alien it might appear to be. Fourth, the now full (or partly) accommodated (or incorporated) idea is to some extent transformed by its new uses, its new position in a new time and place.⁷

For all of his theorizing of the stranger and the outside of thinking, the fact is that Levinas and most of the scholarship on his work has stayed in the orbit of the familiar. Even the outside – figured from the outset as the Judaic – is the familiar outside. Said’s note about the transformation of theory in a new *place*, which is very different than a locally new time or a native shift in historical moment, raises different questions about the encounter with what is alien, foreign. The thought of putting into question is itself put in question by a new set of questions. And this movement goes two ways, as well. The theory that travels from one place to another is beset by what we could call non-native questions: how does the experience of alterity and fragility register in *this* place, where the stranger is strange in her strangeness and the alien is alien as an alien? And so also: how is that experience different, in its displacement of place, than the experience of the familiar stranger and the conventional alien? Reversing direction: how does the ethical, as a singular, Levinasian idea, reinscribe itself and transform the non-native place of its arrival? Travel transforms both sides of encounter.

In many ways, this movement mimics something like Gates’ treatment of Fanon as traveling theory in “Critical Fanonism.” Levinas, like Fanon, gives a conceptual and philosophical language to the experience of marginalization, subjugation, exploitation, and, ultimately, death. I do not think it is too much to see in Levinas’ work the entire experience of European Jews – especially the catastrophic twentieth century. If Levinas’ work works in the wake of, and so largely in response to, the sadness and

crises of the catastrophe of the just-past century, then questions of alterity, responsibility, and survival function specifically as a theory of loss, memory, and resistance to oblivion. The real question in traveling Levinasian thinking lies in the general function of such a theory, where one has to ask, in Said's register, what transplantation and transformation means to that thinking. What is transformed? What remains? What cannot function in the new place and time? And, in those transformations, remainders, and failures to function, what is still productive about Levinasian thinking?

And yet, in relation to Gates' suspicious reading of Fanonian theory-travels, there is an important difference. Fanon's work is fundamentally concerned with a diagnosis: what is the structure of colonialism? In that structure, Fanon asks, what is the fate of the racial Other, both as over-determined in her exteriority and as under- or non-determined in her interiority? Gates raises a number of suspicions on these grounds. If Fanon's work is diagnostic, and that diagnosis concerns the fate of black bodies and their psyches under racial colonialism, then the traveling of that theory has particular, decisive limits. The moment in which the theory arises is emphatically *the* moment of the theory; an exigency presents itself, perhaps drawing on a long, shared history, and a theoretical insight or programme is put forth as a frame or vision of another possible future. There is, we might say, something fundamentally reparative in any theory whatsoever. *Exigency, crisis, diagnosis, repair*. Each traveling moment, however, raises increasingly skeptical questions. How can the theory be relevant across time if it is tied to a particular political and psychological context, as well as to particular forms of domination, resistance, and liberation? Is the experience of, say, anti-black racism in the colonial, then emerging postcolonial, Caribbean travel across geographic boundaries to India, Algeria, London, New York City, the Andes in Perú, and so on?

Or is the *specificity* of certain kinds of racism, in certain kinds of places, at certain moments of history – is it all too much for carriage across time and place? Gates' suspicions affirm just these questions, wondering, rightly, if there is not a certain abuse of Fanonian texts in the moment of travel. To be sure, Said's notion of a traveling theory is open to transformation, and indeed Said himself is a central figure in traveling Fanon's theory from the Caribbean to the Middle East in an effort to understand forms of the gaze, knowledge, and so on.

But Levinas' thought is significantly less diagnostic of cultural and political practice, so perhaps raises very different questions in traveling and in its subjection to the intellectual's Rorschach test. Levinas is instead concerned with a strange ante-structure of any culture or politics. There is, and this is noteworthy, a strange sort of universality at the center of his anti-universal thinking. Or, put another way, Levinas' thought is concerned with diagnosis – the West is dominated by theories and practices of totality that obliterate difference – to the extent that it sets the context for, and contrast with, his notion of the ethical and of radical alterity. The diagnosis of the West is really rather thin, by Levinas' own admission.⁸ At the very moment he makes a general pronouncement about Western philosophy and culture, Levinas walks us through a number of figures (Plato, Descartes, others), ideas (infinity, responsibility, divinity), and even institutions (human rights, liberalism, democracy) that exceed the description of the West as dominated by totality. After that walk-through of counter-figures and ideas (Plato's good beyond being, the One in Plotinus, the Cartesian idea of the Infinite, and so on), I cannot help but think that Levinas has named, not exceptions to the West, but rather the foundations of the very same history and culture he describes as totalitarian in orientation, values, and practice.

It is as if Levinas stages the emergence of his own thought – and this is a very French moment in his rhetoric – in order to let it resonate in its maximum interruptive force, and then grows anxious at the prospect of beginning out of such a complete abyss. What if Levinas were to begin with the abyss, with no roots except those grown in the instant of the ethical relation? There is argument for such an abyss, of course: writing in the wake of the Shoah, where, as Adorno, Horkheimer, Blanchot, and others would have it, the West, culminating in Enlightenment reason, was exposed as a murderous project. But this is precisely the rationale Levinas does *not* offer in the moment of absolute beginning. Unlike, say, Adorno and Horkheimer, who famously argue in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* that rationality is a (if not the) condition of anti-Semitic persecution, Levinas' engagement with the Shoah is more along the lines of memory and ethical sensibility, rather than the pessimism of cultural and historical critique.⁹ He opts instead for a more tempered and cautious portrait of the West, one that simultaneously renders difference abject and obsesses over difference and transcendence as the very heart of what it means to be. In place of the rather tepid, under-committed, and even under-theorized theory of the West, Levinas develops not a particular or specific intervention, but *first philosophy*: ethics, the ethical. Now what exactly that enigmatic notion of the ethical *means* is a matter of interpretation, but we can easily say that it turns on a notion of subjectivity split in the very origins of its identity, diachronic time, absolute difference, the vulnerability of the body, cleaving knowing and being from the encounter with otherness, and a new theory of language and the senses. In other words, everything changes with the ethical and the prescriptive moment lies not just in responding to the unnamable accusation from the Other, but in the various structures of subjectivity – and so world

and intersubjectivity, however reconfigured they are under the Levinasian conceptual regime – that the Other’s accusation solicits.

The shift from diagnosis to prescription has a double-effect for traveling Levinasian theory. Levinas’ depiction of the West moves quite easily across borders and times without much risk, in part because it is put in such general and generalizable terms that it fits nicely with the experience of colonialism. The theory of totality and its total effect explains well the anxieties produced by colonialism, especially the internalization of psychological violence so well-documented across Fanon’s work. As well, the notion that colonialism mobilized all aspects of European culture – from religion to philosophy to economics to the physical sciences – is nicely bundled under the rubric of totality as the West’s singular and comprehensive obsession. The only possible response to this violence, Levinas argues, is to interrupt the commitment to sameness at the root of totality with a fragile, yet powerfully deconstructive notion of difference; this is why *Totality and Infinity* posits the tension – that enigmatic “and” in the book’s title – between the violence of totality and the vulnerability of the face as infinity. At the same time, and this is where the moment of travel is more complicated, the prescriptive in Levinas is committed to a certain repudiation of any history, experience, and theories of embodiment whatsoever that might enmesh the body in the political economy of global domination.

Interestingly, it is Jacques Derrida, especially in his later work on immigration, lingualisms, and cosmopolitanism, who has put Levinas’ work into traveling practice. (Or, perhaps, Derrida’s identification with Africa and his Algerian roots should indicate, from the beginning, that his reading of Levinas already travels the theory.) One could argue, in a line of thinking with which I am largely sympathetic, that Derrida’s later work, with its active seeking out of the

strange and the stranger *beyond* the borders of the familiar, is more Levinasian than Levinas' own reflections on the crossing of ethics and politics. In particular, Derrida's brief, but crucial, reflections on monolingualism point to a key item transformed by traveling Levinasian theory: language itself.¹⁰ Levinas' conception of language, as we know well at this point, is complex, but is fundamentally modeled on continuity. Language remains the same, even as it becomes fractured and broken apart – is not every fracture a splitting of what is assumed to be single and identical? Continuity is therefore a (if not *the*) source-point of the problem. Derrida's early criticism of Levinas makes this clear: speaking and writing moves the singular into the general, placing the enigma of the other into the economy of intersubjective meaning. This is the ethical import of Levinas' epistemological critique of Husserl, which Derrida turns back on Levinas with a recurrence of the Husserlian analysis. Intersubjectivity, because it proceeds from a sense of a shared world *first* (Husserl's concern was always with the possibility of science and scientificity), does not conceive alterity *radically*. Levinas' first task is to uproot the idea of the other, pull out of the soil of intersubjectivity, and thereby relocate the notion of the other in the non-ground of interruption, disturbance, and the complex temporality in which ethical experience "happens." Language is therefore the curling back of the Same, threatening philosophy's attempt to articulate alterity from within the terms of articulation itself. Derrida's "Violence and Metaphysics" saw this so well. So, in his later work, Levinas re-casts the subject and language as address, accusation, and the diachronic structure of the encounter. *That* notion of language cannot swallow up the other, but is, in a sense, swallowed up *by* the other. De-nucleated and carved out.¹¹ Subjectivity itself trumps language from the (non-)position of the other who never appears in language, yet puts me under

the accusative in the encounter I cannot recall. This is Levinas at his most radical and, let us be honest, his most incomprehensible. As it should be. Responsibility never quite makes sense.

There is a double moment here that deserves consideration, one that Derrida's later work picks up. On the one hand, language cannot remain stable and is destabilized from the first utterance of an address. In this sense, language is never monolingual in the Levinasian context. No sameness of meaning can gather and neutralize difference. Language, like subjectivity and even, indeed, *in* subjectivity, de-nucleates. On the other hand, the language of address in Levinas is always from one and the same place, which he enigmatically names a *non*-place. The non-place does not come from the world, so cannot be called a place proper; there is nothing worldly about the Levinasian Other. The accusing address never bears markers of cultural or historical difference. This means that the ethical address – and any politics that might carry across – takes place in its own kind of neutral zone. Levinas describes in great detail how the face expresses and undoes its own expression and my encounter with that expression in the mode of *nudity*¹². Levinas goes so far as to say: we would never notice the Other's eye color in the address. The double movement here is between a kind of anti- or ante-monolingualism that nonetheless repeats a perhaps sublated version of the same. *Monolingualism in the very same moment monolingualism might be said to be surmounted*. The stakes are high in this moment. Indeed, in this context, we can register a new challenge to Levinas in Derrida's reflections on monolingualism and relations of domination. Derrida writes:

Every monolingualism and monologism restores mastery or magistrality. It is by treating each language differently, by grafting languages onto one another, by playing on the multiplicity of

languages and on the multiplicity of codes within every linguistic corpus that we can struggle at once against colonization in general, against the colonizing principle in general (and you know that it exerts itself well beyond the zones said to be subjected to colonization), against the domination of language or domination by language. The underlying hypothesis of this statement is that the unity of language is always a vested and manipulated simulacrum.¹³

There is much that warrants comment in this passage, and it is of particular note that Derrida locates monolingualism in both colonization and what he calls the colonizing principle. By widening the claim of monolingualism, and so also the meaning of colonialism beyond particular zones of domination *elsewhere*, Derrida returns the question to *us* – and, for my purposes here, to Levinas. What sort of vested and manipulated simulacrum could be at work in the Levinasian prerogative, and so, by extension, so much of philosophy? And what is at stake in thinking outside that monolingual habit? Here, the question of a Levinasian monolingualism lies in two sites. One, the quiet universality of his thought – thinking the ethical, subjectivity, time, and so on *as such* – and, two, the insistence on the nudity of the face. If the other bears no markers from the world, and therefore is vacated of any historical experience whatsoever, then we are warranted in considering the presence of certain colonizing principle in Levinas' work – and so also some first terms of decolonizing his thought. We might consider, for example, the case of Glissant, the Martiniquan poet, novelist, and theorist (and someone in whose company Derrida has also addressed the problem of monolingualism). Glissant places the problem of alterity at the heart of his notion of a Caribbean poetics. Alterity registers in Glissant's work in a number of different tones, beginning with what he has called, on a number of occasions, the

right to opacity.¹⁴ Cultural difference means, as a point of beginning, the right to opaque formulations and linguistic foundations, which in turn makes difference make a difference. Opacity seals difference as irreducible, rather than as variation on what is, ultimately, one and the same core of meaning and significance. Alterity also lies at the heart of what Glissant calls the open imaginary. Thinking must open itself, be opened by, and open up in the Other a sense of Otherness. Not in the interest of synthesis, of course, for difference is irreducible. In the interest of contact and chaotic transformation – what Glissant calls, in his signature term, *creolization* – opacity is put to work as the doubling of relation: protective of self (resistant to the Levinasian sense of totality), yet also transformed by and transformative of all that is put in contact. Lastly, alterity, in this context, is *global* and *globalizing*. Creolization is a process of global and transnational contact. This process of contact is already at the origins of the Caribbean as a cultural site – composed as it is out of the fragments of Atlantic cultural forms – as well as the reality of cultural formation in late- and post-modernity. We are already global. The Other shows up in that global moment, questioning us, yes, but also provoking the new. Glissant's work, not unlike Levinas', takes us from the thought of the other to the other of thought. That is, not an other who is the object of my thinking, but, instead an other who relocates and is re-located – there is always relation – to the threshold of thinking and creating. At this threshold lies not just a healthy sense of limits (something the world actually needs) but also new, emerging, and ultimately unexpected forms of political and cultural transformation of the imagination. *Another world is possible*. But that world, for Glissant, is always worldly and informed by a multiplicity of historical experiences.

We do not find this sense of the global in Levinas' work. Indeed, the global shows up in Levinas' work in largely

disappointing – if not outright troubling – passages, where the polylingual becomes an aberration of the true philosophical language of Europe. The Bible and the Greeks is not merely a trope, but rather a guiding structure of Levinas' work, one that facilitates a mode of judgment that subordinates the globally or culturally different to the play of differences in the historical geography of Europe. Levinas gets so much out of that play of differences, to be fair. He certainly does not reify the tradition. European philosophy is never the same after Levinas. Notions of tradition and continuity are broken up by the fragility of Europe's internal other – the Judaic – and the excessive, though often oblique, presence of the wisdom of love in the love of wisdom. Jewgreek is Greekjew, Greekjew is Jewgreek. Derrida's playfulness in "Violence and Metaphysics" names something so crucial about Levinas' work and its foundations. Foundations that in one sense are completely disruptive – there is no monolingualism in the address and the doubling of Europe as Hebraic and Hellenic – and yet in another sense completely colonial. Were Levinas to have simply admitted limits and ignorance about the global other, we might have lost sight of this strange, yet utterly central monolingualism in Levinasian thinking. Levinas' disappointing, if completely predictable attitude toward the global other thereby reminds us of the monolingualism of his own thinking.

How are we to frame this monolingualism? What is its proper register and how can it be contested from the perspective of a robust and aggressive polylingualism? If we keep Glissant's notion of otherness, set as the right to opacity in globalized space, then I think the problem of historical experience comes into particularly sharp focus. One can easily see the appeal of Levinas' work when reading Glissant's later theoretical writing. The obsessive presence of various forms of otherness haunt and sustain Glissant's

texts, and evoke, at bottom, nothing other than an irrecusable responsibility. Responsibility, in his case, to the variety of historical experiences and threads and traces that are passed along through memory, language, and the various cultural forms that make the Caribbean archipelago a peculiar, compelling site of the simultaneity of difference and identity. This sense of responsibility turns also on the right to opacity, which is at once the Levinasian evocation of infinity and something quite different. Glissant evokes opacity to name just what Levinas names with infinity: the unthinkable at the center of thinking. It is not just that thought encounters the unthinkable. The unthinkable – which remains opaque to any thinking, both by definition and by ethical prescription – makes thinking possible, while at the same time drawing its limits. Bold limits. Transcendental limits. Glissant's appeal to opacity and responsibility, however, is informed by a long, important history. It does not issue from nudity, but instead from bodies saturated with pain, particular memory, and the history of race and racism. The Middle Passage, plantation slavery, and the colonial aftermath build a responsibility to memory of suffering and survival, as well as a certain opacity derived from (and sustained by) the traumatic conditions of beginning.¹⁵ To the extent that Levinas' work is a response to the Shoah, a provocative and underdeveloped claim in the literature, there is a connection here between Glissant and Levinas on the question of memory and pain. Yet, and this is critical for our considerations here, the conditions of how and why memory and pain inform epistemologically opaque and ethically transcendent claims are very different. For Levinas, that pain comes as an interruption, then near annihilation of a tradition.¹⁶ For Glissant, there is beginning in the abyss. The pain of the Middle Passage evacuates all roots and rooted senses of meaning, placing Africans in the Americas in the unprecedented situation of beginning *with*

the abyss – and not, as with the Shoah, beginning with the spectre of the abyss. Two models of trauma, two models of opacity, two models of responsibility to the past and into the future. Between those two models, which in many ways are not models at all, but instead irruptions into and against history, is a split in historical experience. The split requires some conceptual nuance, but in that nuance lies a deeper issue of the lingualism of our language of difference. Do we begin with a notion of difference as nudity? Or do we begin with a notion of difference that is colored by the racialized conditions of beginning, from the beginning? Or, with opacity as our first position, would it be better to begin with the difference of difference and its self-differentiation, a notion that is polylingual from the outset?

This last issue is, for me, what is most crucial about the future of Levinasian thinking. How can we conceive and think the ethical – with all of its companion notions of time, space, subjectivity, and so on – across the multiplicity of sites of difference? A simple claim: the terms of the ethical, from the epistemological to the metaphysical to the political and aesthetic conditions of accusation, are put in question by multiplicity and by its anti-monolingualist theory of difference. We are now returned to my opening motif, of course: what does it mean to travel Levinasian theory? Perhaps the Rorschach test character of Levinas' work says something about the appeal of the ethical across borders, something to counter the claims above with a case, without restriction, *for* the nudity of the face. Perhaps the notion that one sees oneself in the inkblot of Levinasian ideas is too cynical and denies the transnational, ultimately humanist appeal of Levinas' nudity of the face. Or, perhaps the full travel of Levinas' work across borders is still in process, a process that must transform some of Levinas' central concepts in light of the racialized experience of difference and otherness that animates so much of our world. I would

of course push for the latter sense of travel, for in it we not only attend to specificities of place as interpretative of the extant lingualism of the other – *the vernacular of encounter*, as it were – but we also begin to engage in what I am calling here the decolonization of European philosophy. Traveling Levinasian theory, when it contests its own monolingualism or finds its monolingualism contested by the Other (as if there were a difference, really), connects us to how colonial habits of thinking structure even a philosophy of difference. The nudity of the face, I would say, is its own kind of decadence, revealing, however obliquely in Levinas' case, how the West habitually takes itself as its own measure, obscuring or flatly forgetting how the racialization of experience of Same and Other animates so much of the world. (A world, it is always worth adding, that Europe itself created.) We also know from history that taking oneself as the measure of oneself is the first movement of colonial empire for the West. From the narcissism of the West taking itself as its own measure, the Levinasian Other becomes measured by that same measure, smuggling in (or overtly enacting) a notion of the same in the very same moment that difference is moved to a transcendental position in philosophical discourse. That is the logic of colonialism. That is also, perhaps, the logic of how Levinas can privilege difference in one gesture, yet turn around and dismiss African theorizing as “mere dance.” Mere dance, it is clear, does not fit the measure of a proper discourse of difference. In a decolonized Levinasian thinking, however, perhaps this difference can make a difference and begin a wholly other mode of theorizing contact, vulnerability, embodiment, responsibility, and so forth. Traveling is transformation in a new position and in a new time and place. Now, how this changes Levinasian terms must be left, in each case, to the particularities of travel. Where Levinas' work travels, each shift of geography, is determinative of the terms of transformation.

New position. New time. New place. So much new, such complexity of what remains after contact across borders.

But, and here by way of conclusion, we can nevertheless venture a meta-claim about the re-orientation of Levinasian thinking more generally. While the particulars depend upon the geography of travel – including both the reader and the read, as well as the always enigmatic chiasm they produce – it is also clear that the tendency toward thinking in pure epistemological and metaphysical terms must give way to a fundamental mixture of ethics, politics, aesthetics, and the general concerns of knowing, being, and their limits. This disturbs not only Levinasian thinking as it stands, but also the dominant orientation of philosophy in the West. It is striking that such purity of thought, as it were, does not show up in subaltern philosophical traditions. Indeed, it would not seem at all strange to entwine knowledge, being, history, culture, and politics in, say, the Caribbean tradition or contemporary African-American theory. For subjects subjected to the historical experience of forced migration, slavery, colonialism, legal segregation, and the long shadow of all of those exploitations in contemporary practices, subjectivity has always been an entangled affair. To know is to know from somewhere; to be is to have been formed, as alienated or in resistance, by complex powers. Entanglement begins in those complex formations that are rooted in the particularities, and racially specific generalities, of historical experience. It is peculiar that European philosophy has failed to see its own entanglement in the same historical experience, having lived for centuries from the machine of colonial violence. The slave trade and colonialism was a total project. When theory travels, one learns such things about, in this case, Levinas' work. From that travel and the instruction of arrival in a foreign context – replete with new positions, places, and times – we learn something about philosophy more generally. Namely, we

learn that the travel of theory displaces measure. The purity of epistemology, metaphysics, aesthetics, and so on are displaced by the kind of informing that happens in dramatically different, and often traumatic, historical experiences of loss and beginning again. In that displacement, which is nothing other than the next step of a radical theory and practice of difference, Western philosophy can begin to think through its own colonial entanglements. This is a difficult beginning. And yet it is the most necessary beginning, for, like all great beginnings, it is simultaneously archeological and prophetic. That is, decolonizing European philosophy excavates what is already there, but, in that excavation, also critiques the past and present in a vision of another kind of future. A future, if I may be plain here, in which the West is a creative trace in the world, a world of transformative imaginative contact, rather than an imperial force producing another pile of wreckage at the feet of the angel of history. This begins with the other Other who puts me into question. In a word, it is a project of Levinasian *responsibility*, here, with all earnestness and hyperbole, writ historically large. To the future.

- 1 Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004, pp. 1–28.
- 2 Edward Said, "Traveling Theory," in *The Edward Said Reader*, eds. Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin, New York: Random House, 2000, pp. 195–217.
- 3 Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Critical Fanonism," in *Tradition and the Black Atlantic: Critical Theory in the African Diaspora*, New York: Basic Books, 2010, pp. 83–87.
- 4 Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *Tradition and the Black Atlantic: Critical Theory in the African Diaspora*, New York: Basic Books, 2010, p. 86.
- 5 Said, "Traveling Theory," p. 196.
- 6 Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978, pp. 97–192.
- 7 Edward Said, "Traveling Theory," in *The Edward Said Reader*, New York: Vintage, 2000, p. 196.
- 8 On the question of Levinas and the West, see my *Levinas and the Postcolonial: Race, Nation, Other*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011, pp. 1–16.
- 9 Emmanuel Levinas, "Signature," in *Difficult Freedom*, trans. Sean Hand, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, pp. 291.
- 10 Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- 11 Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988, pp. 99–130.
- 12 On the question of nudity, see Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, trans. Richard Cohen, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1988, p. 42. I treat this in some detail in my *Levinas and the Postcolonial: Race, Nation, Other*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011, Chapter One.
- 13 Jacques Derrida, *Who's Afraid of Philosophy: Right to Philosophy I*, trans. Jan Plug, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002, p. 105.
- 14 Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000, p. 189.
- 15 See, for example, the opening chapter from *Poetics of Relation*, especially Glissant's reflections on the three senses of abyss.
- 16 On the question of Levinas, history, pain, and beginning, see my "Beginning's Abyss," in *Nietzsche and Levinas: After the Death of a Certain God*, eds. Bettina Bergo and Jill Stauffer, New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, pp. 134–149.

**WORLDS
PICXURED IN
CONXEMPORARY ARX:
PLANES AND
CONNECXIVIXIES**

**XERRY
SMIXH**

Xhe imagining of worlds within the World is a topic that has concerned me for some time, to the extent of nominating it in recent publications as one that is at the core of contemporary art, as it is of current being-in-the-world, and thus definitive of our contemporaneity. For example, I conclude a recent article, “The State of Art History: Contemporary Art,” with the following remarks:

Placemaking, world picturing and connectivity are the most common concerns of artists these days because they are the substance of contemporary being. Increasingly, they override residual distinctions based on style, mode, medium and ideology. They are present in all art that is truly contemporary. Distinguishing, precisely, this presence in each artwork is the most important challenge to an art criticism that would be adequate to the demands of contemporaneity. Tracing the currency of each artwork within the larger forces that are shaping this present is the task of contemporary art history.¹

These are, I know, bold claims, but I am encouraged in pursuing them because I know them to be accurate pointers to the main (but of course not the only) concerns of contemporary artists. They are also a straightforward – if rather summary – description of the enterprise of many art critics, historians and theorists of visual cultures working throughout the world today.

The second issue of the journal *World Art* is devoted to contemporary art. I have contributed an essay that attempts

to answer the question: Can we say that contemporary art is – perhaps for the first time in history – truly an art *of* the world? I argue along the following lines:

As biennales have for decades attested, art now comes *from* the whole world, from a growing accumulation of art-producing localities that no longer depend on the approval of a metropolitan center and are, to an unprecedented degree, connected to each other in a multiplicity of ways, not least regionally and globally. Geopolitical change has shifted the world picture from presumptions about the inevitability of modernization and the universality of EuroAmerican values to recognition of the coexistence of difference, of disjunctive diversity, as characteristic of our contemporary condition. Contemporary life draws increasing numbers of artists to imagine the world – here understood as comprising a number of contemporaneous “natures”: the natural world, built environments (“second nature”), virtual space (“third nature”), and lived interiority (“human nature”) – as a highly differentiated yet inevitably connected whole. In this sense, from what we might call a planetary perspective, contemporary art may be becoming an art *for* the world – for the world as it is now, and as it might be.²

My essay is accompanied by an insightful commentary by Marsha Meskimmon that adds much depth to my raw intuitions about the affective dimensions of the kinds of coeval ethics called for in contemporary conditions: the world “as it might be.”³ Ian McLean has also contributed an important essay that tracks some of my earlier writing on this topic, treating them within his own original argument about the emergence of an idea of “world art” within the Art World since the 1960s.⁴

Two ideas from within the passage I have just quoted attract attention as being key topics of relevance. For over fifty years now, a world historical shift from EuroAmerican

hegemony to a declining dominance within an increasingly differentiated world geopolitical and economic order has been underway – recently, at an accelerating pace. It has found expression in art, I suggest, as a shift from various kinds of practices oriented for, against or at oblique angles to modernization (not all of which are *modernist*) to practices that arise out of contemporary conditions. I will return in my conclusion to some implications for art historical writing of this worldwide shifting from modern to contemporary art.

WORLDS-WITHIN-THE WORLD

○ want to focus the main part of my remarks on the kinds of worlds that are envisaged in the passage I just quoted.

○ I will not develop the metaphor of worlds as “natures.”

○ I am of course alluding to world-picturing as envisaged by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in the Communist Manifesto of 1848, *the* quintessential description of the forces at play in the then *modernizing* world. Rather, I will put before you a description that I believe is more suitable to our current, post-1989 circumstances: that of contemporaneous worlds linked by a mix of direct determination, contingency, planetary transformation, and also, paradoxically, by particular kinds of non-contemporaneity.

There is, I acknowledge, a degree of foolishness in attempting such general descriptions. This is especially true at times of world disturbance, a truth we see pictured in the famous image of the *World Map (Fool’s Cap)*, c. 1590.

The most recent mapping of the continents (close to those published by Ortelius in the 1580s) is framed by a court jester’s outfit, and laced with mottoes of biblical and classical origin, all of them warning against the vanity of presuming to know too much. The legend in the left panel reads:



Anon., *World Map (Fool's Cap)*, c. 1590. Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (Bodleian Map Room, Douce Portfolio 142 [92]).

“Democritus of Abdera laughed at [the world], Heraclitus of Ephesus wept over it, Epichthonius Cosmopolites portrayed it.” Across the cap’s brow, the inscription translates as “O head, worthy of a dose of hellebore.” The Latin quotation just above the map is from Pliny the Elder: “For in the whole universe the earth is nothing else and this is the substance of our glory, this is its habitation, here it is that we fill positions of power and covet wealth, and throw mankind into an uproar, and launch wars, even civil ones.” The reason for this chaos is explained in the quotation below the map, from Ecclesiastes: “The number of fools is infinite.” The jester’s staff at right also cites this book: “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” Inscribed on the badges adorning the shoulder belt are sayings to the effect: “Oh, the worries of the world; oh, how much triviality is there in the world,” “Everyone is without sense,” and “All things are vanity: every man living.”⁵ The most important motto is the one that presides above them all, the Latin version of the Greek dictum “Know thyself.” Framing scientific truths as “fancies” was, of course, an essential strategy at times of Inquisition. In 1590 we were forty years into the Roman Inquisition, and forty years before the trial of Galileo Galiliei.

How does the challenge of world picturing resonate in contemporary art? Let me begin in an equally specific way, with these words of Adelaide artist Fiona Hall: “I live in the late twentieth century and this is my subject matter and what influences my work. I’m informed everyday by switching on the evening news, by looking at the newspaper, by reading current art magazines, by observing events around me – I think my work reflects this and it therefore has a contemporary presence. I certainly hope it does.”⁶ Julie Ewington identifies Hall’s *Gulf War* ceramics of 1991 as a turning point in the artist’s efforts to discern the impact of distant, “world events” on the closeness that constitutes our sense of place.⁷ Since then, Hall has consistently

attempted to show how global forces shape locality by tracking their presence in everyday objects, which she then assembles into evocative installations. Her *Biodata* series includes works such as *Medicine Bundle for the non-born child* (1993): a delicate-looking baby's layette knitted from strips made from Coca-Cola cans, with the addition of a six-pack of can with rubber teats. The transformation of coca leaves and nuts as medicinal plants in South America into the ubiquitous symbol of commodity capitalism, which has become a dangerously unhealthy addiction for millions, is amusingly yet sharply suggested.

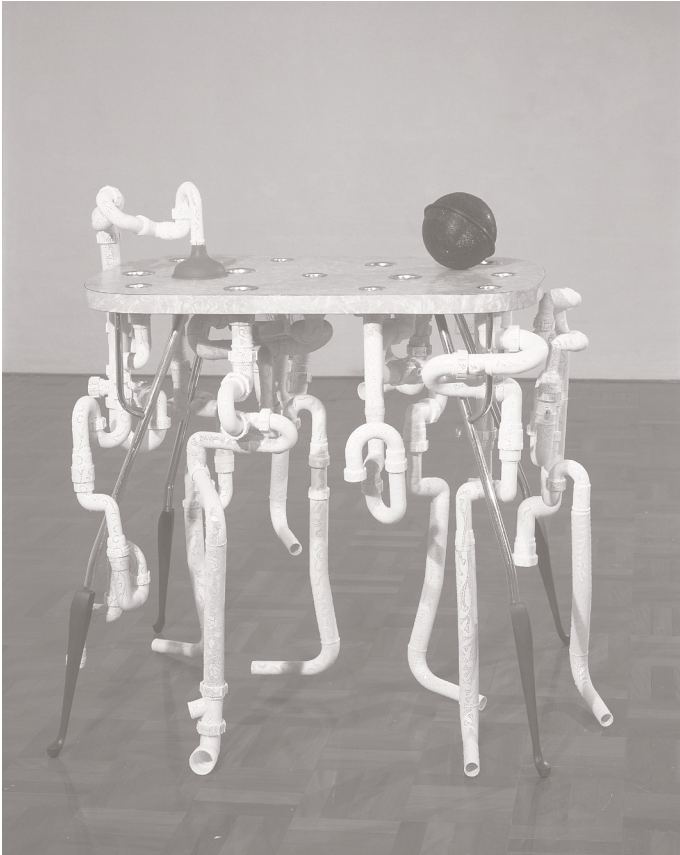
At first glance, Hall's sculpture *Incontinent* (1997) might imply the gathering around a table of two individuals suffering from loosened bowels, but I read it as a subtle visualization of some of the key connectivities operative in the world today. It is part of a suite of similar works from 1998–99 – *Drift Net*, *Fieldwork*, *White History*, *Dead in the Water* and *Cell Culture* – in which quasi-anthropomorphic forms suggest body parts that have been subject to scientific examination, quasi-organic forms suggest plumbing fixtures or medical instruments, while animal parts merge into machinic elements. Much of this merging is conveyed by the choice of materials: PVC pipe, plastic, glass beads. The economic history of the use of these materials is grounded in cruel colonialism and vastly exploitative imperialism. *White History* places on one side of a Natural History Museum style vitrine a black orb, on the other a white metronome, and connects them visually through intricate piping. The black orb had appeared one year before in *Incontinent*, where it faced off across the Formica tabletop against a white, twisted pipe that culminated face-down in a plastic suction cap. The game, on the surface, is simple. On a plane spotted with holes, there are two players, one that rolls uncontrollably, the other that is fixed in place: two continents are symbolized, two civilizations perhaps, but they are shown as embodying



Fiona Hall, *Medicine Bundles for the non-born child*, 1993. Biodata series. Aluminium, rubber and plastic. Dimensions variable. Collection Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane. Image courtesy the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

two kinds of impotence. If the tabletop is the world that we can see clearly, the legs below show that the world is supported by a firm structure that has risen from beautifully turned natural wood, switched into metal piping, and holds up what is probably pulpboard laminated with marbled plastic. The three ages of manufacture elegantly evoked. In between them, however, twists a parallel structure, more rhizomatic in character: random, over-elaborated plumbing fixtures, molded from Tupperware, and pierced with delicate designs representing the flora and fauna of the world's continents. Perforated like this, these pipes do not hold water. The incontinence of the continents.

In recent years Hall has sought ever more subtle ways of suggesting the complex connections that have shaped the contemporary world. *Cash Crop* (1998) displayed a variety of everyday and exotic plants carved in soap the botanical names for which were matched with terms from financial markets. *Leaf Litter* (1999–2003) is a series that connects the concentration of wealth in parts of the world with the distribution of plant species that has been crucial to that accumulation. Black and white images of plant species (taken from historic botanical illustrations) are painted in gouache on brightly colored banknotes, each carefully chosen to suggest a historical or present relationship. As Ewington comments: "This ambitious profusion is essential to the work: it embodies the almost unimaginable richness of the natural world, the breadth of human knowledge about plants and their properties, and the gross and abundant energies of commercial traffic, creating edgy dialogues between all three."⁸ Her works might be seen as artifacts of these dialogues: as examples of the kinds of thing that dialogic exchange between these forces and flows might be if they were, indeed, things. Small wonder that they seem such strange, impossible hybrids, and yet look like things that have always existed but have never been seen before.



Fiona Hall, *Incontinent*, 1997. Laminex, metal, wood, PVC, rubber, glass.
Dimensions variable. Collection Bendigo Art Gallery. Image courtesy the artist
and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

SPATIAL LAYERING, TEMPORAL CONTEMPORANEOUSNESS

Like many other artists working today, Hall's work displays the physical conjunction of a number of different kinds of world: the intimate, personal sense of "my world"; the close neighborhood of the local; further worlds, increasingly distant beyonds, until a sense of the World in general is reached; then the transitory, "no-places" in between. Furthermore, this kind of art evokes the contemporality of these worlds, their differential movement through time. Let me take this spatial idea of simultaneous worlds and marry it to the idea of these worlds sharing temporal contemporaneousness in an effort to envisage the structure of the world as we experience it today. Beginning spatially, we might imagine four planes, surfaces, fields, arenas, or domains that stand to each other as layers – "orders" in an older parlance, or "levels" in a more recent one. Let us call them "worlds" in the sense of worlds-within-the-World.

WORLD/WORLDS: PLANES, LAYERS

Earth, planet, natural histories, evolution, information

Sentient interiority (human, animal, things? machinic?)

Societies, social relations, cultures, local economies, nation states

Geopolitics and economics, international arrangements,
ngos, civilizations

I have been inspired to this (tentative) proposal partly in reaction against the somewhat simplistic modeling recently advanced by theorists of globalization and government such as Samuel P. Huntington and Joseph Nye Jr.⁹ Nye suggests that we envisage the distribution and play of power throughout the world as a chess game played on

multiple boards at once, in which actors moving pieces on one board (say, the geopolitical) impact on another (say, the cultural). He urges that, if the United States is to retain its preeminence it must act in awareness of the effects of power across all relevant domains, and do in a planned way, within frameworks of conscious policy (thus his concept of “soft power,” avidly adopted as a tool of foreign policy by governments around the world today, not least the Chinese government). Being actually more concerned with coercive power, having forgotten their Foucault, and being unconcerned about climate change, both Nye and Huntington pay little attention to interiority and the planetary. But their models do have the virtue of highlighting the fact that we form perspectives on the world at large according to the forces in play within the world, or worlds, in which we mostly act, or most immediately need to act, and that we are often unaware, or unable to envisage, the nature of the relationships that connect them.

With these cautions in mind, let me complicate the diagram with some suggestions as to the kinds of relationship that are commonly held to connect these planes. I indicate only some of the most prominent *forms* that these relationships take, through the *names* that these relationships have attracted.

WORLD/WORLDS/WORLDING: PLANES & RELATIONSHIPS

Earth, planet, natural histories, evolution, information

<Indigeneity, ecology, virtuality>

Sentient interiority (human, animal, machinic? things?)

<art, language, sexualities, belief, humanities, sciences, media>

Societies, social relations, local economies, nation states, cultures

<diplomacy, war, criminality, cooperation>

Geopolitics and economics, international arrangements,
ngos, civilizations

<modernity, globalization, globality, planetarity>

To “complete” (to the degree that *that* is possible) my first, evidently tentative sketch of this world picture, I would posit that a host of actions, difficult to diagram, actually weave the connections, are the *substance* of relationships, within this model. Let us call them “connectivities.” They include imagination, feeling, projection, identification, communication; producing, consuming, prosuming; warring, surging, peace-making, reconciling, deterring, negotiating; searching, networking, flocking; and many others both shared and specific to particular practices. Imagine them as threads weaving through these layers and forms of connection, thus giving us a three-dimensional matrix. (I hope that the relevance of Fiona Hall’s impossible hybrids is now clear.) Let us call this overall activity, this weaving of connectivities, “world-making” or “worlding.”

Please notice what we might call the *rounding* of the model, its return to itself, such that our taking of the Earth itself as *the* grounding matches, at world-scale, a planetary consciousness rather than a globalizing thirst for dominance and hegemony. (One ambition is to enable a conception of the world that does not begin from the image of the globe, or that of a map of continents, but of course includes them within a broader pictorial imagining of worlds-within-the-World that now stretches through more space and more time and in more differentiated ways that hitherto imaginable.)¹⁰

If something like this connective layering is the structure of our intersecting worlds, how might we understand it to have changed throughout time?¹¹ I am incapable of imagining

this across more than a few decades with any confidence (and even then with much trepidation), before succumbing to an unfounded hubris. But others, thank heavens, are less restrained. We can see in our cinemas today one such example: Terrence Malick's film *The Tree of Life* (2011). For all of its obvious flaws, New Age over-reaching, and quasi-Creationist banalities, this is an extraordinary effort to imagine visually the world-historical dynamic of something like the structure I have just sketched.

COUNTRY AND CONNECTIVITY



One element lacking from Malick's world picture is Indigeneity. In Australia, recently, we have learnt to take indigenous perspectives less as obligatory additions to a broader but nonetheless Eurocentric perspective, more as something close to an equivalent, indeed preceding, starting point. For millennia, indigenous Australians have been depicting "country" to themselves as part of ceremony and less formal spiritual observance. The "masterpieces" of the contemporary Aboriginal art movement are complex, multilayered evocations of convergent "dreaming lines" across vast actual and religious territory. Classic examples, to take two from the collection of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, range from Mawalan and Wanjuk Marika's *Djan'kawu Creation Story* (1959) to John Mawurndjul's *Mardayin* (2001), or, to take two from the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria, *Napperby death spirit Dreaming*, painted by Tim Leura Tjapaltjarri and Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri in 1980, to *Ngayarta Kujarra*, painted in 2009 by a large group of artists from Punmu, Western Australia.

Connectivity may be understood less as a state of being connected in some fixed array, more as an on-going process

of seeking out the lineaments of connection, catching glimpses of them, allowing them to resonate, change, and inevitably loosen, only to seek them again. Something of this spirit informs the 2006 collaboration between Pura-lia Meenamatta, a poet from the Ben Lomond clan of the Cape Portland nation of North-East Tasmania who is also named Jim Everett, and Jonathan Kimberley, an eighth generation descendent of First Fleet convicts, a painter who lives and works between Hobart and Warmun, Western Australia. Their *meenamatta lena narla puellakanny-Meenamatta Water Country Discussion* took the form of an exchange between thirteen of Pura-lia Meenamatta's poetic/prosodic reflections and ten of Kimberley's paintings. Pura-lia Meenamatta's poems range from evocative observations of creeks, rivers and rainwater at places in his country to speculations on water's centrality in global politics. "Some call me water" begins

some call me water
 nearly all need me
 i touch nearly everything
 connecting the inanimate
 with living things

whereas "Europa" consists entirely of these lines

colonies established post-colonialism
 which became neo-colonialism in the
 new nation of people exclusively
 under the controlling marketplace
 until all-life dies and neo-colonialism
 reaches its final regression
 in broken water dead.¹²

A student in Melbourne during the later 1980s, Jonathan Kimberley is of a generation of painters for whom the contemporary Aboriginal art movement was no longer a fascinating, from-the-deserts phenomenon, its future filled with as much uncertainty as hopefulness. Yet it had not quite achieved the diversity of output, continent-wide spread and depth of market that have made it, since 2000, a structural force at least as definitive of Australian art as the work of non-indigenous artists. During the 1990s interaction between the two kinds of “Australian” art waxed and waned, often becoming intense, even volatile – especially when artists on both “sides” used appropriative strategies. Exchanges between Michael Nelson Tjakamarra and Tim Johnson, and those between Gordon Bennett and Imants Tillers, are striking pairings among a wide variety. If they began as actions that sought to cross deep cultural divides, these encounters subsequently underwent complex transformations, only some of which can be properly understood as convergences.¹⁵

Kimberley and Pura-lia Meenamatta have inherited this history. Their approach, however, is post-appropriative. After graduating, Kimberley elected to live and work in remote communities, and was the founding manager of the Warmun Art Center at Turkey Creek (1998–2000). In his paintings, echoes of some of the major Aboriginal artists may be seen (Michael Nelson’s wild brushstrokes, Emily Kame Kngwarreye’s lines), as may that of others (Jackson Pollock’s thrown networks, Colin McCahon’s textual admonitions), but these are faint. And they are way less important than his tipping and tilting the canvas to let lines of poured paint run in rivulets, randomly, all over the linen, or his picking out the shapes of natural growth, or his writing across the resultant surfaces the words that should be sung over them.

The core figure of *beyond the colonial construct: meenamatta map of unlandscape* (2006), a diagram, suggests at once a bush, a brain and a fish trap. It is a free standing shape, but also a watery stain across a surface, one that leaves dissolving charcoal in its wake. It bursts up within a forest of trees. It hovers above four flowing rivers – of paradise, a reference to medieval mapping. Or it runs, shadow-like, beneath them. These are markings of a projective imagination. They are tokens of Kimberley’s efforts to see the world – in large, in small, and in between – from a plangermairreener perspective. They are a step toward their picturing of watery presence in their country, to showing how they might “map” what is, to them, not a landscape. Kimberley pursues this goal in all of the paintings in the series: some come close to landscapes, others are conjunctions or overlays of entirely abstract forms. When joined to its companion painting, *meenamatta water country*, it becomes a diptych. It also becomes the *summa* of the series. The words inscribed across the surface, “meenamatta walantanalinany,” mean “meenamatta country all round.”

For his part, Pura-lia Meenamatta writes prose poems that seek to grasp the same subject, in his own language, but also in English. These are written out directly on to the painting by him. The shapes float, as if they are floating on water, like leaves, but also in water, like continents. Reading around *beyond the colonial construct: meenamatta map of unlandscape* from top left to top right, down to the bottom left, then across to the lower right quadrant, these are the titles of each text: “some call me water,” “this place is outside the bible,” “water,” “blue tears in manalargenna country,” “water spirits,” “in the time of living origin,” “birthing water,” “tubuna,” “antipodes,” “planegarrtooth-enar,” “asia,” “africa,” and “europa.” As I noted above, they range in imaginative scope from precise locations in the

poet's country to the evocations of movements outside of locative space and measurable time. Reversing Kimberley's approach, but matching it, they use English in ways that attempt to show plangermairreener perceptions about being-in-the-world to Western presumptions about space and time. They are Pura-lia Meenamatta's best shot at overlaying his worldviews on those of Kimberley.

For both artists, the point is to arrive at a state of connectivity between their separate ways of seeing what they take to be a shared world, one that is fully, but inadequately, described by the each other's ways of world-picturing. Each perspective is inadequate, because for it to be complete, it would necessarily exclude the other. Neither wishes this outcome. Nor is such an outcome generalizable any longer. Is there a larger perspective that can encompass both? If there is, it is not what is in front of us. *beyond the colonial construct: meenamatta map of unlandscape* may have gotten beyond the colonial construct, but it has arrived as far as showing us a meenamatta mode of mapping the nether space in which water moves, the nexus of actual terrain and mythic time-space for which the two artists use the word "unlandscape." Theirs is a deconstructive gesture, not as yet a constructive action. Perhaps this is why both painted and the textual surfaces read so flatly, why their evident thirst for depth and movement seems so stilled. Nevertheless, to get this far is no inconsiderable achievement. It may be, in contemporary conditions, as far as we can get. To the artists, it is early days in their collaboration, their ongoing conversation.



Pura-lia Meenamatta (Jim Everett) and Jonathan Kimberley,
beyond the colonial construct: meenamatta map of unlandscape,
and *meenamatta water country*, both 2006. Synthetic polymer, charcoal,
text and linen, diptych, each work 244 × 244 cm. Conforming to above:
Images courtesy the artists and Bett Gallery, North Hobart, Tasmania.



CONTEMPORARY WORLD CURRENTS

Like the geographers and mapmakers who precede them, most contemporary artists quite sensibly confine themselves to envisaging one or two aspects of what it is to *world* (taken as an active verb) in contemporary conditions.¹⁴ Taken altogether, however, worlding is an enterprise that is unfolding at world scale, something that, perhaps, art itself – or, more broadly, the human visual imagination – is undertaking. If this is so, what is precipitating it?

In my recent work I have developed a historical hypothesis about how – in the latter decades of the twentieth century – modern art became contemporary, or, more accurately stated, about how it happened that the variety of modern, modernist, traditional and indigenous visual arts being produced all over the world could no longer be positioned relative to some broad, all-encompassing narrative of art's historical development (such as modernism followed by postmodernism). For all of their evident differences (indeed, *because* the evidence of their difference was so intense) they became suddenly – in the first decade of the twenty-first century – simply coexistent, nakedly contemporaneous. It is this contemporaneity of difference that resonates throughout what we now see as contemporary art, as it does the expanded sense of worlds-within-the-World that constitutes our contemporary condition.

This is the sense in which I argue that a multi-faceted, highly differentiated shift from modern to contemporary art has occurred in distinct ways in the various art-producing centers and regions of the world. Many of us are involved in the enterprise of tracking these developments as they have unfolded in the localities and regions within which we work, and as they continue to do so. For example, John Clark's outstanding work as an empirical researcher,

art historiographer and meta-theorist of these developments as they play out in Asia.¹⁵ There is increasing interest in how these new narratives connect with each other – in how localities relate to others in their region, in how regions relate to contingently connected others; and in how specific localities and regions relate to the various forms of internationalization that were abroad during the modern period and that have arisen in response to our contemporaneity. This is a trafficking in artists, artworks, images and ideas; in institutional practices and cultural stereotypes; in models of differentiation, cooperation and reconciliation; in ways of seeing worlds, and the World as a whole – in short, in world-making in the visual arts within the context of being-in-the-world, the contemporary structure of which I have been attempting to sketch.

I will conclude by outlining briefly how I have tackled this subject in my book *Contemporary Art: World Currents*. Within the atomistic particularity of all of the art being made today, I discern three main currents, and within these various tendencies that vary from each other in different ways within each current. Overall, I try to grasp what is distinct within each current and tendency, what is shared between them, and what emerges in the specific connections that occur between them. The first prevails in what were the great metropolitan centers of modernity in Europe and the United States (as well as in societies and subcultures, such as Australia, closely related to them) and is a continuation of styles in the history of art, particularly Modernist ones. Remodernist, retro-sensationalist and spectacularist tendencies, fusing into one current, continue to predominate in EuroAmerican and some other modernizing artworlds and markets, with widespread effect. The second has arisen from movements toward political and economic independence that occurred in former colonies and on the edges of Europe, and is thus shaped above

all by clashing ideologies and experiences. The result is that artists prioritize both local and global issues as the urgent content of their work. It came into prominence on international circuits such as biennales and traveling temporary exhibitions – this is the art of transnational transitionality. Thirdly, the great increase in the number of artists worldwide, and the opportunities offered by new informational and communicative technologies to millions of users, has led to the viral spread of small-scale, interactive, D-I-Y art (and art-like output) that is concerned less with high art style, or confrontational politics, more with explorations of temporality, place, affiliation and affect – the ever more uncertain conditions of contemporaneity on a fragile planet. Taken together, I suggest, these currents constitute the contemporary art of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. World picturing is common to them all, but it is done in very different ways, and for different reasons. The contemporaneity of these differences is what makes today's art contemporary.

Note: A version of this essay was first presented at the conference “The World and World-Making in Art,” Australian National University, Canberra, August 11–13, 2011. My thanks to Caroline Turner, Michelle Antoinette and Zara Stanhope.

- 1 Terry Smith, "The State of Art History: Contemporary Art," *Art Bulletin*, Vol. 92, No. 4, December 2010, p. 380.
- 2 Terry Smith, "The State of World-making in Contemporary Art," *World Art*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 171–188.
- 3 See: Marsha Meskimmon, "Making worlds, making subjects: contemporary art and the affective dimension of global ethics," *World Art*, Vol. 1, No. 2, September 2011, pp.189–196.
- 4 Ian McLean, "The World Art Artworld," *World Art*, Vol. 1, No. 2, September 2011, pp. 161–169.
- 5 Versions held in the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, and the Royal Geographic Society, London. Translations by Frank Jacobs, post 480 on his *Strange Maps* site, at <http://bigthink.com/ideas/24015>.
- 6 Fiona Hall cited in Max Pam (ed.), *Visual Instincts: Contemporary Australian Photography*, Canberra: AGPS Press, 1989, p. 14.
- 7 Julie Ewington, *Fiona Hall*, Annandale: Piper Press, 2005, p. 125. See also: Gregory O'Brien, Paula Savage and Vivienne Webb, *Fiona Hall Force Field*, Sydney: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007.
- 8 Ewington, 2005, p. 173.
- 9 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* New York: Simon & Shusteer, 1997; Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Future of Power*, Cambridge: Public Affairs, 2011; and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Cambridge: Public Affairs, 2004.
- 10 Just how difficult it is to move from this limited repertoire of models can be seen from recent surveys of modes of data visualization. See, for example, Manuel Lima, *Visual Complexity: Mapping Patterns of Information*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2011.
- 11 A comparable approach to these questions may be found in David Christian, *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History* Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2004. On the history of conceptions of time, see Norbert Elias, *Time: An Essay*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992; and David Christian, "History and Time", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 57, No. 3, September 2011, pp. 353–365.
- 12 Pura-lia Meenamatta (Jim Everett) and Jonathan Kimberley, *meenamatta lena narla puellakanny-Meenamatta Water Country Discussion* Hobart: Bett Gallery, 2006, pp. 20, 26.
- 13 Ian McLean has traced these in a number of his essays, notably "9 shots 5 stories: Imants Tillers and Indigenous Difference," *Art Monthly*, No. 228, April 2010, pp. 13–16; and *Art Monthly*, No. 229, May 2010, pp. 12–16. For some key original texts on the issue see Ian McLean (ed.), *How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art*, Brisbane & Sydney: Institute of Modern Art & Power Publications, 2011, pp. 263ff.
- 14 See Daniel Rosenberg and Anthony Grafton, *Cartographies of Time: A History of the Timeline* New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2009, where Chapter 7

reviews relevant artworks, as does Katherine Harmon, *The Map as Art: Contemporary Artists Explore Cartography*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2009. I discuss a number of works of contemporary art that exemplify aspects of each layer, relationship and connection in part III of Terry Smith, *Contemporary Art: World Currents*, London: Laurence King & Upper Saddle River: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2011, where I examine themes such as world picturing, climate change and social media.

- 15 See, for example, John Clark, *Asian Modernities: Chinese and Thai Art Compared, 1980 to 1999*, Sydney: Power Institute, 2010.

CULTURAL
TRANSLATION ✦✦R
CULTURAL EXCLUSI✦✦N?
THE BIENNALE ✦✦F
SYDNEY AND
C✦✦NTEMP✦✦RARY
ART IN THE S✦✦UTH

ANTH✦✦NY
GARDNER AND
CHARLES
GREEN

INTRODUCTION: BIENNIALS AS MODELS FOR CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS

On the burgeoning discipline of curatorial studies, large-scale exhibitions play a central if complicated role. This is particularly true of the perennial, often spectacular and sprawling survey exhibitions of contemporary art called biennials. On one level, biennials have come to epitomize the significance of cultural translation for contemporary art. They bring artists and works from one culture or region into another, ideally to establish dialogues, tensions and resonances between different cultural products, and all through an exhibition medium transposed from its nationalist foundations at the Venice Biennale in 1895 into a leviathan of international proportions and inflated profiles today. Yet, this globalized over-reach reveals the less salubrious aspect to these exhibitions: their reduction to an easily identifiable trope, an already ossified readymade enabling a struggling locality (often, though not always, a second- or third-tier post-industrial city like Liverpool or Gwangju) to aspire to the attention of international art audiences, markets and magazines. In each city's yearning for new-found global relevance, notions of cultural translation have thus come to function in two directions at once. By absorbing the structures and methods most indicative of globalized exhibition making, a local art scene can project its practices and discursive debates into an international canon of contemporary art – or, rather, *believe* it can project the local into global legitimacy.

That, at least, is the narrative that dominates the perception of biennials and their international proliferation since

the mid-to-late 1990s and which subtends this chapter. Biennials are almost invariably presumed to be a cultural symptom of globalized neoliberalism, such that the openness of North Atlantic art to those worlds beyond its shores becomes another strategy of colonization and self-promotion.¹ However, such views forget that biennials are not simply a phenomenon imported worldwide from the capitalist West in recent years. During the nearly four decades of the Cold War, especially from the early 1950s to the end of the 1980s, biennials were among the foremost models for bringing together artists and exhibiting artworks from myriad cultures *outside* the West, and thus for establishing the exhibition as a paramount venue for cultural encounters. This was especially true of what we call the “second wave” of biennials, which emerged along the art world’s so-called “peripheries” – in São Paulo, Brazil, in 1951, for instance, and in Alexandria, Egypt and Ljubljana, Yugoslavia in 1955 – long after the inauguration of the Venice Biennale and the Carnegie International in the mid-1890s. A number of these biennials sought an often self-conscious rejection of the cultural pretensions – and certainly the cultural hegemony – of the North Atlantic. From the Latin American biennials in Medellín, Colombia (the Bial de Coltejer) to the roving Arab Art Biennial in Baghdad, Iraq in 1974 and Rabat, Morocco in 1976, or the Asian Art Triennial in Fukuoka, Japan in 1979, these exhibitions sought to focus on identities that were regional rather than ethnic, and that were largely marginalized by the Cold War enmities between the capitalist United States and the communist Soviet Union.² The regionalism championed here pertained to the South and the Third World, and it would find its greatest and most dramatic advocate in the second and third editions of the Bial de la Habana in 1986 and 1989, for which 2000-plus works were drawn from across Asia, Africa and Latin America and installed in various sites (institutional and not) across the Cuban capital.³

Alongside the Bienal de São Paulo, the Biennale of Sydney stands as the most durable and prominent of the biennials established during this second wave. Begun in 1973, the Sydney Biennale refused to follow São Paulo's adoption of the Venice model (that is, a biennial dividing its artists by national representation, while granting awards to individual artists). It was not the first biennial to dispense with this template. The Bienal de Coltejer had been presenting sprawling group shows, with international and local artists' works placed alongside each other regardless of nation or medium, since 1968. But the Sydney and Coltejer format was to become the path taken by most newer biennials, in part because it was empowered by a ready and increasing cadre of freelance auteur curators who were to a great extent modeling themselves on personalities such as the influential director of *Documenta 5* in 1972, Harald Szeemann. Szeemann had helped shape the expectations of the Sydney Biennale's early organizers about what an ambitious survey of contemporary art might be, and had visited Australia to curate a survey of local art, *I want to leave a nice well-done child here* (staged at the Bonython Gallery in Sydney and then the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne), in 1971. His thematically organized, rather than survey-based, model for *Documenta 5* (and specifically his organizing conceit of "Individual Mythologies," that exhibition's slogan) would prove especially important for the 1979 Biennale of Sydney, as would the figure of the roving, itinerant biennial director exemplified by Szeemann and by numerous Sydney Biennale curators from 1979 on.

This chapter documents the early years of the Sydney Biennale, presenting it as an important case study in the histories and practices of exhibitions since the start of the 1970s. There are two main reasons for this. First, while most studies of biennials posit 1989 as the Year Zero for the formation of a global complex in exhibition making

– including all the near-pathological competitiveness, paranoia and desire for recognition that comes with that complex – the Sydney Biennale reminds us that we need to look much earlier than 1989 to find the roots of both globalization and biennialization in contemporary art. The Cold War period was not a dead-zone for major international group shows like biennials. The first decades after World War Two instead pinpoint the birth pangs of, and complicated desires for, internationalism interwoven with self-doubt – or, to be more precise, the dialectics of contemporaneity and provincialism, the ambitions to be “contemporary” and the fear of being “provincial” – that lie at the heart of cultural globalism.⁴

This leads to the second reason to focus on the Sydney Biennale here. At stake in this early phase of globalism was the struggle to articulate modes of world-making very different from the antinomies of capitalism and communism, east and west, that still dominate Cold War cultural histories. Instead, exhibitions like the Sydney Biennale provide concrete evidence of a more complicated set of aspirations between the local, the regional, and the international – part of a broader desire for culture to function in an “age of three worlds,” as historian Michael Denning has argued, rather than two.⁵ This is not to say that we should forget Cold War adversarial hostilities altogether. We clearly cannot, and the production and reception of biennials outside the North Atlantic was still very much informed by the broader political and social contexts of the Cold War, the Vietnam War, worldwide anti-American feeling of the 1960s and 1970s, and the use of culture as a weapon of soft power by governments of all stripes during this time. Australia, like many other countries outside the North Atlantic, was a target of the US cultural sponsorship program aimed at projecting the prestige and power of American art in international group exhibitions and

biennials. (This was the program of soft power promoted by the Central Intelligence Agency (the CIA) through the US International Service and the Museum of Modern Art's International Council, and thoroughly analyzed by Serge Guilbaut, Frances Stonor Saunders and others.)⁶ Exhibitions including *The Family of Man* and *Two Decades of American Painting* anchored briefly in Melbourne and Sydney on their international, CIA-sponsored world tours.⁷ However, this patronage had trailed off by the time of the 1979 Biennale of Sydney, and the USIS had little involvement with art by then.

The 1970s marked a period of significant cultural, economic and geopolitical change, and biennials were potent bellwethers of these transitions because they lay at the very nexus of local ambition, regional traction, and new internationalism that were the cornerstones of cultural politics at the time. The development of Sydney's biennial from 1973 on thus provides us with a crucial example of artistic, curatorial and bureaucratic responses to these politics. How did an art scene and a biennial as geographically distant from the "center" as Sydney's engage with international cultural and political transformation? How did they translate, or even endogenize, the models of cultural encounter promoted by the structure of large group exhibitions? And how did the local and the international entwine in 1970s Australia? As this chapter shows, while notions of encounter and translation were very much central to the Sydney Biennale's ambitions, it was ultimately difficult to separate them from worries about exclusivity, and especially the exclusion of the local at the expense of international prestige.

FOUNDING THE SYDNEY BIENNALE



y the end of the 1970s, the arrival of relatively affordable international flights had pushed Australian artists, along with their peers from Brazil, Argentina, Korea and other “peripheries” of art, into closer contact with North Atlantic art centers. The result was the beginning of a fracturing and opening up of art circles beyond New York and Western Europe: their division into local ghettos and an international art world. The two did not overlap, because the latter did not at that time or later necessarily renew itself from the former’s talent-pool of the best and brightest. But as well, by the late 1970s, Sydney’s art world seemed to have reached a respectable if small critical mass in terms of self-sustaining size. This shift coincided with the main focus of this chapter: the third Biennale of Sydney, held in 1979, that launched the Australian city’s biennial as an international event seeking to be an image of the world of contemporary art as it then stood.

Both the São Paulo and Sydney biennials were founded by immigrants from post-War Europe – in São Paulo, Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho; in Sydney, Franco Belgiorno-Nettis. Their motivations were similar, and they had been affected by their own experiences of post-World War Two diaspora. They were European migrants who established themselves as important industrialists, proudly participating in their chosen city’s civic desires for international recognition as nascent global cities and as nodes of business and capital in their respective regions in the Southern Hemisphere. Needless to say, civic and national aspirations were never identical nor necessarily in harmony, nor was the balance between the two always equal. Whereas the country’s new, government-sponsored arts funding organization, the Australia Council, wished to project Australian art internationally and empower artists,

Belgiorno-Nettis wanted to replicate and import the cultural institutions of his homeland to his beloved Sydney, and in particular the venerable institution of the Venice Biennale:

My love affair with Venice, where I have been a frequent visitor for years, is the source of inspiration for the Biennale. How do you break the isolation of Australia, which I felt strongly myself in the early 50s? How do you inject that flavor of international extravaganza, originality and explosive vision that you see at gatherings in Venice, in the Giardini, in the Corderia, in the Arsenale, with their centuries of tradition?⁸

He invented, underpinned and financially supported the new biennial with the organizational and curatorial resources provided by his family conglomerate, the powerful Transfield Corporation, which built bridges, railways and major infrastructure projects throughout the Sydney region. Belgiorno-Nettis wanted to move beyond his previous sponsorship of a major national competition of contemporary art, the Transfield Prize, which he had started in 1961. But the prize was a model of art exhibition, focused on paintings or sculptures, that was on the wane by the early 1970s.

The first, humble 1973 Biennale of Sydney, largely organized and staffed by Transfield, was a simple survey exhibition. In fact, it was not much more than part of the opening celebrations at the spectacular, new, Jørn Utzon-designed Sydney Opera House (the foyer of which was the Biennale's main venue). Most of the artists were Australian and the selection was very insular and conservative, especially considering the large number of local exhibitions and artists already working in conceptualist or new, post-object forms. Many of these postobject artists had already established international connections through

survey exhibitions or biennials. For instance, minimalist Robert Hunter represented Australia in the 1970 Triennale-India of “Contemporary World Art” in New Delhi, India, with austere, stenciled wall drawings. There, Hunter met Carl Andre, with whom he became good friends and who facilitated Hunter’s participation in other international exhibitions. At the Triennale, Robert Ryman, Carl Andre and Sol LeWitt had represented the U.S.A.; Waldo Rasmussen, Executive Director of Circulating Exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, had curated their national representation. Rasmussen had long been instrumental in sending mega-exhibitions of American art to far-flung global destinations. In 1967, he had organized an enormous and influential exhibition of post-War New York School painting, *Two Decades of American Painting*, for the International Program of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. It had toured to Kyoto, to New Delhi, and finally to Melbourne and Sydney.

The Biennale of Sydney had been founded with the mission of engaging two separate groups – on the one hand, local artists, students and intellectuals; on the other, the general public – with the latest in contemporary art. But it was now faced with the contradictions inherent in taking on that self-appointed mission in a relatively small art center. For its founders, the Biennale initially appeared to be Australia’s lifeline to the outside art world. But even at that time, for many artists, it was simply one forum amongst many. For some – even in 1979 for the local artists who were most likely to be invited into these biennials – Australia, like Brazil or Argentina, possessed a more complex and cosmopolitan art scene than simply that of a collection of small, parochial, provincial cities. These nations’ own art scenes had already been enmeshed for a decade or more in the very real 1970s globalization of contemporary art – or at least conceptualist art – which had from the start

flourished beyond New York or London in several far-flung cities such as São Paulo, Buenos Aires, Vancouver, Sydney and Melbourne. For visiting artists and curators, all of these cities boasted respectable venues for Avant-garde art as it touched down by mail delivery or in curators' suitcases. Just as Lucy Lippard easily transported to Seattle her major conceptualist survey, *557,087* (titled after the population of Seattle at the time, it included John Baldessari, Eva Hesse, Vito Acconci, Dan Graham, Sol LeWitt, Daniel Buren, Walter De Maria, and Adrian Piper), so conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth had commissioned adventurous Melbourne gallerist and patron, Bruce Pollard, to place advertisements in Melbourne newspapers as part of *The Second Investigation, 1969*, coinciding with similar appearances in London and New York papers. Pollard paid for the advertisements (even though one newspaper refused to accept them, on the grounds that they might be subversive), enabling Kosuth to create a work by remote control at long distance.⁹

The second Sydney Biennale, staged in 1976, saw the synthesis of two different models of support. The Biennale received an even greater, and now dominant, portion of its sponsorship through the Australia Council and less from the continuing but smaller support of private donors, of whom Transfield was by far the largest. With the clout provided by its funding, the Australia Council steered the Biennale into a new, mega-exhibition structure. This time, though, instead of participating directly in artist selection as it had in 1973, the Council delegated the task to an appointed director who it knew would seek out new types of art. In effect, this was an early phase in the evolution of a preference for what only partly in jest became known as "biennial art." The Biennale was to be governed by a powerful, quasi-autonomous Board and curated by a Director whose position was independent of host venues.

It was to be exhibited in the city's largest and most venerable art museum, the recently refurbished Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW), offering the Biennale temporary access to the museum-quality, climate-controlled spaces and experienced technical staff that a large-scale exhibition with loans needed. Without doubt, the cosmopolitan, internationalist members of the Council's Visual Arts Board, led by Leon Paroissien (who was later to direct the 1984 Sydney Biennale and then become inaugural Director of Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art) wished to set in course a new format: the carefully orchestrated narrative of center-periphery relations and artist choices that would draw supportive international responses and an interest in Australia. However, it would also create negative, frustrated Australian criticism. The Biennale's organizers had taken careful account of the initiative of one of their close friends, Sydney-based collector and philanthropist John Kaldor's series of Art Projects. In 1969, Kaldor had commenced a biennial series of invitations to artists to realize a major artistic project in Sydney, beginning with Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *Wrapped Coast – One Million Square Feet, Little Bay, Sydney, Australia*, 1969. He followed this with an invitation to auteur curator Harald Szeemann to assemble a survey exhibition of contemporary Australian art during his lightning-fast visit in 1971 (this did not result in the inclusion of any Australian artists in Documenta 5, however), and then to Gilbert & George to present their *Singing Sculpture* in 1973. Veteran curator Daniel Thomas remembered that the grandeur of *Wrapped Coast* shifted contemporary art sympathetically into the minds of Australians and, just as important, suggested to a new generation of local artists that they were not geo-culturally isolated. Thomas, then an adventurous young curator at the AGNSW, wrote the key, cosmopolitan catalogue essay for the first Sydney Biennale; it was to be his vision of the

1979 Biennale that eventually prevailed over others. *Wrapped Coast's* supporters, who included Belgiorno-Nettis, were also, later, Board members of the Biennale of Sydney. Kaldor had demonstrated two things: that there was considerable public interest in contemporary art that moved outside the boundaries of paintings on art museum walls; and that the international art world's attention could be focused on a distant event given the right, adventurous programming. To achieve this double ambition, in 1975 the Sydney Biennale Board poached maverick curator Tom McCullough from his position as director of the Mildura Sculpturescape – a dramatically successful, spectacular biennial survey in a distant, dry rural township on Australia's Murray River – to direct the 1976 Biennale of Sydney.¹⁰ Despite Mildura's huge distance from anywhere – it is nominally located between the three major population centers of Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne, but only in the sense that Santa Fe is between New York and Los Angeles – McCullough had established the Mildura Sculpturescape as the key exhibition of advanced art in Australia through an astute combination of insider word-of-mouth, inveterate travel, sheer energy, a close-knit group of artist advisors who talent-spotted for him, and a core group of dedicated assistants. His 1976 Biennale of Sydney, entitled *Recent International Forms in Art*, was curated according to a capacious theme rather than a national typology and, further, it largely focused its rhetoric, though not in fact any genuine critical focus, on artists from the Pacific Rim (Australia, New Zealand, Korea, Japan and the Bay Area of the United States). This was dictated as much by the small budget for the inventive curator's travel as by his ambition; biennial artist selection was, and often remains, opportunistic and dictated by the limitations of time and money, even if the results might be sometimes revelatory. McCullough recalled that,

Artists who were extending three-dimensional ideas beyond the pedestal into installations, earth-works and performance art were regularly showing in Mildura by the 1975 Triennial, and I consulted them on new concepts, contacts and ideas for the upcoming Biennale. In 1976 I visited only two countries while preparing for the Biennale, as we didn't have much money. I was only allowed two weeks overseas so I decided to focus on a Pacific triangle.¹¹

More recent biennial directors have, by contrast, become famous for their itinerant nomadism, but McCullough relied on a small group of advisors from each region, including veteran expatriate curator John Stringer, based in New York, and Tommaso Trini, from the Italian art magazine, *Data*, to help select the inclusions. Such curatorial delegation was also common in later biennials and large-scale exhibitions (most notably, *Magiciens de la Terre* in Paris in 1989). The exhibition catalogue was equally frugal: the cheapest, one-color printing on the cardboard cover, spiral-bound, brown paper pages, and dull monochrome illustrations. It looked like a down-market instruction manual. The conceptualist look was partly deliberate, not unmodish (it very consciously recalled the “bureaucratic” appearance of Szeemann’s *Documenta 5* catalogue) and partly unavoidable, but the austere publication was, as with the absence of curatorial travel, a contrast with the future direction of biennials. For McCullough at the time, the poor publication seemed adequate, looked appropriately austere and saved a lot of scant money.

WHITE ELEPHANT OR RED HERRING: THE 1979 BIENNALE OF SYDNEY

Xhe Third Biennale of Sydney in 1979 preserved the innovations of 1976, in particular the notion of a biennial shaped by an Artistic Director, and it was in reality the first Sydney Biennale to grab any degree of international attention. At the same time, its audience numbers – almost exclusively local – also grew considerably. Both successes were the result of considerable calculation; the double-guessing was typical of this phase of regional biennials everywhere, and followed a series of symposia, meetings and public consultations that began at the conclusion of the 1976 Biennale and continued over the next year or so, in part as a way of road-testing the way forward, in part as an opportunity to audition the short-list of prospective directors for 1979, in part in conformity to the 1970s penchant for consultation and collective processes and consensus, even if (as turned out) this was window-dressing. Englishman Nick Waterlow was one of those who presented a proposal for the next Biennale at a public meeting at Paddington Town Hall, in the inner suburbs of Sydney. He gave the impression that his Biennale would involve a substantial amount of community consultation and local artist selection:

The role of the Biennale coordinator and back-up staff should be to work very closely with a liaison group representing the various interests, including artists, performers, gallery people, industry, state, etc., government, community groups, students and sponsors. This would need to be carefully administered, but it is important the coordinator is in a real position to respond to ideas and suggestions and to ensure they are implemented where feasible. Unlike Venice or Sao Paulo, this could then make for a Creative Peoples Biennale while maintaining a high

level of production, activity, ingenuity and dissemination – in other words a highly unique Sydney Biennale. The Biennale will succeed if it exists at three levels – community, national and international.¹²

In effect, Waterlow wanted to create a Biennale that would be a popular exhibition for a regional public as well as the expression of local artists' wishes for a fuller representation of Australians and women artists. It was to be a dialogue with living artists. This intention was potentially far more exclusive and expensive than local art activists realized.

Waterlow had curated no major exhibitions before his appointment as Artistic Director of the Third Sydney Biennale. He had been resident in Australia for a period in the 1960s, had moved back to London, where he worked with community arts organizations and their art spaces in Milton Keynes, a postwar project city an hour by car outside London, before returning to Australia to teach curatorial studies at one of Sydney's three major art schools (a position he was to hold until his death in 2009). His directorship of the Biennale was accompanied by an often-intense hostility felt by many local artists towards the Biennale's organization and directorship. The surprisingly cursory inclusion of Australian artists in McCullough's previous Biennale, given his almost unique rapport with adventurous local artists, had resulted in vocal public claims of an international bias against Australian artists. It slowly became evident, as Waterlow's selections and Biennale press releases gradually became public, that the under-representation of women had continued. As Biennale Director, Waterlow was soon negotiating a maze of protest meetings and angry letters. Two groups of well-organized, vocal artists and critics from Sydney and Melbourne threatened an artist boycott if demands for a 50% representation of women, and a substantial representation

of local artists and community arts, were not met.¹³ The artist groups convened public meetings, lobbied funding bodies and frenetically agitated amongst and often against their interstate peers, publishing an illustrated, book-length manifesto against the Biennale, called *Sydney Biennale: White Elephant or Red Herring. Comments from the Art Community 1979*.¹⁴ This strongly resembled earlier Art & Language publications, which was no surprise since a key member of the New York chapter of Art & Language, Ian Burn, had returned to Australia a few years before and created a publishing collective with other artist-activists including Ian Milliss. Burn and Milliss contributed an essay to the *White Elephant or Red Herring* document, called “Don’t moan, organise! (with apologies to Joe Hill),” writing, “Events like the Sydney Biennale can be foisted off onto the art community in ways which poorly reflect our interests or needs. Because artists are powerless, structures like that of the Biennale, which assume to define the situation in which we all work, can be imposed on us.”¹⁵ They wrote to Waterlow, “We cannot stress too strongly our concern that while a major international exhibition is to be held in Sydney, Australian artists are to appear in an ancillary, complementary way to an exhibition that should be highlighting and not downgrading their talents.”¹⁶ The activist groups felt that the significant amount of public money spent – by Australian standards at the time, the Biennale was a lavish event – underscored the lack of an Australian version of a Whitney Biennial, a national survey of artists. The Biennale Board disingenuously agreed. In a prompt reply to the Melbourne artist group, Franco Belgiorno-Nettis urged the group to lobby for an Australian biennial that, he suggested, might be held in Australia’s other large city and artistic hub, Melbourne, in alternate years to the Sydney Biennale.¹⁷ In the end, after discussions, remonstrances and reassurance, of the sixty-two individual

artists that the activists counted in the 1979 Sydney Biennale, there were only nineteen Australians. Of the nineteen Australians, only five were women. There were only five women amongst the international artists. In all, as the Sydney activists angrily noted, there were only ten women included in the list of sixty-two artists received from the Biennale Board. The focus was now firmly on ephemeral and relatively easily transported or assembled new art forms: on performances and installations rather than paintings. Significantly, the Australian representation included artists from non-urban locations including, for the first time in a major survey exhibition of contemporary art anywhere in the world, paintings by Aboriginal artists from north-east Arnhem Land, in the distant “Top End” of Australia’s Northern Territory. The Biennale’s vain struggle to mediate between local and international spheres was almost invisible to the audiences who arrived at the exhibition itself. They saw a continuum of messy, body-based contemporary art, of Marina Abramović and Ulay’s collaborative action, *The Brink*, 1979, in the company of Mike Parr’s installation that incorporated performance documentation and photographs involving his whole extended family. Parr’s own, widely read commentary on the exhibition, “Parallel Fictions,” appeared in the country’s leading art magazine, *Art and Australia*. He focused on the emergence of a new, global language of post-studio contemporary art rather than on the statistics of artists’ inclusions and exclusions.¹⁸ The exhibition catalogue that accompanied the 1979 Biennale was quite different as well: it was not nearly as spartan as the publication of 1976, since biennial curators and artists alike were coming to feel that these exhibitions deserved commemorating and that artists deserved better representation.

Waterlow pointedly titled his biennale *European Dialogue*, adamantly refusing to include any American artists and

focusing instead on work from across both Western and Eastern Europe (a relative novelty that only Australia's distance from Europe and its Cold War divisions could allow at the time). Waterlow sought to introduce Australians to a messier, more political, definitively post-1960s Europe, rather than the neat modernism and Parisian abstractions of postwar French painting, a large exhibition of which had toured Australia in 1953. In effect, *European Dialogue* recycled Harald Szeemann's curatorial theme from the 1972 *Documenta 5* of "individual mythologies." But both this biennale and the large survey shows now appearing in Europe, such as the 1980 Venice Biennale, the 1981 London Royal Academy survey, *A New Spirit in Painting*, and the 1982 Berlin mega-exhibition, *Zeitgeist*, all excluded the Outsider artists and the atlases of objects culled from mass culture that the maverick Swiss curator had included in *Documenta 5*. Szeemann's capacious label, "individual mythologies," was now beginning to be repackaged as a new direction in painting – as hyper-expressive, allegorical paintings that were about to be labeled neo-expressionist or transavantgarde – in large survey exhibitions around the world. This label occluded the degree to which the new painting had grown out of the second generation of conceptualist art, beginning to appear in *Documenta 5* and much of which was now shown in the 1979 Sydney Biennale. There was relatively little of the so-called new painting in Sydney (apart from the scrawled symbols of German artist A.R. Penck), but much diaristic, semi-fictional and narrative photo-documentation. Waterlow did include, though, several of the Transavantgarde's putative father figures, including School of London survivor Howard Hodgkin, and German painter Gerhard Richter, already claimed by many art movements as a precursor. Waterlow wrote,

The concept and themes of the 1979 exhibition evolved from the range of new work that was coming out of Europe, that hadn't been seen in Australia, which I knew about before moving to Australia in 1977. There had also been a couple of major American exhibitions here so there existed more of a need to show the European avant-garde in relation to Australia. The exhibition did bring a lot of postobject work that hadn't been seen before as well as artists like Marcel Broodthaers, Gerhard Richter, Hanne Darboven, Mario Merz, A. R. Penck, Valie Export, Daniel Buren and Armand Arman. There was also some terrific performance work from Marina Abramović and Ulay, Jürgen Klauke, Ulrike Rosenbach and others.¹⁹

The idea of a "European Dialogue" reflected more than the conceit of a surfeit of American art. In his catalogue essay, Waterlow was echoing the widespread doubt that New York remained the center of the international contemporary art world, for this was the period of the deepest Cold War, a phase in which American economic and political power was in decline. Jimmy Carter's presidency and the Iranian Revolution were the backdrop to the Biennale, and a few months later the Iran Hostage Crisis unfolded. This was also a period of pervasive anti-Americanism in the largely left-leaning worlds of both European and Australian contemporary art. Waterlow's desire to curate beyond the United States was also referring to the sequence of American exhibitions that had arrived in Sydney, Melbourne and other cities around the world through the remarkable Circulating Exhibitions Program of the quasi-autonomous International Council of the Museum of Modern Art, from *Two Decades of American Painting* (1967) to *Some Recent American Art* (1974), to *Modern Masters: Manet to Matisse* (1975). Waterlow was, in effect, attempting to revise art history much as many of his Sydney and Melbourne critics would have liked, albeit stripped of their Marxist politics and, more surpris-

ingly, his own egalitarian, community arts background. After a couple of decades of intense American influence upon Australian art, he was revaluing the direct links between Europe and Australia and the influence of European art on Australian art. This was evident in the show's installation rather than in its catalogue, for its essays were cursory and under-theorized, and no longer than three pages in length (though this brevity also, in part, replicated Szeemann's short text introducing the *Documenta 5* catalogue). Waterlow's well-intentioned but very hasty essay was just a page long, compared with the extensive, scholarly essays in the catalogue for the 1988 Sydney Biennale, which Waterlow was also to curate, a mere decade later. In the 1988 exhibition's book, Ian Burn (who had been one of the ringleaders of the agitation against Waterlow in the lead-up to the 1979 Biennale), contributed a major revisionist essay setting out a different and highly significant framework – different both to MoMA's and Harald Szeemann's atlases of international art – for imagining Australian art's participation in a global history of art, and thus that of any art center of the South.²⁰

The 1979 Biennale, in effect, began the process of self-consciously garnering to itself the role of international gatekeeper, a process initiated by its important predecessor of 1976. This intention – as much as showing a local audience a smaller simulacrum of Venice or Documenta – was to underpin many regional biennials from this time on. The Sydney Biennale's Board was self-consciously setting its event and curator up as the mediator, the meter-and-greeter between the international and national art worlds: as the point where the very different and separate international and national art worlds intersected. This was significant. The aim was to actually intervene in both international and Australian art: to represent each to the other; and to push to be part of a nascent network of globalized artist movements in which international artists would

create new work in a “peripheral” location (the concept that Kaldor had fostered) and to create the networks that would allow Australian artists to participate in European biennials, and then definitely not as national exemplars. By 1979, the Sydney Biennale sought a more ambitious transcultural exchange than simply a curatorial selection of artists from across the world (the Venice model). Drawing together artists from across the globe (rather than from a particular idea of the central metropolis) was meant to spark new artistic dialogues between practitioners from hitherto disparate or even isolated contexts, rather than represent what was happening elsewhere to local audiences.

Inherent in this aspiration is the presumption that biennials have an affective, transformational power, not just for the careers of the invited artists, but also for the course of world art and national art. The show sought to intervene as well as to reflect. Waterlow invited many artists to Australia – including Jürgen Klauke, Klaus Rinke, Anne and Patrick Poirier and Marina Abramović/Ulay – hoping they would make new works for the occasion. The Biennale flew the artists into Sydney, connected them with local hosts – with curators, artists or writers – and to local institutions such as art schools and their eager students. Abramović and Ulay, for instance, made a tantalizing but frustrating tour to Australia’s Central Desert, and returned for a much longer visit in 1981, with an Outback visit that changed the course of their art.²¹ Later Sydney Biennales continued to prioritize flying the participating international artists to Australia, where many then lectured at art schools and universities across far-flung Australia to a younger generation of artists. Others took time out to sun themselves on white, sandy beaches, at least until the arrival of more harassed schedules during the 1990s, from which point it became normal for artists to fly in, install their works, and quickly fly out for an engagement at the next biennial.

IMPORT/EXPORT TRADE

Xhe key to the success of a gatekeeper event was to be the invited, auteur curator who owed little or nothing to the local host art museum or *Kunsthalle*, and in fact was probably a complete outsider to local art museums, but who would have access to international networks of artists, or who would know precisely who to ask for that advice. In other words, Tom McCullough in 1976 and Nick Waterlow in 1979 had thoroughly internalized the auteur curator model of Harald Szeemann, even if they were hindered by a lack of resources. Both had successfully adapted Szeemann's improvisatory but highly centralized Documenta method, with a dedicated group of talent scouts and committed advisers rather than a team of professionals backed by proper resources. McCullough recalled, "I had virtually no staff. It was Tom McCullough, full stop, for most of 1976 and one really had to get on with the professional staff of the gallery."²² Waterlow was forced to accept the same approach as McCullough to short-staffing and scant resources but, like McCullough, he was able to rely on the white cubes and the highly professional installation and security staff of a major art museum, the Art Gallery of New South Wales. This was crucial if, in the future, to be only reluctantly offered. For the AGNSW, the Biennale meant ceding control of its exhibition spaces during a peak period of the calendar to an external curator working beyond the museum's control. São Paulo, by contrast, was almost from the outset housed in the expansive, late modernist Oscar Niemeyer-designed building adequate to its great ambitions and marked by vast sightlines. The Biennale of Sydney's venues were, quite simply, less suitable for the often outsized, unconventional works that artists were planning. Waterlow's later 1986 and 1988 Sydney Biennales made use of an extra venue,

Pier 2/3, a gargantuan timber structure like a vast ex-industrial loft thrust out over the blue waters of Sydney Harbour itself. This provided rough, industrial spaces of enormous proportions for large installations. It was immensely atmospheric, bitterly cold during Sydney's winter storms, and unexpectedly expensive to fit out and make safe. By 1990, space emerged as a major problem. That year's Sydney Biennale director, René Block, was forced to make major cuts to his exhibition. A substantial part of his deeply cosmopolitan, Fluxus-oriented Biennale – in Block's words, a “well-curated historical exhibition on the topic of the readymade” – remained in shipping containers even while the AGNSW launched a large exhibition by a popular local hero, conservative painter Brett Whiteley, in the exhibition spaces not allocated to the Biennale; Block tactfully reminisced, “However, constant budget cuts forced me to merge the two into a single exhibition, which turned out okay in the end.”²³

The Biennale of Sydney's problems arose from its origins. Sydney's chronic disorganization, sometimes erratic timing (it was initially more a triennial than a biennial), lack of money and a consistent record of secrecy and rationing of information to the public were the unintended products of a tiny, idealistic, semi-private operation, operating in an ambiguous zone between public and private. Apart from Transfield's continuing sponsorship, the Biennale of Sydney was hindered by inadequate local funding as well as a precarious hold on its exhibition spaces: the former was alleviated by a dramatic increase in Federal Government funding in time for the 2006 Biennale; the latter was ameliorated by the Biennale's consolidation in the harbor-side Museum of Contemporary Art and the colonization from 2008 onwards of a spectacular and immensely popular new site, a derelict shipyards on Cockatoo Island in the middle of the harbor's emerald waters. Freight costs also perpetually restricted the

movement of large exhibitions into the Southern Hemisphere. As a consequence, for years, participating countries contributed a large part of the Biennale's operating costs by underwriting individual artists even without the control that national pavilions would have given them. 1982 Sydney Biennale director William Wright remembered that this support often amounted to up to 60% of the Biennale's budget, and guessed that Sydney survived on between 5–10% of the operating budget of the Biennale of Venice.²⁴ So, an exhibition of international impact and representation was put together on a very small budget, though that budget, as we have seen, seemed large and even recklessly spent to many local artists.

CONCLUSION



After 1979, the Sydney Biennale became Australia's mediator with the global – or more accurately the putatively “global” art world that would quickly re-entrench the status of Europe and North America by the 1980s. There were no more extraordinary exhibitions from MoMA's International Council, nor would they have been received as such. But there was a certain lack of reciprocity in this: the global did not actually need to come to the South, even if the compensation was a trip to a balmy, subtropical, Southern Hemisphere city by the water, a site as visually spectacular as Rio or the exhibition's original referent, Venice. Conspiratorial though it sounds, the Euro-American center just did not need to conduct a dialogue with the South even in the former's initially grudging but later avid admission of “globalism.” This was very, very scant in 1979: a biennial would never be an agent of change itself, for no clear consensus about political or community art in a period of change and up-

heaval such as 1979 was possible anyway, if biennials were dependent upon peak art museums such as the AGNSW, which for better or worse were the bastions of entrenched local privilege as well as professionalism. Art museums in relatively small art worlds were, it seemed, bound to totalize and infantilize their audiences, shoe-horning them into one of two categories: either the capacious straitjackets of the few, cosseted insiders at exclusive, invitation-only events; or else into the constricting, conservative demands of the imaginary common man or woman posited by populist newspaper reviewers. But the biennial as an exhibition form offered the promise of escaping such double binds.

At a time when artists were working in a cultural geography of destabilized but still crushingly hegemonic center/periphery relationships, the 1979 Sydney Biennale offered a confused and contradictory place for local art. For a parochial art scene, the Biennale brought welcome news in the form of recent, major works by international artists. But it also brought an infuriating exclusion from international circles, given the number of local artists was a small percentage of the exhibitors and the visitors were often carefully chaperoned or had set themselves over-optimistically tight schedules, oblivious to the minimum twenty-four hours flight time from Europe or New York. The issue of artists and audiences for biennials in national and regional centers went further than artists' concerns about exclusion and lack of representation to the deeper question of whether something other than a token link between local and international art was possible. Local artist organizations and activist collectives had wondered in 1979 if the concept of a globally focused biennial was worthwhile. If the Sydney Biennale continued to occupy its particular import/export niche, mediating between local and international cultural production, they had argued, such a small, under-funded Sydney Biennale was not going

to do anything other than passively conduct international fame, style and art-world glamour. Worse still, it could ultimately cater to the Euro-American hegemony, and its military-industrial complex, that many biennials outside the North Atlantic – including, to an extent, Sydney's – were seeking to challenge. The 1979 Biennale's problems were to be replicated in numerous other biennials and international group shows in subsequent decades (most infamously, the short-lived Johannesburg Biennial during the mid-1990s), because the struggles and uncertainties of international exhibitions in the 1970s were little different from those apparent in the 1990s. The difficulties that the curators of biennials had in negotiating local relevance and international prestige hinged on the question of who, in truth, was a provincial biennial's real audience. The global and regional art economies, both of which each biennial of the South must cater to, have often proved to be intractably and mutually exclusive.

- 1 The most notable and provocative exception is Okwui Enwezor's essay "Mega-Exhibitions and the Antinomies of a Transnational Global Form," *Documents*, No. 23, Spring 2004, pp. 2–19. /.../ *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere*, Oxford & New York: Routledge, 2011, pp. 45–62.
- 2 Biennials of the South on the Edges of the Global", *Third Text*, Vol. 27, No. 4, August 2013, pp. 442–455.
- 3 Important analyses of these exhibitions can be found in Rachel Weiss, "A Certain Place and a Certain Time: The Third Bienal de la Habana and the Origins of the Global Exhibition," in Rachel Weiss et al, *Making Art Global (Part 1): The Third Havana Biennial 1989*, London: Afterall Books, 2011, pp. 14–69; and in Miguel Rojas-Sotelo, "Cultural Maps, Networks and Flows: The History and Impact of the Havana Biennale, 1984 to the Present," Unpublished PhD thesis, Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh, 2009.
- 4 Though it is beyond our ambit in this chapter, it is important to note that this is precisely the trajectory that underpins the current fascination with "contemporaneity" in recent art history and criticism. Terry Smith's significant work on "contemporaneity" cannot, ultimately, be separated from his writings in the 1970s on provincialism that transformed art discourse in Australasia and elsewhere. That continuum from provincialism to contemporaneity is an art historiography that still awaits its proper articulation. See, among many other influential texts, Terry Smith, "The Provincialism Problem," *Artforum*, Vol. 13, No. 1, September 1974, pp. 54–59; and Terry Smith, *What is Contemporary Art?*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- 5 Michael Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds*, London: Verso, 2004.
- 6 See Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983; Max Kozloff, "American Painting During the Cold War," *Artforum*, May 1973, reprinted in his *Cultivated Impasses: Writings on Modern Art*, New York: Marsilio, 2000, pp. 220–249; this was a revised version of the introduction to the following exhibition catalogue: James T. Demetrian (ed. and curator), *Twenty-five Years of American Painting 1948–1973*, Des Moines: Des Moines Art Center, 1973; Eva Cockroft, "Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War," *Artforum*, Vol. 15, No. 10, June 1974, pp. 39–41; Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War*, London: Granta Books, 1999.
- 7 See Charles Green and Heather Barker, "The Watershed: *Two Decades of American Painting at the National Gallery of Victoria*," *Art Bulletin of the National Gallery of Victoria*, No. 50, May 2011, pp. 64–77 & 4 pp. notes.
- 8 Franco Belgiorno-Nettis, in Paula Latos-Valier, *Biennale of Sydney 2002: 1973–1998*, Sydney: Biennale of Sydney, 2002.

- http://esvc000946.wic004u.server-web.com/Biennale2002/bos_history.asp#4, accessed 14 April 2010.
- 9 See chapter 1 of Charles Green, *The Third Hand: Artist Collaborations from Conceptualism to Postmodernism*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.
 - 10 For a detailed and illuminating account see Anne Sanders, "The Mildura Sculpture Triennials 1961–1978: An Interpretive History," Unpublished PhD thesis, Canberra: Australian National University, 2010.
 - 11 Tom McCullough, interview, in Paula Latos-Valier, *Biennale of Sydney 2002: 1973–1998*, Sydney: Biennale of Sydney, 2002. http://esvc000946.wic004u.server-web.com/Biennale2002/bos_history.asp#4, accessed 14 April 2010.
 - 12 Nick Waterlow, presentation at Paddington Town Hall, Sydney, 21 July 1977, quoted in Vivienne Binns, Ian Milliss and The Women's Art Group, "History/Herstory," in *Sydney Biennale: White Elephant or Red Herring: Comments from the Art Community 1979* (1979), reprinted in *Ian Milliss Retrospective Documents*, Sydney: Ian Milliss, 2010: <http://www.ianmilliss.com/documents/historyherstory.htm>, accessed 14 April 2010.
 - 13 Nick Waterlow, presentation at Paddington Town Hall, Sydney, 21 July 1977, quoted in Vivienne Binns, Ian Milliss and The Women's Art Group, "History/Herstory," in *Sydney Biennale: White Elephant or Red Herring: Comments from the Art Community 1979, 1979*.
 - 14 Vivienne Binns, Ian Milliss and The Women's Art Group, *Sydney Biennale: White Elephant or Red Herring: Comments from the Art Community 1979, 1979*.
 - 15 Ian Burn and Ian Milliss, "Don't moan, organise! (with apologies to Joe Hill)," in Vivienne Binns, Ian Milliss and The Women's Art Group, *Sydney Biennale: White Elephant or Red Herring: Comments from the Art Community 1979, 1979*.
 - 16 Janine Burke, John Davis, Lesley Dumbrell, Robert Jacks, Peter Kennedy, Robert Lindsay, John Nixon and Jenny Watson, letter to Nick Waterlow, 11 September 1977, quoted in Vivienne Binns, Ian Milliss and The Women's Art Group, "History/Herstory," in *Sydney Biennale: White Elephant or Red Herring: Comments from the Art Community 1979, 1979*; this letter was from the group of Melbourne-based artists and writers.
 - 17 Franco Belgiorio-Nettis, letter to Janine Burke, John Davis, Lesley Dumbrell, Robert Jacks, Peter Kennedy, Robert Lindsay, John Nixon and Jenny Watson, 26 September 1977, quoted in Vivienne Binns, Ian Milliss and The Women's Art Group, "History/Herstory," in *Sydney Biennale: White Elephant or Red Herring: Comments from the Art Community 1979, 1979*.
 - 18 Mike Parr, "Parallel Fictions: The Third Biennale of Sydney, 1979," *Art and Australia*, Vol. 17, No. 2, December 1979, pp. 172–183.
 - 19 Nick Waterlow, interview in Paula Latos-Valier, *Biennale of Sydney 2002: 1973–1998*, Sydney: Biennale of Sydney, 2002.

- http://esvc000946.wic004u.server-web.com/Biennale2002/bos_history.asp#4, accessed December 2009.
- 20 Ian Burn, "The Re-Appropriation of Influence," in Nick Waterlow (ed. and curator), *Australian Biennale 1988: From the Southern Cross: A View of World Art c.1940-1988*, exh. cat., Sydney: Biennale of Sydney Ltd, 1988, pp.41-48.
- 21 For a detailed description see Charles Green, "Group Soul: Who Owns the Artist Fusion?" *Third Text*, Vol. 18, No. 71, November 2004, pp. 595-608.
- 22 Tom McCullough, in Paula Latos-Valier, *Biennale of Sydney 2002: 1973-1998*, Sydney: Biennale of Sydney, 2002. http://esvc000946.wic004u.server-web.com/Biennale2002/bos_history.asp#4, accessed 14 April 2010.
- 23 Rene Block, in Paula Latos-Valier, *Biennale of Sydney 2002: 1973-1998*, Sydney: Biennale of Sydney, 2002. http://esvc000946.wic004u.server-web.com/Biennale2002/bos_history.asp#4, accessed 14 April 2010.
- 24 William Wright, in Paula Latos-Valier, *Biennale of Sydney 2002: 1973-1998*, Sydney: Biennale of Sydney, 2002. http://esvc000946.wic004u.server-web.com/Biennale2002/bos_history.asp#4, accessed 14 April 2010, p. 24.

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(2002), *world rush_4 artists* (2003), “2004: Australian Visual Culture” (ACMI/NGVA, 2004), and “2006 Contemporary Commonwealth” (ACMI/NGVA, 2006).

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REGIONALITY / MONDIALITY

Perspectives on Art, Aesthetics
and Globalization

Södertörn Studies in Art History and Aesthetics 2
Södertörn Academic Studies 57

Published in 2014

ISSN 1650-433X

ISBN 978-91-86069-93-3

Graphic design by Simon Hessler

Knowledge Foundation ><

södertörns
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SÖDERTÖRN UNIVERSITY

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CENTRE FOR BALTIC AND EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES

The title of this anthology, *Regionality/Mondiality: Perspectives on Art, Aesthetics and Globalization*, signals the regional dimension inherent in the globalization of the arts. Rejecting a comprehensive theory of globalization, the texts in this anthology instead circumscribe a situated understanding of the production and interpretation of the arts, which serves to condition cultural translatability. The texts of the anthology argue that cultural translatability should be considered through the concept of *regionality*, that is, the quality of being both territorially and relationally situated. Bypassing the abstract and politically charged category of “nationality,” regionality addresses human relations in and through the more tangible physical environment in and by which they are configured. As seen in the work on archipelagic thinking by the Martinican writer and philosopher Édouard Glissant, both the cultural and physical aspects of one’s immediate environment are used to articulate a form of self-understanding in the face of cultural and economic expansion, the particular character of which is indicated by the term *mondiality*. This concept derives from the French word for “world” or “people,” and thus affirms the fundamentally social and cultural character of experiences thought of as global. Each of the eleven contributions in this volume brings its own perspective on arts and aesthetics, producing world-views that still share a keen awareness of their partialness.

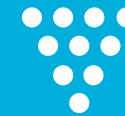
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