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Incandescent Joik: Filming Chants of Resilience in Sápmi, Norway

Abstract

The article analyses how we, as a team of visual anthropologists from the University of Tromsø (Sápmi-Norway), worked with two young Saami musicians (S. M. Gaup and L. Somby) who are themselves researchers in the “joik” tradition. Sápmi is the term of the imagined nation of the Saami people, covering a territory that goes across Norway, Sweden, Finland and Northern Russia. The joik is the specific form of Saami chanting. It conveys lyrics, melody and throat singing techniques, with a high level of abstraction in rendering the relation to people, natural sites, places, animals and events, that we attempted to understand contextually and historically.

We did not only wish to pursue an archival quest to document contemporary joik, but we wanted to render through film how joik is a vehicle for existential revelations of the self to one’s community, to imagined communities, to former and future images of self as a Saami subject. We also wished to reveal how joik operates in connecting a multiplicity of identity markers, where musicians and their audience assign meaning to events, situations, history, stories, symbols and places.

The cultural complexity emerging in this multivocal and multisited project shows the embodiment of verbal recollections, gestures, conversations, lyrics, chants, improvisations, outbursts and secretive features of the Saami chanting endeavor. Among the archetypal cultural features attributed to the Saami, the article will critically analyze: the wandering in space and time, the gathering around the Árran (hearth, bonfire), the “joik which remembers” (poetics expression of the first known Saami writer, Johan Turi, 1908), and the taboos and achievements of political indigenous activism. Among the socio-political issues that the film addressed is the poignant reality of fading away languages: Southern Saami is today spoken by less than 500 speakers in Norway. The core analysis will articulate how the joik is operating as a medium and agent for sociality and construction (and de-construction) of collective memory.

Keywords

Joik, Music, Indigenous Media, Norway, Saami, Disappearing Languages, Transcultural Cinema, Youth Culture

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“Over the years quite a few Samis have emerged, whose occupation is artistic work. And there are more on their way, and there is a need for them – we need more forces. We Sami artists have felt a wall before us. We have been unable to avoid running into it. An artist is something new for Samis, a new phenomenon. That sort of thing always gives rise to astonishment”.

Nils-Aslak Valkeapää (1979:29)

Introduction

The non-fiction film *Firekeepers*¹ explores the contemporary nature and evolution of Sámi joik, perhaps the oldest continually practiced musical form in Europe. A joik can either be an individual's spontaneous emotional or philosophical expression or a group performance, sometimes accompanied by a drum. According to Ande Somby, one of the film's main protagonist's father and a renowned Sami joiker and scholar, unlike western European music, joiks do not have "a linear structure." He continues, "A joik seems to start and stop suddenly. It hasn't a start or neither an ending. Joik is definitively not a line, but it is perhaps a kind of circle." The film addresses the polysemic, evolving mode of performance of two Sámi joikers: Lawra Somby and Sara Marielle Gaup, from the Southern and Northern regions of Sápmi². Adjágas, founded in 2003, is Lawra Somby's site-specific musical project whose aim is to disseminate the joik tradition worldwide. For example, Adjágas is sometimes performed in a staged rock music setting accompanied by a band and sometimes as a solo performance. "Adjágas" in Northern Sámi means "the state between sleep and awakening". In this peculiar condition, it is said that one can unveil reality and tune into the most profound and original joiks. Joik (juoiggus) is a specific form of Sámi chanting and it has many regional forms. Those applied by Adjágas are the *luohti* (North Sámi) and the *vuolle* (South Sámi). Starting from this practice, Adjágas brings the musical-lyrical performance of joik to the international musical scene, collaborating with musicians using different genres, and adapting its performances to the context of reception.

Film SEQUENCE 1: CONCERT ADJAGAS RIDDU RIDDU from 31:35 to 33:50 on timeline vimeo (2 min.)

Drawing on Somby's group Adjágas, the film explores how a new generation of Sámi artists relates to the cultural inheritance that their parents and grandparents were forbidden to practice, but kept in reserve as cultural and social memory. In other words, the film addresses what aspects of Sámi cultural history and tradition are worth struggling for understanding, and how joik constitutes social realities, bringing together everyday life, politics and spirituality and becoming a form of healing the pain of the decolonization process (Kramvig: 2007, introduction to the film). Sámi people have experienced centuries of gradual

¹ The film was directed in close collaboration of a team of visual anthropologists and filmmakers, who worked together with the protagonists and their families over two years. There are four languages spoken in the film: North Sámi, Norwegian, English and South Sámi. It has been screened worldwide (USA, Nepal, Taiwan, Europe, Russia, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada), as well as throughout Sápmi and the sub-polar regions, in seminars, debates, and festivals with particular interest in Indigenous issues, endangered languages and post-colonial music. In 2008, it earned a commendation at the British Royal Anthropological Film Festival, given by the Intangible Cultural Heritage jury. The film is online for the reader of Visual Ethnography at this url: <http://vimeo.com/46061235> (password= firekeepers).

² *Sápmi* is the term for the social, territorial and cultural community of Sámi people who live in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Northern Russia.

dispossession of their land and water resources from the Scandinavian nation states since modern times; cultural and linguistic assimilation; dispossession of their territory through national borders; and compulsory conversion from an animistic religion to various Lutheran denominations. In crucial ways, Sámi experiences of settler colonialism mirror those of Native Americans, Maori, and other global Indigenous peoples. According to Harald Gaski (1998 :10), “the idea behind colonization was not simply to seize new territory and more resources, however, in Norway’s case, for example, it was also a way to spread Norwegian language and culture to the Sámi” in order to destroy their claims of indigeneity and increase the number of taxable “Norwegian” citizens.



Adjágas, Troms, Norway (2009)

Firekeepers, like many recent films on Indigenous issues, was an intensely collaborative project. The film originated as a joint effort involving anthropologist and film producer Britt Kramvig, who has worked for more than twenty years on issues of decolonization and gender in Sápmi, and myself, a visual anthropologist and filmmaker who has written on migration, transnational film, and visual culture. We began by engaging in the preparatory research and then worked together intensively on the shooting and editing phase of the project. We actively involved two other filmmakers, Ingeborg Solvang and Rachel Andersen, and we co-authored the screenplay with Lawra Somby and Sara Marielle Gaup. We filmed informal and public joik of the new “era” initiated in 1968 by Nils-Aslak Valkeapää (Laitinen: 1994: 11), one of the most important poets, musicians and artists in Sápmi, who was an internationally known “ambassador” in Indigenous issues and Sámi art. Lawra and Sara were already well known performers in Norway; nevertheless, they are not preoccupied with commercial success. Instead, they produce music on their own terms, learning from elders who are well-versed in joik and their music demonstrates how they are invested in issues of Sámi history, autobiography and ethnicity. The film explores their attempts of being legitimized by elders,

relatives and joik teachers, as well as by new transnational audiences, which they reach through European distribution³.

What we wished to render through film is how joik functions as an agent for existential revelations of the self to one's community, to imagined communities throughout Sapmi, and to past and future Sámi self-representation. May it be as Sámi youth, as "post-rock" musicians, as sons or daughters of Sámi activists, as actors in a non-fictional film, as emerging Scandinavian music stars, as grandchildren of notable *siida* (herd unit) members, and/or as speakers of endangered languages⁴.

FILM SEQUENCE 2: Sara Marielle talks about her background. 33:51 to 36:16 (2 min. 30".)

But we wished also to reveal how joik operates in connecting a multiplicity of identifications, where joikers and their audiences assign meaning to events, situations, history, stories, symbols and places, and are simultaneously constituted by the materiality of these expressions. The cultural complexity emerging in this multivocal and multisided project shows, through the power of transcultural cinema (Barbash & Taylor 1999), the embodiment of verbal recollections, gestures, conversations, lyrics, chants, improvisations, outbursts and secrets towards which the spectator becomes progressively addressed. The journey that the film followed and instigated at times, was composed of actual encounters, undisclosed revelations, places and atmospheres, attempts to reconnect oneself with something lost and to make sense of untold feelings. The journey became also the affective drive toward an imagined past. It showed how joik is operating as a medium for sociality and construction (and de-construction) of collective memory (Valkepää 1983, Gaski 2000, Jernsletten 2012).

The ancestors

Trondheim, Central Norway. April 2010.

I walk past the Methodist Church. It is a place I cherish in Trondheim, for in February 1917, one hundred Sámi representatives, among whom forty were women, convened to bring light to Sámi issues. They were organized by Elsa Laula Renberg, the first Sámi woman to be published⁵. She was a Sámi activist and politician, influenced by the early global women's movement. The meeting was a memorable event in Scandinavian history: it marked the beginning of the organization of trade unions and political associations among Sámis across the border with Sweden⁶. Even if that project was suspended several times between the two world wars, it was reinvigorated in the 1970s. The leadership of a woman such as Elsa Laula

³ Adjágas has a Berlin-based agent, a website (<http://adjagas.com/>), a MySpace page (<http://www.myspace.com/adjagas>), and posts music videos on YouTube, all of which contribute to its international distribution strategy.

⁴ At the time of the making of the film, Southern Sami was spoken in Norway only by less than 500 persons.

⁵ Elsa Laula Renberg (1877-1931) published *Inför Lif eller Död? Sanningord i de Lappska förhållandena* in 1904. She was also married to Thomas Renberg, a Sámi reindeer herder from Nordland. Additionally, Renberg an organizer of the first National Sámi Organization ever, the "Lapparnas Central Förbund" in Sweden, where she studied (1904).

demonstrates that feminism was not ignored by this ethnic minority. On the contrary, women actively participated in all the political meetings that followed that one⁷.

During World War II, this same Methodist church served as a clandestine synagogue, and in 1944 welcomed refugees fleeing from or being deported by the Germans in northern Norway. The social engagement of this church, its symbolic role at the Sámi meeting in 1917, makes this square an important historical site. A plaque in Norwegian and in Sámi reads: "The Sámi Day 6th-9th of February 1917, the first national Sámi meeting was here held, Initiative taker was Elsa Laula Renberg. Daniel Mortensson lead the meeting, which made possible that Sámi of different countries could organize themselves. The meeting is the basis for the celebration of the Sámi people day. This plaque was erected the 6th of February 1997"⁸.



Trondheim, 1917 Sami National Meeting. Photo H. Rasmussen. Trondheim University Library

I stand in the same spot where these people met and exchanged ideas and plans, as portrayed in photographs and chronicles of those who attended as reporters. The first

⁶ The conference brought together Swedish and Norwegian Sámis and its agenda included reindeer herding, Sámi law, Sámi organizations and education. Elsa considered education of the utmost importance. Very critical toward the assimilationistic project of the "Lapp Mission Schools," she argued for State Sámi Schools. These weren't opened in the Southern Sámi regions until 1951 in Hattfjelldal and in 1968 in Snåase (Snåsa in Norwegian), although her influence on the creation of these schools was critical.

⁷ The movement created by Elsa Laula was called Brurskanke Sámi Women's League, and was founded in 1910, the same year in which she became very active in Norway in order to secure land rights for her people. She realized very early that the whole livelihood should be considered, not only reindeer herding. Men and women could and should be fishers and herders, handworkers, traders, teachers. Most Sámi consider their culture gender complementary prior to Norwegian assimilation.

⁸ *SAMEFOLKETS DAG 6-9 Februar 1917 ble det første landmøte for samer holdt her. Initiativtaker til møtet var Elsa Laula Renberg. Daniel Mortensson ledet møtet. Møtet bidro til at samene i de ulike land organiserte seg og møtet danner grunnlaget for feiringen av samefolkets dag 6 februar. Minneplaten er reist 6 februar 1997.*

assembly departed with a promise: to continue the networking process within Sámi regions and to identify the aspects to put forward for the defense of land rights and reindeer herding sustainability. But they also departed operated during very tumultuous years in European history: the Russian Revolution, World War I and World War II. Because Elsa Laula died in 1931, she did not see the completion of her shared dream. In 1948 her husband Thomas died in an enigmatic event that took place in Dunderlandsdalen, Norway, during a car accident that killed fourteen South Sámi male and female leaders and political representatives on their return from an important national political meeting in Romsa (Tromsø in Norwegian), Norway⁹. This narrative is personalized in the film when Lawra and his family members discuss the tragic personal and communal loss of these people in the accident.

Standing in the square of the Methodist Church, I think of the protagonists of *Firekeepers* living in the Sámi areas north of Trondheim, towards the Swedish border in Snåase (Snåsa in Norwegian) in Maajehjaevrie (Majavatn in Norwegian). They are from the Westerfjell and Kappfjell families, characterized by their strong women and musical men. I also think of Anna Jakobson, lecturer and speech expert of South Sámi language, and Gustav Kappfjell, a renowned joik singer; of Nanni Mari Westerfjell, Lawra's mother ("tjiddtjie" in South Sámi), who sits on the commission for Sámi Land Rights and of Nanni's mother, Ebba Westerfjell, who was a writer on Sámi issues and continues to engage and discuss her political views and memories. Lawra's grandmother ("aahka"), Ebba Westerfjell, who lost her father, uncle and many more relatives in the accident in Dunderlandsdalen, narrates:

They were going to the national Sámi reindeer-herders' meeting in Tromsø. [...] On the way back South, the bus had an accident. Father had to see a doctor, to fix his broken arm. Others were also injured. But the driver kept on driving. It was a warm summer day, 4th of July 1948. When they came to Dunderlandsdalen, the bus tipped into the flooding river. Of the sixteen people only two survived. My father, my uncle and other relatives died in that accident. The way my father died... I can't figure it out. I don't remember much of it. We tried to live through it all. Of course, a tiny people losing so many at once - so many of our leaders [...] After this accident, we had no political leadership left. These people were leaders and organisers. Of course, the Sámi organisation had Sámi from all over Norway. But, for the southern Sámi it was a disaster. Yes, because our spokespersons were gone. [...] We lost father's briefcase... It was in the beginning of the Sámi organising themselves. My father and my uncle wanted a united Sámi organisation. Not just for the reindeer herders, but for all Sámi, whatever their living is. (from *Firekeepers*, Maajehjaevrie 2006).

I see a thin red line of history connecting these people through several generations. The concerns of Elsa Laula and Lawra's grandmother are very similar. Nanni Mari, Ebba's daughter, works with issues of sustainability that Elsa Laula had pointed out nearly a hundred years ago. Walking and reflecting upon these links, I end up in the nave of the Romanic Nidaros Cathedral, a few meters away from the Methodist Church: a grandiose site and sight. It still resonates with the vocal strength of a joik of reconciliation between son and mother,

⁹ Throughout the text, I use the North or South Sámi for various place names whenever possible, parenthetically translating the Norwegian words for these same cities and towns when referred to for the first time.

Lawra and Nanni Mari, which I elaborate on later in this essay. They could finally explain each other's pain for a vexation that had been kept silent too long, but that bore nevertheless some offspring. The film we made told some of these facts and captured this disruption of affectivity and miscommunication. It disclosed one joik like a rose with many layers. After some years from the shooting of the film, I was confronted with the "sequels" of Elsa Laula's visions and struggles, of that dramatic bus accident and of the revitalization of a language almost got extinguished. In this text I will try to draw some of the lines that connected history, joik and us.



Sara Marielle Gaup and Lawra Somby

The slow appropriation of the moment

In order to earn the trust of the actors, and to acquire access to the communities and sites where we filmed, we formulated from the beginning some fundamental research questions informing the film-work. These were basic questions, which we adjusted all throughout the process, but that finally remained quite coherent until the end:

- *How does joik enable different generations to socialize and communicate today?
- *How is joik transformed by the agency of young performers and in which arena are new forms expressed and negotiated?
- *How do joikers reach out society at large and make their way in the broader, global music industry, from their standpoint of traditional indigenous musicians?
- *How do these new musical practices contribute to the decolonizing process in Sápmi today?

This was in fact a project based on collaborative ethnographic paradigms, which sought to establish from the start the parameters, boundaries and protocols of all those involved

(ethnographers, filmmakers, financiers, social actors and performers) and to negotiate throughout the research a way to render “visible” and “audible” the findings that unfolded from 2004-2007, the years in which we interacted, when we shot and showed the unedited film material, and discussed during the work in progress among the participants of the project. The digressions and clarifications that a text permits are not possible in cinematic terms (MacDougall 1998: 85). But film can render the random and unforeseeable connections that actions take when one follows them through the camera lens and can render body language in unmistakable ways, in the context where the body-mind of people expresses itself and socializes. Moreover, no action can be repeated without changing some of it, therefore non-fiction film cannot generalize any event as if it was representative of some sort of cultural typicality. It can indeed render the uniqueness of each event recorded without staging it, respecting the fact that the subjects involved are living through their own life, and that they are not paid to act in a theatrical set. Even in a scene shot in the grandmother’s living room, where important and previously unknown information is disclosed to the protagonist Lawra, the shooting was not steered nor stopped in order to “clarify” what was happening. The filmmaker followed the events, spontaneously, and became the instigator perhaps, but not the puppeteer of what unfolded. Moreover, there was no omniscient narrator explicating the information presented, as is the case with many conventional documentaries.

The documentary presents a Northern labyrinth-like shape: the “entrance” in it can be accessed each time that a group of scenes end and in the same way as the joik, its beginning and end are fortuitous. This form was obviously a choice we made, so that form and message be one. Moreover, as H. Laitinen puts it: “The joik is a masterpiece in the use of microstructures” and we tried to evoke this idea through a very detailed montage. A few intertitles introduce the names of the protagonists, their band Adjágas, and some words about the concept of joik.

Joik is a musical and lyrical form sung by the Sámi people since time immemorial. Persons, animals, landscapes and experiences can all be « joiked ». New joiks are constantly invented, reproduced with personal variations, or passed onto other performers. They express the meaning of being alive, and they are ways of communicating other realities. A joik doesn’t have a set beginning or a set ending: it goes in circles. Lyrics are not definitive and the melody has variations too. The ability to improvise is important.”

According to the vision of N.A. Valkeapää (1943-2001), in “Art is for remembering people,” a superb manifesto that has continued to reverberate for over 40 years:

Yoik¹⁰ wasn’t music – or rather, it wasn’t only music. It was part of life, it was the friend one was joiking, it was the spiritual gossip, it was the grey lead-reindeer with the smart trot, or the summer dwelling place, in all its radiant beauty. But you didn’t yoik about somebody or something, you yoiked them. And I am almost certain that it never occurred to anybody that what was going on was music- that it was art!” (27: 1979).

¹⁰ I have maintained the original English spelling of that text, which was “yoik” and “Sami”.

He continues by noticing that every attitude, body expression, skill in dwelling in the environment and ability to create good and useful tools and artifacts, was an expression of life force, and something one could yoik in order to honor it and distribute it in vast regions where the Sámis were obliged to retire when the economical interests of non-Sámis rose. This necessitated a change in their attitude. It was no more about preserving a timeless culture, as a romantic view would suggest, but about adapting and recreating new vital forces, new trends, and to face the changes through creativity and flexibility, as many people throughout the world operating under settler colonial rule have done.

Non-Samis have always asserted that yoik is not music. In their opinion yoik was nothing, it was wailing and screaming, the voice of devil in man, the howling of wolves. There have undoubtedly been some major changes in attitude to yoik – but for the most part only in aware individuals. [...] When it comes to the language of art, we find our relatives amongst the ethnic minorities of the world. [...] The future of Sami art –and the Samis- is also dependent on the general state of the world, and what comes of it. I am thinking here of things like starvation, overpopulation, pollution, littering, poisoning, destruction (Valkeapää, 1979: 29-32)

The film begins in a region dear to Valkeapää, not far from his home place Bettika, by Käsivarsi. We are in Treriksøysa, the site where three relatively new, artificial borders meet to bisect Sápmi: the Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish borderlines. It is a very symbolic location in Sámiland, it reminds us that there was a time where these national borders did not exist, and the fact that now they are there, is still an abstraction in many ways. But these borders have shaped the life of herd units, pastoral life, land and water rights, dwelling and wandering, for hundreds and hundreds years, and are the evidence of the national fragmentation of previous ecologically-connected territories, where the dwelling was the main force shaping customary law.

The initial sequence in the film shows a traditional summer camp, with lavvos (Sámi tents), and Sámi subjects dressed in gáktis, their colored traditional costumes, while they share a convivial moment under a roof that opens to the sun through its smoke hole. It is a joyful collective meal, followed by improvised joiks. Three men joik for a baby boy: these persons are well-known in Norwegian Sápmi: Ande Somby, joiker, activist and professor in Law at Tromsø University; his uncle Ivvár Níilas, from Deatnu (Tana in Norwegian), one of the most knowledgeable elderly joikers of Northern Norway; and Ande's son, Lawra Somby, protagonist of the film, to whom Ivvár is "fuolki", relative, being the brother of his paternal grandmother. They are lulling for Ainel, last son of Ande, half brother of Lawra, who is still a toddler.

FILM SEQUENCE 3: Under the Sámi tent, lavvo. Treiriksøya. From 01:41 to 06:57 (5min. 20 ")

To listen to three generations of men joiking to a baby was an awesome experience, both aurally and visually, imbued with many expressions of affectivity: it sets immediately the tone of intimacy of which the film wish to be enveloped. To these Northern Sámi joiks, Sara

Marielle Gaup, together with her sisters, responds spontaneously from the other end of the lavvo. Their echoes are haunting. The simultaneity of expressions in disparate locations of the tent reverberates towards Ivvár Niilas, who states that he taught Lawra to joik.

Joik has a peculiar structure with strict rules, but at the same time it leaves each joiker the possibility to shape her/his personal style. It can be sung in solos or in groups, in dialogue or whispered. The owner of the joik isn't the singer, but transforms into the "joiked object," be it a landscape, a person, an animal or even an event (Gaski 2000, Jones-Bamman 2006, Graff 2007, Hilder 2010).



Firekeepers at the árran

Later in the evening, Ande Somby recounts the mythology of how joik was created by subterranean spirits, the *ulddat*, and given to the Sámi. Moreover, he explains how it was prohibited by the Christian Church, and its singers demonized. He notes how it was kept alive, in the same way as a flame hidden under the ambers. The hearth-bonfire in a Sámi dwelling, called *árran*, is an agent of sociality and conviviality in the Sámi way of life: it can be a bonfire on the *duottar* (tundra), a hearth to cook under the *lávvo*, or metaphorically, the stove in a kitchen where coffee is cooking. Stories, secrets, requests, deals, arguments, daydreaming, joik often happen around a fireplace. This account inspired the title of the film: joikers in old times, are paralleled to "keepers of fire," who, through their continued practice healing and shamanic rituals, resisted against persecution and suppression: these were the "firekeepers." The camera slowly pans that around the bonfire are many onlookers: this is not a "natural" summer camp, it is a sort of performance, an event, it is organized... The camera reveals how cultural expressions are reshaped for a performative use, and how this latter shapes new knowledge production, including invention, in the social life of people. In fact Lawra employs this occasion to perform a new joik, that from now on will become a protagonist in the narrative: *Im manne gåarkah*, which means "I do not understand" in the South Sámi language.

The film shows how this particular joik came to life. It applies Southern Sámi techniques, and its theme is existential. Later in the film Lawra's mother, Nanni Mari, will explain about the peculiarity of these techniques: "There are yoiks you can initiate and those who take you. Therefore you can't refuse to joik, you must do it when it takes you", she sums up. In this way, it is similar to an urge, even a cry. "*Im manne gâarkal*" refers to Lawra's experience of loss of his mother tongue: Southern Sámi. In *Treiriksøysa*, Lawra had just discovered that the reason why he had lost the fluency at about five years was caused by the pressure of the kindergarden's personnel in Oslo, which could not cope with trilingual children, and had suggested to his parents, they suspend speaking to him in at least one of the Sámi languages he was gaining fluency in¹¹. This suggestion did not prove to be appropriate, and was perhaps even permeated yet by some principles from the linguistic assimilation time. Nonetheless, the consequent implementation of it from his parents side, had never been disclosed to Lawra, who had been tormented with doubts about this enigmatic loss and with a sense of culpability because he thought he had stopped his own fluency with no apparent reason. "It is like to be a fish in a pond, that is drying out"... he had commented in *Maajehjaevrie*.

In *Treiriksøysa*, the joik "I do not understand" lasts long, much longer than any other song that night: it sounds similar to a blues, and when it ends, it leaves the whole assembly perplexed, in an embarrassed silence. It has touched something painful and vulnerable, or maybe it is simply not the type of performance expected in that place. But this event is also important because Lawra shows his autonomy and personal style around the árran where his father Ande, his master of joik Ivvár and his partner in music Sara Marielle, all sit and listen to him. It is a touchy arena to choose in order to come forward. As Harald Gaski notes, joiking "has played an important role in creating a feeling of unity within the group" (1998: 12) and "the yoik is not about a person, it actually is the person" (1998: 13). Because of this, Lawra not only places himself outside the group as a person who has lost his ability to speak Southern Sámi, he also becomes himself, in some ways. It is not by chance perhaps, that somebody asks Ante Mikkal Gaup, clever joiker and father of Sara Marielle, to joik the grouse, as a distraction from this eloquent lull. There is a sense of puzzlement in the moment: it is an existential joik and it took all the onlookers by surprise. Lawra announced his search, as we would follow up in the film.

FILM SEQUENCE 4: Lawra joik in *Treyriksøya*. From 07:30 to 11:04 (3 min.20")

The grouse sings in the farthest, the crescent of the moon frames a vibrant *lávvo* in the summer night, and in this image of tents, a cross-dissolve shows a house in a big town emerging from a rain puddle... a melancholic transition into the symbols of sedentary life. We embark on an urban scene in *Romssa*, and it is during wintertime, across the polar night.

¹¹ His father Ande spoke with him in Northern Sámi, his mother Nanni Mari spoke to him in Southern Sámi and they were in a Norwegian majority environment, since they were both students at the University of Oslo when Lawra was a child.

Thomas Hilder, who studied joik and Sámi musical forms during years of extensive fieldwork, looked at constructions of contemporary Sámi soundscapes, analyzing the dynamics that are:

[...] formed by musicians, performances, musical institutions and mediating technologies. [...] Sámi music can be traditional and modern joik, contemporary pop music, rock, classical, rap, heavy metal, and jazz. [...] Joik doesn't have a beginning and an end. It is not about something, but brings something or someone into being. It can be a political and social commentary naming and remembering people, animals, places and events. It can be a therapy, and might call spiritual powers into action. [...] Political, everyday, sacred, performed on stage or in arctic wilderness, urban and pastoral. It is mostly funded by Sámi institutions and distributed by Sámi labels (2010: 12).

He describes the loci and foci of these expressions and cultural production, from stages to studios, radios, exhibitions, websites and the social media, the virtual imagery and the sociality of joik. He contends that it is a musical form that utilizes Sámi language and revitalizes it as well, that is able to convey and reinforce a sense of "Sáminess." It affects Sámis, and moreover creates empathy toward other indigenous musical expressions in a contemporary movement connected to the pan-indigenous discourses. Adjágas is an exemplary band considering Hilder's analysis. Most of the aspects evoked above are consciously expressed by their project. The film follows them while performing at By:larm 2006, sponsored by Riddu Riddu, an important Sámi festival dedicated to indigenous cultures. This festival is where Lawra and Sara have been developing as joikers since they were very young, as evidence by their being awarded Best Young Artist in 2001 and 2002. During the concert in Romsa, we perceive what kind of musical project constitutes Adjágas, and the energy that the two performers deploy on stage. Lawra's attitude contrasts with the previous moments in Trieriksroya, but it doesn't clash with them. It is another register, but his "authenticity," or better sense of self, is untouched. On the contrary, the subtleties and presence of the performers signal that they know how to deal with different arenas and contexts of reception, and in both locations they seem in control and proud. The response is an ovation. While Sara Marielle has joiked since she was a child, Lawra started to do it when he was seventeen years old, but since then his career has only been growing. His first public show took place during a United Nations event in Geneva, Switzerland and from there he was invited as a joiker to the opening of the Alexandria New Library in Egypt, then to New Zealand, and in 2005, with Adjágas, to open the famous Glastenbury annual rock concert in England.

The film continues in Guovdageaidnu (Kautokeino in Norwegian) one of the main centers of Sámi society in Finnmark, where we discover more about Sara Marielle and her family background. According to her own account:

I am from Kautokeino. My father grew up here in Mieron, not too far from this house. And my mother is from Gratangen, Rivttat in Sámi. But there the yoik has disappeared. The traditional costumes are almost not used. And Sámi language is fading away. So I try

to preserve what is not lost, on my father's side of the family. I am especially interested in Sámi handicraft, duodji. I was fortunate that my relative Elle Márjá taught me duodji. Our families have very similar *málle*... (Sámi) traditional customs. How do I explain it? *Elle Márjá answers*: "*Málle*": the way things should be alike, their patterns. We have the same traditions, my husband was your relative.

This conversation takes place in the duodji room (both craft and applied art in Sámi tradition); Sara Marielle and Elle Márjá sit and sew a leather jacket for a man, a ceremonial gákti. Elle Márjá is Sara Marielle's duojár. In the Sámi transmission of knowledge, this role between a learner and a master in craft, in fact, it is specific for duodji: the duojár chooses the styles, prepares the different ingredients and materials, knows how to recycle every part of a slaughtered reindeer or how to make use of any material found in the environment, to turn it into beauty and function (Guttorm 1999: 37) and the relation between the two is what gives quality and originality to the final artifact. There is a sort of invisible signature in each item, the result of the knowledge of the duojár and the praxis of the maker. A good duojár is often praised in joiks. This contributes to her or his fame. Sara Marielle shows how important is for her to learn this relation with respect and engagement. Art and handicraft, that since time immemorial weren't disentangled in the Sámi cultural production, are of great importance in her life, even if she is an emerging rock star.

FILM SEQUENCE 5: Sara Marielle and her Duoijar. Sewing. From 13:20 to 18:50 (5 min. 10")

During the interview in Guodageaidnu, Sara Marielle expresses values about her gender, her role in society (both locally and globally) and her ability to live in such diverse realities: concert stage, rock music milieus, transnational travel and then duodji and motherhood in Finnmark. Doing duodji is also an art of remembrance, spontaneity, dialogue, and the theme of joik is here discussed between Sara and Elle Márjá in a very intimate way, evoking also some affecting stories connected to the shame of joiking¹², while their respective bodies at work "weave" memories, secrets, recollections, one sewing leather, while her duojár is rolling reindeer sinews on her cheek.

A shift in the film presents Lawra wandering in the Southern Sámi regions, the area in Trondelag towards Nordland, around Snåase (Snåsa in Norwegian), the small town where his mother resides. From there he drives to his grandmother in the village of Maajehjaevrie, towards the border with Sweden.

¹² Because joik was also used in shamanic rites, accompanied by drum, Christians forbade it, associating it with the "Devil's voice" and banning it from communities; in this way joik's expression and transmission became one of the forms of resistance to suppression. The fact that the action of joiking was considered shameful, shaped as well a relation of intimacy for the singer, because nobody was supposed to do it in public or to show that one had heard it.



Lawra, 5 years old, and his white reindeer pet. Majavatn

His grandmother fondly sits in her living room and is eager to communicate with this beloved grandchild, weaving in her account a very unique pattern between politics, intimacy and joik:

Through joik... You can give something of yourself to others.

Through joik, you can call on help from the spirit world. I remember once... two of my uncles disagreed about how to deal with an issue. Tempers were getting high. First, grandmother started crying. And then my mother was crying too. I was upset by this, but I just kept in the background. My grandmother withdrew from the discussion. So I followed her, to get away from that situation. She went to her turf-house and sat on the threshold, the door open. She looked to the mountains towards the east. And then she started joiking. It was the first time I heard a joik with such a volume.

Because they always kept it quiet, with low volume, my mother and the others. Because it was forbidden to joik! While grandmother was joiking, I walked towards her. The volume of the joik increased. It became so loud that I started crying. And I clung to her arm, because I felt her joik was lifting us up. And I was so scared. And I can still recall that feeling in my body...

It was... mighty. Powerful! I haven't heard anyone joiking like that before or after, and I'm 75 years old. And the tears were dropping, while she was joiking. I don't recall... but I guess she calmed down, and saw me standing there. So, then it was over. But that feeling, and that joik... Nowadays, nobody has the skills. My brother, Gustav, joiked a lot when he was older. He was also touring, with Valkeapää, in Stockholm and other places. But you know... joik seizes the situation in which it's performed in. Joik was mostly for parties. But grandmother was definitely summoning the higher spirits. I am sure of that. If I hadn't held on to her, she would have been lifted away.

It is interesting to be Sámi¹³. I think so! I am so glad that my people are discovering that our traditions are worth keeping. So I am so glad for Lawra, for he joiks. “The blood of shaman drummers is in our veins.” I like this saying. In this way, the Sámi will still live on”. (Ebba Westerfjell 2006, Firekeepers)

Lawra’s mother, clarifies (personal communication 22.10.2008) why her great-grandmother could be so outraged previous to her powerful joik, the one that young Hebba witnessed: ”That is the sequence (in the film) where my mother tells about her own experience of joik – when her grand-mother joiked in such a way that she felt that both of them were being lifted up from the soil. The reason why she did so, it is not explained further – but it is interesting: it happened in 1935, my mother was five years old. [...] The reindeer herders in the family had returned home and told that a settler had closed the track where they moved the herd through their old pasture land. This was in the middle of the worst assimilation time – the Sámi rights were never referred to publicly.”¹⁴

FILM SEQUENCE 6: Lawra’s grandmother tells about joik. (3 min.)

These are areas where Lawra’s maternal kinship comes from and has dwelt for many generations. These families and herd-units (“sejte” in Southern Sámi) are very rich in history, and they have bred activists, politicians, intellectuals, teachers, as well as reindeer herders and duodji makers. In the 1970s the Norwegian government built a barrage in Gaelpieh (Kalvavatn in Norwegian), up in the mountains where Lawra’s ancestors had their reindeer pastures¹⁵. Lawra’s uncle Niilas and grandmother Ebba bring him to the location and explain in southern Sámi what this site looked like and was used for previously: it was an important crossing point for the herds in the spring. Now the whole region is inundated because of a dam project. Lawra gets to know more about his ancestors; the journey that propelled the film. It is a journey of discovery. Lawra states during this journey that to travel to his maternal grandmother’s was like a retreat to a sanctuary. This metaphor is very powerful, for it evokes, among so many other associations to spiritual energy and peacefulness, the relation to piety that he learned from his mother. During this visit, Lawra learns about the real causes that made him lose his mother tongue. A joik bursts out like a cry: Im manne gåarkah. Is “to understand” enough to recover a complex?

¹³ Lawra’s grandmother states that “it is interesting to be Sámi” and this provokes often a laughter among the Sámi audience, because this humor and lyrical twist based on self awareness it is a choice of irony that only one charismatic and respected figure of a Sámi community can make, as she was and still is.

¹⁴ “Det er den sekvensen der min mor forteller om sin opplevelse av joik – der hennes bestemor joiker slik at hun føler at hun og bestemoren løftes fra bakken. Bakgrunnen for at hun joiket slik kom ikke frem –men den er interessant: dette skjedde i 1935, min mor var 5 år. Reindriftsutøverne i familien hadde kommet hjem og fortalt at en nybygger hadde stengt flytteleien i deres gamle beiteland. Dette var I midt i den verste fornorskningstiden –samiske rettigheter var et ikke tema.”

¹⁵ Differently from the Áltá (Alta in Norwegian) demonstrations happening a few years after, where hundred of people mobilized in order to stop the construction of a dam which would have destroyed the ecosystem of the Guovdageaidnu-Máze (Kautokeino-Masi) valley, opportunities to protest this political, cultural and ecological disaster in Gaelpieh never arose. As Niilas, Ebba’s son, explains: “We weren’t strong enough in the South.” In the middle of the 1970s and even more in the wake of the Áltá case, leading activists have participated in the formation of contemporary indigenous rights movements and organizations like the ILO (International Labour Organization).

Snåase, central Norway. August 22d, 2006.

On our way back from Lawra's "sanctuary": the homeland of his grandmother Ebba, in Maajehjaerie.

We follow the railway that leans over a high bridge on the skirts of a dark and extended wood. The night is over, but the dawn has not yet risen. It's been raining heavily the entire night. An interminable night spent awake amidst flames, Jack Daniels, and mysteries. Trolls emerged from the mercurial surface of a tiny lake. The bonfire endlessly consumed and resuscitated, although the rain damped it, the all nightlong. Many words were exchanged between us. Memories faded. We climbed a cliff, often sliding in the mud, we reached above the railway trails, for then we knew that something was about to happen. And the joik awaited for, during more than one year, "became". It was "joiked". And in return, it "joiked" its singer's enigma. My enchanted camera captured it. Also when he disappeared in the forest. A blinking red light announced the passage of the first train early that morning... A blinking heart in a deep blue wood...

This above is an extract from my diary. This anecdote occurred in August 2006 and I have many other entries from that period. It narrates the journey to Lawra's ancestors and to living relatives. What is narrated above appears in a poetic editing form in the film, and it precedes the very end. This is the outstanding moment in which filmmaking, research and life coincide, in which the time spent waiting and hoping, not interfering too much, but accompanying one's subjects in their tribulations and trails, in their fleeting joys and even ecstasies, sorrows or rages, it's worth having been spent. It's not that everything falls into place, but mostly that every place becomes the "thing," and novelty spreads from any situation. This is a sort of existential acceleration occurring that films like these can instigate and capture. But the film doesn't simply follow or provoke, it also shapes the mood for what is to happen. The initial plan was to follow up the birth of a joik. But utilizing a "responsive" filmmaking style, we couldn't order this wish to the protagonists, we could not make this desire too transparent, because the way our filmmaking collective intends non-fiction films resides in the possibility to accompany the formations of sociality, the existential discoveries, the actions and reflections of the protagonists without giving them a prerequisite (MacDougall 1998: 53, 2006: 4). We were obviously aware that our desire and presence as filmmakers might influence acts and thoughts at another level, but it is certainly another thing to "command" a piece of art to an artist than to hope that this will organically generate in his/her mind-body driven by real circumstances. It is substantially different from staging. Even from staging events that occurred in the past, as a way of inserting fictional reconstructions in the non-fictional universe of the present, unfolding before us.

Behind our hope was the theoretical assumption that an immaterial and material artifact, like a song, a poem or in this case a "traditional" chant like the joik, is the materialization of a much wider field of relations and also, it materializes these relations further. In another context, the "epitome" performed in a concert hall, far away in space and time from its original context of conception, may evoke the vast territory where historical, social and spatial lines cross. How does joik operate today? How can this ancient, yet evolving form express current values, concerns, feelings and untold stories, in a meaningful way? How can it constitute its subjects and how do the subjects constitute it?

We might prove the power of cinema, its ability to act upon the world, record and render forms of the real, of both the people and the course of events. But the fact that this medium possess the distinctive quality of rendering musical expressions through the aural and the visual simultaneously are also qualities which are impossible to paraphrase or “textualize.” A medium conveying another medium isn’t simply a question of embedded meta-languages. It of course adds to and detracts from the original medium. Additionally, it shows how all media are mixed-media, to borrow Mitchell’s trope. All the songs have been subtitled, a choice designed to make them appear as important texts interconnected with the moments of “pure” joik; in this way they appear as forms of storytelling, not as simple “mumbled” vocals or meaningless vocables. The respect given by a subtitle, which doesn’t often occur in documentaries showing musical performances in minority languages, was an important aspect for us. It made joiks more accessible and at the same time, revealed their poetics as meaningful, if not always fully understood by outsiders of Sámi society (Gaski: 2000).

“It is quite certain that a Sami artists would cut a film at quite different tempo from a Parisian, out of the same material. It is just as evident that a Parisian public would identify itself with the “internal clock” in the Parisian version, and the Sami public with the “clock” in the Sami version.” Valkeapää (1979: 30)

Paradoxically, although Valkeapää published the quote above in 1979, and that I was a Parisian filmmaker, the editing of the film turned out to be quite speedy and lyrically patched, and this was also by request of the Sámi protagonists, who are young and sophisticated about the language of contemporary media (internet, TV, video music etc.). The associations between images, sounds, graphics and music aim at creating a “certain state of mind” enabling the active understanding of poetic and at times arbitrary connections and disconnections, which the film montage reveals and deconstructs.

The rendering of space and time dimensions with which film-form can play so openly (although not as freely as most may assume) made the movement continuous: with no clear cut between absence and presence in each other’s horizon. It’s a future “becoming” as one goes along in finding and creating evocations, links, which are sometimes territorial but sometimes purely mental and that are translated into filmic form in order to become something else again. Moreover, one could contend that non-fiction films like this one are too obsessively sticking to their empiricism, which is accentuated by a lack of special effects and staged scenes. This style has its challenges though, and it is not assumedly only interested in the trivialities of the quotidian. A documentary constructed in this way demands an effort of renewed interpretation from the viewers’ and the makers’ side at each new screening. It demands to be seen many times, because the structure mirrors the one of a joik, where several associations are made available if connecting with different points in space (sequence) and time (length, duration). It demands a pact with the viewer, a sort of collaboration from the first sight.

We chose to represent this multi-sidedness also through the power of montage. As Marcus puts it, this type of montage can better render “the simultaneity and spatial dispersion of the contemporary production of cultural identity” (Marcus 1995: 99). It is a multitudinous space where one can assign new meanings to aspects of embodiment and sensorial knowledge, and at the same time play with what were before discrete categories such as space (namely places, sites, locations, land and seascapes, boundaries, bodies in movement) and time (namely tempo, rhythm, anticipation of future events, present, verbal evocation, storytelling and recollections). One cannot help but begin with metaphors and acts that the actors invite us to follow up and that will be discussed as contributions of the collective text operated by the montage. Nobody in the film used metaphors like “roots” or “rootedness”, but we heard more about flooded cultural spaces; car accidents; primary education and attempts at linguistic and psychological assimilation; the expression of grief and rage in joiking; shamanic experiences; traveling to an emotional and material sanctuary, etc. In the film, one hears about *málle* in northern Sámi: the “patterns which are alike,” a concept that is possible to use in kinship matters as much as in clothes materials and tools measures. Concepts that get materialized by doing, acting, connecting and that the film shows while they happen for the first time.

Lawra and Sara can also give voice to two different attitudes in dealing with the imagined past, but also with a certain common understanding and mythologizing of the past. They are in a process of mental decolonization in relation to the future. Lawra seems to play out his principle of transformation as a way to remain open to the future, while Sara Marielle sticks to cultural inflections, practices and social patterns that seem to be connected with a past, in some ways, a more “conservative” one: i.e., as identity markers as they have been passed on by her family members and close network. On the other hand, both Lawra and Sara Marielle were those who in 2000 and 2001 renewed the scene of Sámi musical performance through Riddu Riddu. Later on, with Adjágas, their innovative way of joiking together, in an anti-fusion musical style with non-Sámi musicians, was also based on certain ideas about what the future might hold for musicians of the globalized musical world industry. Sara articulates her perspective by stating that living in Guodageaidnu and being part of Adjágas is sometimes a great split, a clash of moods, responses, and psychological gymnastics. While for Lawra there is one place he needs to frequent in order to reconnect himself to a sense of belonging: his maternal grandmother’s village, Maajehjaevrie. All this lies deep in Lawra’s identification with an historical place, a cradle for ethno-political awareness. In this way, Maajehjaevrie is a place to go to when everything else seems to collapse. Thus, in his “ubiquity”, he can wander in the larger territory of Sápmi, and now the whole world as such, which are equally accessible places for his transient residence. Sámi young audiences in various screenings perceived this: Lawra is ahead of tradition and time; he makes the Sámi young subject a world citizen¹⁶. But a sense of history and pride is also needed, that Sara brings in a more feminine chord: she emphasizes where her own generation comes from in

¹⁶ Sámi, in many ways, have always been cosmopolitan and sophisticated in their understandings of the larger geo-political scene in which they are embedded. For example, in the familial, cultural, and economic exchanges between the north and coastal Sámi when the northern Sami go up the coast to reindeer pastures.

terms of a thirty year span (1975-2005): they are the nieces or sons of the creators of the ČSV¹⁷, a Sámi creative-political movement of the 1980s, funded in Deatnu; of the activists of the Alta case; and of the first representatives in the new created Sámi Parliament. Lawra, Sara and many of their peers are the offspring who were not as radicalized as the generations that preceded them. The heavy burden of inheriting a condition where most of the struggles seem already won and mobilized isn't so easy as the tender smile of Sara undermines. These moments are filmed in such a way that cannot be staged nor repeated and therefore, these are the moments we must see in order to grasp what an ethnographic filmmaking practice that both critiques older forms of visual anthropology and works in tandem with the needs and desires of Indigenous peoples brings to social research.

Behind, after the film

“In the eyes of ‘my’ subjects, my film will not be judged by how it makes the obvious points. They will set a much higher standard. I must go beyond what is implicit between us. I shall not be able to speak as the expert, nor shall I feel comfortable about belaboring the elementary things we both already know. My work will be judged by its good faith towards them and its understanding of their perceptions of the world, without pretending to be their view of it.” (David MacDougall, 1998:91)

After we screened “Firekeepers” the first time in the Verdensteater, the historical cinema of Romsa, Lawra phoned and stated that he was satisfied with the screening and after-party, but indeed, he articulated that the film wasn't finished. He claimed we might continue it. We knew he was already in a new phase than the one that his externalization in front of the camera had expressed. Lawra was on his way to regain his lost language, his mother-tongue, in a literal sense: this was a way of empowerment that the film had provided for him, not only because of that, but mostly because of his own realization.

To edit the narrative as it is today has been a long process: we looked at the rushes many times, we organized trips for Lawra and Sara outside of Romsa to come to the cutting room in order to comment the rushes and the editing. We did this until they were comfortable with what was selected and edited in the final version.

After the release of the film, the joik *Im manne gáarkah* became *I goh gáarkah*, *I can understand*. The melody is similar to the previous version, but the lyrics in Southern Sámi read:

*Time has brought us far
can't recognize my surroundings
Memories remembered by my blood
clouded by the fog of no knowledge*

¹⁷ The development of Sami politics during the 1970s and 1980s was, in many respects, a new awakening. A new awareness was expressed in art especially. Young Sami wanted to reclaim what they had lost. Old cultural expressions such as place names and the “gákti” were rediscovered, and new cultural traits invented. This was a political and cultural renaissance without precedent in Sami history. The period was often referred to as “ČSV,” after three of the letters of the Sami alphabet. (<http://sapmi.uit.no/sapmi/ExhibitionContainer.do?type=tema>)

*The fear is strangling our throats
no word can come out
Don't you understand that fear is the obstacle
fear of loss, fear of failure
Rigid pride will make us fall like rotten trees
Ancestor blood in your vein
be your blood, offer help by giving
you help life
True pride is in humbleness*

FILM SEQUENCE 7: Lawra's account about losing language. From 44:50 to 55:50 (11 min.)

Since the visit to Maajehjaevrie that we filmed, after his mother told Lawra about the reasons of the loss of the language, he had been somehow distant and slightly vexed with her. But something had happened in Trondheim, in the Nidaros Cathedral, some months later. Firekeepers was shown during the establishment of the South Sámi Church congregation, (Sør Samisk Mendighet Råd Kirke in Norwegian), belonging to the Norsk Statens Kirke. Lawra would honor the opening with a joik in the nave of this historical cathedral. The pastor who invited him to perform, Bierna Bientie, had come to Snåase to the screening of the film and the concert of Adjágas a few months earlier, and had thought that mother and son might have the occasion to talk together about the issue of language loss. Nanni Marie in fact had spoken at length after the screening, in a long “confessional” declaration where she had fully assumed the consequences of that infamous choice of removing southern Sámi language a home language for her son, in accordance with his father. At that time she believed in the educational expertise of teachers and pedagogues in the public school, but obviously they had had it wrong. Now she felt she had failed because she had not listened to her “gut feelings” at that time¹⁸. Her pain was expressed with such a dignity that she moved most of the people in the auditorium, and there were there many parents with similar stories:

“Obviously I have a sense of guilt that shall stay with me the rest of my life. Today we know that to transmit a language and a culture is something that one must do without restrictions. Nevertheless, at that time, we did not know to what extent multilingualism could influence a child. I think indeed that I have paid my debt now”. (Nanni Mari Westerfeld: Ságat n.176 – 12-10-2009)¹⁹.

Many youth were also at that screening in Snåase with their parents, and they came back the day after to the highly energetic concert that Adjágas performed, in front of so many

¹⁸ Though it is important to emphasize that this wasn't necessarily just a personal choice, but a choice that was part of a wider pattern, the settler/colonial context, that sought the assimilation of the Sámi as a people through the prohibition of language, culture, musical traditions, etc.

¹⁹ Jeg har jo en skyldfølelse som vil forfølge meg resten av livet. I dag vet vi at å videreføre et språk og en kultur er noe man skal gjøre uten forbehold, men på den tiden visste vi jo ikke hvordan det påvirket barna å være flerspråklige. Jeg føler jeg har gjort opp for dette nå. (Nanni Mari Westerfeld Ságat n.176 – 12-10-2009).

among Lawra's acquaintances, friends and family from the South Sámi region. The young people, were silently overcome with emotion during the concert while Lawra joiked "Th Goh Gáarkah." They could visibly recognize something of themselves and perhaps of their common history as Sámi people, but also as a minority within the mainstream Sámi society (young Southern Sámi subjects born in the 1970s-1980s). The atmosphere was so touching during the performance of that particular joik, that one could think that part of the pain of the past losses was relieved in a collective and cathartic rite.

A cathedral resonates with joik

Lawra had phoned before going to the Nidaros Cathedral. He was quite excited, worried, and had mixed feelings about the event. He had just finished reading the charismatic book of Eckhart Tolle *A New Earth: Awakening to your Life Purposes* (2005) that suggests a new way to look at individual and relational traumas through the emotional reactions that they induce in oppressed subjects.

He had then understood more what had happened to him in the kindergarten and about the choice of his parents, which was not only a personal undergoing, but part of broader postcolonial currents. When he had learned about it in Maajehjaevrie, he had first become "flat and still like a lake before a storm," completely devastated. He had then felt an outraged feeling rising in his body and he had asked me to drive with him for a stroll in the mountains.

"This has been such a foggy area for me. Like if the whole foundation of me had been tore apart"... he had commented that evening.

That was a completely unexpected event in the trip. Nevertheless Lawra admits that the protracting of that journey, for which we had postponed to travel to Maajehjaevrie at least three times during that year, had the precognition that something would happen. He had already received a sort of omen when he had driven to Ebba's home; he saw two ravens: one in anguish and the other taking care of its partner. That sight, while he was driving, persisted in a sort of *adjágas*-like mood long after and became an omen of radical change in his present condition.

Tolle's book deals with trans-generational relationships lingering in the person through what he calls the "pain-body"²⁰. This concept had clarified Lawra's emotional reaction to himself through his bodily reactions: he became anxious before the session in the Nidaros Cathedral when he had recently learned that his mother would be there. But the pastor made them sit in such a way that they could have a dialogue. Slowly it turned out to be a healing session, in which he sat beside his mother while they could talk together in front of the audience of dozens of spiritual professionals. At this point, Lawra had joiked. The Cathedral

²⁰ From the philosophy of Eckhart Tolle, a "pain-body" is the collective manifestation of all the pain, misery, and sorrow a person has ever gone through their entire life, and all the things they inherited from their culture and family history as well. (<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=pain-body>).

reverberated his voice in such a way that he had never heard himself as such. This was a sort of apotheosis, one might say.

Nanni Mari previously was a participant in Bønne møter (praying assemblies) all over Norway, through her former affiliation to the Pentecostal movement, to which she had often brought her son. Therefore, Lawra was used to see preachers in action, huge congregations, masses, collective reunions, emotions and ecstasies, and so many gender practices, for this activity was mainly with Nanni's girlfriends (Myrhaug 1997). She inherited this love for the Pentecostal Church from her grandfather and also from her uncle Gustav Kappfjell. Otherwise, there were few churchgoers in her family²¹. Her uncle Gustav was one of the greatest Southern Sámi joikers of his generation and because of the scarcity of singers commanding Southern Sámi, nobody had yet replaced his role. Gustav converted to Christianity during the Maajehaevrie tragedy in 1944. This is a chapter of the Resistance to German Occupation during WW II²². During the war, he had disclosed the location of a German soldier under the house where the latter had hidden himself after an attack of partisans. After he was found, the German was immediately shot. Then and there Gustav had a sudden conversion and became Christian, due to his sense of guilt. When Germans inquired and discovered him, he was then arrested and brought to a concentration camp nearby. He was tortured and retained two years, together with his father. In the meantime several leaders were killed in the Resistance. The Sámi contribution to the Resistance during World War II have never really been acknowledged. Since then, it was painful to talk of it. No medals, nor celebrations were awarded to Sámi participants.

After World War II, another tragedy had marked these regions: the bus accident in 1948, which added even more losses and inconsolable grief to these communities. That story has been kept silent for decades too. People do not like to speak about it in Maajehaevrie.

FILM Sequence 8: Grand Mother recounts bus accident. From 27:14 to 31:28 (4 min. 10")

To this day there is a very deep respect and uneasy feeling toward it which is hard to explain. The loss has been too big, and the accident too violent, even the causes of the accident have remained mysterious reasons that cannot be proven in any way.

Genesis of *ih go gáarkah*

Lawra had tackled the issue of the pain connected to loss and marginalization by co-producing the video *Mun ja Mun* in which the Southern Sámi language and culture is

²¹ Differently from the North of Sápmi, in which congregations following Laestadius ideas are plentiful, the South never had Laestadianism, but a Pentecostal presence.

²² The German occupation of Norway in April 1940 was a new experience for every person living in Norway. In particular, the German occupation had great consequences for the population of Northern Troms and Finnmark. In the autumn of 1940, the German forces had started their preparations for the assault on the Soviet Union. This made the northern part of Norway a highly strategically important area.
<http://sapmi.uit.no/sapmi/ExhibitionContainer.do?type=tema>.

presented as endangered. He had called his relatives to pose in a compelling black and white shot video clip, in which his joik *Mun ja Mun* entrances the viewer into a smooth lullaby, slightly melancholic, but indeed powerful.

FILM SEQUENCE 9: Video *Mun ja Mun*. By Lawra Somby. (3 min. 40'') link to Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2xUQuP6SxY>



Video music *Mun Ja Mun*, Lawra, Ebba and other relatives

To continue this quest about “not understanding,” and willing to work more on the issues of loss and resilience, Lawra chose a retreat in Sirbma (Sirma in Norwegian), by Deatnu, at the Somby’s extended family place, in order to work on the genesis of *Im manne gáarkah*, a joik he was transforming into *I goh gáarkah*. He lived several weeks in the same room where, as a child, he had heard stories of ghosts and *ulddat*, and had been utterly scared. His grandfather’s death, happening in the same months when he was creating this new joik, very much influenced his condition since he felt a strong attachment to his father’s environment too. Perhaps this enabled the expression of his sentiments even more, for he is fluent in Northern Sámi and he realized that he could still take up the Southern Sámi as a result.

He relates that a huge and scary bear’s fur was hanging in his room. He dreamt he was fighting the bear, chasing him away and escaping on the tundra on a motorbike. When Lawra dreamt about this fight, he felt unburdened. It enhanced his inspiration and he wrote about twenty poems in English in a few days, and then edited them down into the actual lyrics. (Personal communication with Lawra, 2d of February 2010, Romsa).

Once back in Romsa, his mother had traveled by chance from Snåase and she helped him translate these lyrics into Southern Sámi. This occurred right after he recorded some trials with his close collaborator, the musician and sound designer Andrea Mjøs.

“I am born in a family of joikers. I think it is a fate. [...] There are so many and strong ways to express one’s feelings, there is so much behind a joik. It is a part of life and a philosophy. When I began to joik, my life started to transform itself. (...) For me joik is the life story of human beings. The sum up of a life can be in a joik. It is so strong just to think of it...” (Lawra Somby, 2006:3 Interview to C.Y. Olsen, Nordlys)

The event at the Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim was a turning point in Lawra’s life and part of a much longer story. He had developed “*Im manne gårkab*” throughout the filming period, and the accidental presence of his mother exactly when he had to record it had made it possible for him to transform it into an existential “manifesto.” Moreover, when he recorded it for the first time, his voice turned into a much more mature man’s tonality, lower, a little hollow, and more pained than usual. Recorded by chance during a test with Andrea Mjøs, it appeared to be an incredible beautiful and expressive voice that was kept as such in the final version of the new album. Today it seems that there is a constructive transformation in his life. Adjágas is not only increasingly successful, but Lawra and his mother are trying to speak South Sámi to each other, and at least, she speaks it now to him on any occasion and without fear.

Acknowledgements:

I came to discover Sámi culture before I decided to settle in Northern Norway through the English translations of the poems of Nils Aslak Valkeapää (1994). Until then, I had only read the Italian translation of Vita di un Lappone by Johan Turi, one of the first translations ever published in Europe about the Sámi. In this way, when I came to Tromsø, I was already predisposed toward the Sámi imagery. To make Firekeepers was a way to pay respect to the Sámis and to honor these feelings of gratitude since I was a stranger living in their territory.

I would like to thank Terje Brantenberg for being my first teacher in Sámi ethno-politics and much more. Ande and Kathry Somby, Ingeborg Solvang, Hans Ragnar Mathisen, Rachel Andersen and Laurent Fauconnier also contributed their points of view to the making of the film. A warm gittus eatnat to Harald Gaski with whom I could share such rich moments of communication around joik. Thanks to Thomas Hilder and Laura Castor for inciting me to write about the process, which I finally did! This text though could never become as I had wished it, if it hadn’t been for the midwifery ability of Michelle Rabeja, to whom I am indebted and thankful.

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In memoriam: Ailloas, 23.03.1943-26.11.2001

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Forest of Bliss: Sensory Experience and Ethnographic Film

Abstract

Forest of Bliss (1986) is a film that explores the ancient Indian city of Benares, focusing on both funeral and religious practices. The viewer comes to know the city through the eyes of ethnographic filmmaker Robert Gardner. He describes it by the use of complex editing that allows this documentary to be included in the subgenre of city symphony. The film is distinguished both by its dense network of visual and aural symbols with which the cycle of death and regeneration is represented and by its ability to communicate the sensory experience of being there. The filmic procedures of *Forest of Bliss* evoke synesthetic perception, increasing the viewer's participation in the daily life of the culture shown. Because of these features, the film can be considered in relation to the recent attention anthropology has given to the role of the senses in a given culture, even though Gardner did not intend this film for scientific purposes.

Keywords

Robert Gardner, *Forest of Bliss*, anthropology of the senses, ethnographic film, Benares, being there, city symphony, sensory experience.

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graduated from the University of Bologna in “Dams” (curriculum Cinema) and has a diploma from the School of Visual Ethnography of ISFCI in Rome. His area of expertise is Visual Anthropology, especially the use of film for the study and comprehension of the various aspects of culture. The film journal «Bianco e Nero» (n. 571, 2011, CSC, Carocci) published his essay *Forest of Bliss. Esperienza sensoriale e film etnografico*. His work entitled *Rappresentazioni indigene: profili e tecniche del 'salvataggio' etnografico*. *Dead Birds di Robert Gardner* was published in the book *Rappresentare. Questioni di antropologia, cinema e narrativa* (2012, Clueb).

In the United States the second half of the twentieth century was a period of major development for visual anthropology. Margaret Mead continued promoting the use of cinematographic tools in the study of culture and field research, while the production of ethnographic documentaries made important strides thanks to the work of Robert Gardner and the Film Study Center. This production center was founded in 1957 and it was established initially in Harvard's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. The center, directed by Gardner for 40 years, represented a source of young talent, among which were John Marshall and Timothy Asch, who for the next few decades became some of the most active individuals experimenting and proposing various forms of contact between cinema and anthropology. While in Europe Jean Rouch, who trained in Marcel Griaule's school, used the camera to document other cultures, it was the important work of Gardner and the Film Study Center in America that led to an even closer collaboration between documentary film and cultural anthropology. With his academic background in anthropology and his self-taught education in cinema, Gardner established himself as a filmmaker in 1964 thanks to *Dead Birds*, a film shot during an expedition in Western New Guinea in which Karl G. Heider and Michael Rockefeller also took part. Gardner's first feature film directly highlights the double nature that distinguishes almost all ethnographic documentaries directed by him: in addition to representing local culture, there is also an interpretation of anthropological data, in order to express a personal vision with the primary purpose of representing indigenous reality as an existential condition of all mankind.

Human mortality, which is a recurring theme in this author's works, is particularly explored in the film by going beyond the meaning given by the society being observed, in order to describe the concerns and profound needs that are common to all individuals, regardless of their origins and traditions. Gardner often avoids addressing of scientific concerns in his films, nonetheless they are analyzed by anthropologists and ethnographic film academics, and they undoubtedly represent an important part of the collection of works in the history of visual anthropology. His films have raised debates, at times quite controversial ones, between those who appreciate their original and effective representation methods and those who instead believe these representations are too subjective of the populations encountered to be scientifically valid. The main focus of said discussions has been *Forest of Bliss*, the portrait of an indigenous culture that is the most complex and experimental of Gardner's ethnographic films. Together with *Dead Birds* it is among his most famous works, and to this day it allows us to reflect on important epistemological questions of visual anthropology. The blend of art and science, the authenticity of the representation, the use of film language to render the experience of others, and the use of specific cinematic codes to free this field of research from a subordinate relationship to written anthropology, are all central topics in the connection between film and ethnography that can be discussed using Gardner's work as an example. This film represents an interesting point of discussion in a field with blurred boundaries where the definition of "ethnographic documentary" is subject of debate among scholars.

Forest of Bliss is a 1986 documentary filmed in Benares, Varanasi, in collaboration with various anthropologists, including Ákos Östör, a very experienced researcher in India. "Forest of

Bliss” is the name used for Benares in ancient Sanskrit texts. It is the city on the banks of the Ganges River: a privileged place for believers who reach it upon dying in order to be cremated or to bathe the corpse in its sacred waters, in the hopes that by dying in this city they can free themselves from the perpetual cycle of reincarnation which everyone is subject to. *Forest of Bliss* offers a mosaic description of Benares. Various events and actions intertwine repeat and alternate with each other, forming a complex composition. Among the images shown by Gardner, who shot and edited the film, we can see workers transporting sand and wood; temples and religious processions; marigolds being collected and turned into garlands; prayers and offerings made to gods; animals feeding on whatever they encounter; cadavers being transported in the streets or by water; or burnt in funeral pyres; various types of boats as they move along the river; and children playing. There are three people who are followed more closely than others as they perform their daily activities, but episodically nonetheless, and whose names are not mentioned in the film but simply in the director’s writings: Mithai Lal, an elderly healer; Dom Raja, an “untouchable” who takes care of affairs related to funeral ceremonies; and Ragul Pandit, a man devoted to prayers and rituals. In the film, the ancient atmosphere of stone architecture and religious liturgies prevails: there are only a few scenes of chaotic streets filled with crowds, bicycles, and traffic noise. The Ganges River has a central role in the film’s depiction of the city. The events and activities shown often concern the long string of bathing ghats, the cremation ground, the transport boats and the stretches of sandy shores. The film begins and ends with dawn, describing a day in Benares without employing educational or explanatory description; rejecting many stylistic features of anthropological cinema which have been used by Gardner in previous documentaries. In *Forest of Bliss* we can see the elimination of an immediate cause-and-effect continuity between events. The meaning is produced through metaphors, symbols, and allusions, at times difficult to interpret, created by complex editing partly influenced by the work of Eisenstein, Vertov, and Ruttmann. *Forest of Bliss* can, in fact, be placed within the city symphonies genre. It is a form of documentary that was inaugurated by the European avant-garde of the twenties, where a restricted environment, usually a city, is described by rejecting the conventions of narrative cinema and the focus on verbal communication, in order to rely on a conceptual representation based on the expressive and associative potential of images. In the diegesis of the film, the city is often represented through a single day, which is used as the frame and reason for the progression of the situations shown. As observed by William Guynn, the representation abandons the use of the classic elements of film such as main character and continuity of actions, because the people that are filmed are followed for short periods of time, too short to allow the unfolding of a narrative plot. The film must therefore find new and different methods of textual organization in order to give coherence to the succession of sequences (Guynn 1998: 91).

Gardner's interest in the visual possibilities for shaping ideas and concepts, led him to gradually disengage the use of narration and interviews in his ethnographic documentaries. In *Forest of Bliss* we can, in fact, experience an absence of intelligible speech, since the film has no voice-over, no captions, or subtitles explaining the images, except for a brief introductory quote

and the name of the place. Consequently, the non-translated discussions and comments of the people of Benares acquire a paralinguistic value. In the absence of verbal or written communication, which attributes a specific significance to events and connects them to each other, the viewer is led to other forms of reception including, as we shall see, sensorial and symbolic ones.

Forest of Bliss is an exploration of the ancient city of Benares, focusing on funeral practices and surrounding business, while interpreting the dualism of life and death through images and sounds that evoke a sense of death and the continuous regeneration of existence. As a means of finding order in the chaotic city center, Gardner extrapolates a series of elements, which are often ordinary, building a network of symbols and parallels that communicate the transitory nature of existence throughout the film. In *Forest of Bliss* the freshly picked marigolds will be partly used as body decorations in the funeral rituals; the stacked wood will be used to cremate the dead; and the vitality with which men prepare and use the boats or supports for transporting the cadavers is destined to wane. The wood will be consumed by the fire, turning into ash; and the men's bodies will become inert over time, in a process of continuous consumption and transformation that represents the theme of the film, as well as a reification of the Hindu beliefs in the cycle of existence. "Everything in this world is eater or eaten, the seed is food and fire is eater": this is the interpretation of the film given by the initial quote of W.B Yeats from the Upanishad translation, which indicates a world where nothing lasts forever and everything that is born is destined to be consumed, to be symbolically burnt or devoured (Gardner, Östör 2001: 23). Boats, birds, dogs, kites, and marigolds, for example; all become visual motifs, symbols of life and death with possibly a slowly emerging significance; just like the aforementioned piles of wood, which, only near the end of the film, can we begin to understand are associated with the dead, to be used in their cremation ceremonies. The Ganges River becomes an image and chronotope of the passage between opposite conditions or states of being and the eternal cycle of existence. The camera constantly moves through a world where rituals of purification and urban decay, holiness and materialism, vigorous figures and lifeless bodies all coexist. It follows the life of Benares in order to embody its atmosphere in the cinematic experience and to give the viewer the feeling of being there.

Although the topic will be introduced for functional purposes, this paper will not go into detail regarding the complex structures of symbols and metaphors which have already been extensively discussed elsewhere (Oppitz, 1988; Gardner and Östör, 2001; Henley, 2007, etc.); instead we will examine how the film is able to evoke a physical and multisensorial exploration of the local culture. This is why we have included a detailed description of some parts of the film with specific reference to the procedures that create this effect. We will consider the connection of *Forest of Bliss* to anthropology and its recent interest for the role of the senses, to indicate some of the applications ethnographic film might have within that field of research. We will see how a research-oriented interpretation of this work is possible, even though Gardner did not intend to produce this film for scientific purposes.

Forest of Bliss focuses on the description of a city based on an elaborate combination and repetition of images, colors, sounds, voices, and songs. Ilisa Barbash states that:

[...] the film virtually demands the viewer to respond non-verbally, viscerally. As such, it stimulates an interplay of the senses with an uncommon intensity: the camera's eye seems at once unusually tactile and unusually auditory. More than that, it is an olfactory eye and a haptic ear. We feel and smell the ghats and their pyres, the boats and their oar locks, the bamboo-worker and his *bidi*, as much as we see and hear them (Barbash 2001: 377).

The spectator's attention is drawn towards the sensorial world produced by the activities of the inhabitants of Benares and their relationship with the environment in which they live. This aspect, however, does not preclude the need for active engagement in understanding the documentary: the dense network of metaphors, visual and audio symbols to be deciphered, and the connections between situations that are not immediately accessible are constant throughout the entire film. This response to the film, which we could define as "conceptual" appears rather hidden and difficult to grasp compared to the more immediate sensorial one. In *Forest of Bliss* we witness various discontinued activities, without contextualization or a direct explanation. At first glance the movie appears to be a series of miscellaneous situations, linked only by the fact that they take place in Benares and often concern funeral rituals. This characteristic has provoked harsh criticism from reviewers: according to Jay Ruby (1991: 13) the documentary represents "a jumble of incomprehensible vignettes", while for Jonathan P. Parry (1988: 7) the message given by the film is that India appears too impenetrable, therefore "all we can do is stand and stare. So let the camera roll". However, in *Forest of Bliss* each element is carefully arranged to form a logical and coherent filmic discourse, without resorting to conventional organizational layouts, and, as we saw with Guynn, this is an aspect deeply rooted in the subgenre of city symphony. In fact, these same considerations may be applied to *The Man with a Movie Camera* (Dziga Vertov, 1929), which as Noël Burch observes, must be viewed several times and requires the active participation of the viewer to decipher the images, in order to understand its multiple associations of concepts: Every shot is determined by a series of meanings, which become fully accessible only through a meticulous and thorough knowledge of the film as a whole (Burch 1979: 94). Although *Forest of Bliss* does not have a classic narrative structure and the events are often fragmented to create symbolic, visual associations, there are still some story lines that can be reconstructed by connecting seemingly unrelated situations. For example, in the first part we see certain actions where the significance escapes us: large quantities of marigolds being picked and transported to the city (Fig. 1); a type of ladder being built out of bamboo (Fig. 2); the inner courtyard of a building being washed (Fig. 3). In addition, the film shows elderly women lying in bed receiving visitors, including a priest. These events are not immediately explained and they are blended with other various situations. Their significance, however, becomes clear a while later (min. 39-43), when the body of a deceased elderly woman is carried on what we now realize is a stretcher, decorated with marigold garlands used as funeral elements, and it is laid down in the hospice courtyard, which was previously prepared and purified for this moment (Fig. 4). Using the slow

disclosure technique, typical of Flaherty's documentaries, the meaning of the previously shown activities is explained gradually, becoming fully understood only after the documentation of this funeral ceremony. This method, used in Gardner's film, gives the viewer the sensation of progressively exploring and discovering the city, while lessening “the potential for initial revulsion on the part of a Western audience that may have differing ideas about death, corpses, and economics” (Coover 2001: 416).



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In the world of ethnographic cinema, the documentary series *Netsilik Eskimo* (Quentin Brown, Robert Young, 1967–1968) has also described another culture without relying on an explanation given through narration or translations, except in rare instances. These films were shot among the Canadian Arctic Inuit under the supervision of anthropologist Asen Balikci, and they mainly provide a portrait of the material culture of the indigenous people. Hunting and fishing practices, building sleds and homes, and tanning skins, for example, are often told using analytical editing and the previously mentioned visual suspense mechanisms. Parallel editing is also commonly used to make scenes dynamic and to better describe the subdivision of tasks according to social roles. Through the use of careful shots and accentuated sounds, this series of films emphasizes the sensible aspects of the indigenous environment—its objects, foods, and inhabitants—by evoking the feeling of being there and intimately participating in the Inuit everyday life. Nevertheless, *Netsilik Eskimo* uses a linear narration and the lack of explanation is motivated by the principle of using films as a didactic tool in various educational contexts, with suitable written material and explanations from the instructor used as a support. *Forest of Bliss* has a different and rather more ambitious objective: to communicate the intangible—in other words, the ideas related to spirituality, and the life and death of the people of Benares, often through a kind of editing in which the sum of images produces a new meaning compared to the content of single shots. We see a boat loaded with wood moving along the river, then a cut to birds flying in the sky, and finally the image of a cadaver floating in the Ganges River “in order to say that wood has some death-related meaning, that it is not just for keeping people warm at night” (Gardner, Östör 2001: 48).

As previously mentioned, aside from its particularly semantic and narrative characteristics, Gardner's film is distinguished by the representation and evocation of the sensorial world of Benares. *Forest of Bliss* creates an immediate impact due to its visual and audio peculiarities. The seductive images of the city are often accompanied by sounds, with an increased volume in comparison to the background audio. This stylistic feature of Gardner's cinema intensifies the involvement of the viewer's senses. Sounds can be enhanced to better express the material nature of the elements filmed. With certain shots—when the body of a donkey is dragged down a stairway accompanied by a loud hollow thud as the head hits the steps—the solidity of this space is communicated through a graphic description that which would not have been possible without heightening the sound (Ibid., 68).

On the other hand, the grace and balance of the women as they carry marigolds on their heads (min. 16-17) is transmitted with the fluid movement of the camera and the silence produced by this task, whereas the spectator has become used to hearing the sounds of everyone else's activities. This scene is also contrasted with the much noisier one that follows, which contributes to a greater impact.

Here (min. 17-18), the weight of tree trunks laboriously loaded and carried on the shoulders of the workers is effectively depicted by the low position of the camera and the

upwards angle shot, which focuses the main aspects of the actions in the upper part of the frame producing the effect of pushing the viewer down to the ground (Fig. 5, 6)¹

The sounds are intensified by Gardner, even when their origin is offscreen, thus giving the



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6. © Documentary Educational Resources

impression of a wider space than what is seen in the frame (MacDougall 2001: 83-84), a space aurally disclosed as the viewer waits to be affected by the remaining senses. The repeated sounds of bells, and the strokes and squeaks of the oars rhythmically punctuate the images, allowing the viewer to slip into the atmosphere of Benares. Many shots in *Forest of Bliss* were recorded without synchronized sound: Gardner (2006: 303) does not believe in the *cinéma vérité* approach, and prefers to work the audio separately in order to make the most of the possibilities of expression. Sight and hearing evoke the perception of other senses: we feel the soft texture of the food being avidly eaten by Dom Raja; we breathe in the incense used during prayer; and we are enveloped in the smell of smoke and the heat of the fire of religious rituals. In the representation of Benares the numerous images of alleyways, temples, and dwellings are alternated with bright and open shots of flower fields, the sky, or the riverside, in a composition of space that oscillates between feelings of constriction and relief. The fascination with color contrast is expressed in these environments: between the pale tints of buildings and the intense tawny, lilac, and purple tones of flowers, of certain clothing and fabrics, even the ones used for the dead in the ceremonies (Fig. 1, 7, 8). Color is not simply perceived by the eye; its material qualities also engage the sense of touch. During the blessing ritual for a recently repaired boat (min. 48-52), the fluid color can be felt on the skin; or dust can be felt on fingertips as the

¹ Stan Brakhage conversation with Robert Gardner in *Forest of Bliss* - Special Edition DVD. 2008, Studio7Arts. All images included in the article are courtesy of Documentary Educational Resources

carpenter plunges his hand in the yellow ochre paint, then delicately touches a ruby red substance leaving fingerprints or small markings on the hull, the ground, and work tools (Fig. 9, 10).



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In the city of Benares that is depicted in *Forest of Bliss*, people and animals coexist and move incessantly. People are often filmed through shots that avoid or overshadow their faces due to the contrast of light. The shots concentrate on bodies walking, working, praying, and tightening up. The camera tends to avoid illustrative shots and prefers dramatic and suggestive angles (Fig. 11, 12, 13) or tight positions that amplify the illusion of physically participating in the activities shown (Fig. 14, 15, 16).



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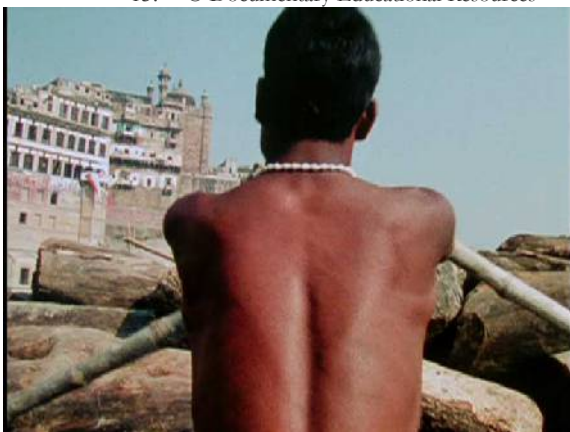
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13. © Documentary Educational Resources



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The recurrent images of the dirty and dusty ground and stairs, as people and animals walk by, further emphasize the strong and concrete relationship between the city and its inhabitants.

For example, at the beginning of the film we see Mithai Lal leaving home to go to the waters of the Ganges River for daily ablutions (Fig. 17, 18, 19, 20).



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The camera follows him with ten shots (min. 3-4) from different positions, at times up close, without ever clearly revealing his face. The attention is exclusively focused on his careful

steps, the slow and strenuous movements of his legs, the sound of his bare feet as he descends the stone stairs, the tight and filthy alleyways, the background noises, and, most of all, his voice as he makes throaty comments—which to us are incomprehensible—during his long walk. The body, space, and movements are all combined to depict this man's experience and the physical characteristics of the area where he moves about. As we already know, in *Forest of Bliss* there is no particular importance given to a sole individual. The film focuses on the relationship between the people and the environment made up of a city maze, incense and temples, coexistence with animals and river activities—while communicating the idea of an organic whole. Michael Oppitz (1988: 210) talks about an “impersonal quality of the film”, because aside from the three cases mentioned, the other inhabitants of Benares appear as expressions of the activities they perform, disappearing behind their tasks. Nevertheless, Gardner's film avoids objectifying people by transforming them into mechanisms of a highly organized social life, which is what occurs in many “visual symphonies” such as those by Ruttmann and Vertov. *Forest of Bliss* is a representation of material and spiritual life, which in fact recalls *The Song of Ceylon* by Basil Wright, a 1934 documentary that deeply inspired Gardner's work. Most of all, Gardner appreciates the capacity to express the sacred atmosphere of the place through the editing, with the use of simple images of birds, stones, the sky, and water; seeing these on their own and without audio would not create the same effect (Gardner 2006: 310). Furthermore, *The Song of Ceylon* possesses “an amazing capacity to make images that convey feeling and mood at the same time they are representing, even preserving, the world of reality” (Gardner 1996: 171). If Wright's film uses narration and describes the changing of a world (from ancient times to the introduction of commercial trade on the island), then it is the use of symbols and above all the humanity and depth of its portrayal that are the important aspects we can be sure to find in *Forest of Bliss*. According to Thomas W. Cooper the film displays people through various points of view, sometimes already in mid-action, allowing the viewer to participate in the events more effectively:

Often we originate with a process, like its “intimates,” rather than being attracted toward it from afar, like tourists. When bodies of the dead are being prepared, we encircle them, then follow them, as do others in the procession (Cooper 1995: 40).

Forest of Bliss does not have a communicative strategy that overlays images with characters, a narrative voice, or texts. Instead, these images are what attract the attention of the viewer, asking to be perceived along with sounds in all their expressive power. From this point of view, the prologue of the film is paradigmatic. *Forest of Bliss* starts with a long fade-in from black, and the first sense being engaged is hearing, through the increasing volume of bells, birds' cries, and the patter of animal. These moments evoke in the mind of the viewer the sensation of an undefined open space. The first shot is of a dog on a whitish background (Fig. 21), looking in various directions beyond the frame and walking on the sand, until disappearing past the right margin of the screen. The same direction of movement is followed in the next shot of a boat in

the dim light of dawn (Fig. 22): the coming in and out of the frame continues to suggest a space which goes beyond the visually perceived, a space already introduced by the sounds offscreen. We then see workers (Fig. 23), animals, boats, architectural elements, and a young boy (Fig. 24) tightening the string of a kite (offscreen) as the sun rises. The shots filmed in the morning fog have a grainy texture. The image is lacking in consistency, and the “haptic eye” tries to penetrate the space evoking the feeling of a porous membrane. The growls and barks, increasing in intensity, break the stillness by changing the tone of the scene. On the sand, a few dogs start biting each other: an emotional moment due to the harsh impact, which transmits a sense of pain caused by this sudden and violent action. The scene ends with the opening credits and dull sounds, which we understand to be hatchets as we hear a tree crashing to the ground. Although these elements will come together in the film creating a framework of



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well-defined meanings and symbols, in the prologue they affect the viewer and his or her imagination through a synesthetic experience, which does not simply engage sight and hearing but the entire body, creating a strong impression of spatial dimension. The film particularly suggests an image of the environment that often it is not possible to directly see: the presence of the river is evoked through shots of sandy surfaces and the movements of boats and the sound of splashing water. Shots of the young boy allude to the kite and the sky. While the sounds of the fallen tree create a compelling image in the viewer's mind, much more than sight would have allowed (Gardner, Östör 2001: 25). *Forest of Bliss* stimulates a physical and emotional response in the viewer. The “haptic eye” provokes repulsive sensations as it lingers on corpses floating in the river, or on dogs chewing carcasses with the sound of flesh between teeth (Fig. 25). The texture, mass, and superficial character of the elements shown are communicated at times with close-ups, creating a contrast in volumes with the subjects in the background: the rough mass of the sand load carried by a boat is contrasted with the slender figure of the boatman (Fig. 26), just like the heads of water buffalo, with their swollen eyes and their round hairy bodies, fill the screen as the inhabitants of Benares appear in the background as small figures (Fig. 27). However, the attention given to the human body, with its physical and organic nature, which may appear efficient (such as men rowing, carrying wood, building objects) or dysfunctional (such as Mithai Lal's difficulty moving, the blindness of an elderly man, the bedridden women dying), is usually one of the main aspects through which *Forest of Bliss* represents the city. The interest in the body emerges from constant physical and manual labor, and from the organic processes and bodily functions sometimes included in the film. It emerges from the inclusion of elements of everyday life, which, as David MacDougall (2006: 19) observes with regard to cinema, are often excluded in films due to the social taboos involved, when they are in fact shown, a sense of realism is created. Through feelings of aversion or empathy, shock or familiarity, and disturbance or visual pleasure, the body of the viewer is engaged at an emotional and sensorial level within the space of the film, regardless of his or her narrative or symbolic understanding. Finally, in addition to the physicality of the subjects filmed and the viewer, the documentary also calls into question the body of the filmmaker, whose presence emerges from numerous hand-held shots, thus suggesting an active figure behind the camera. The filmmaker's body and his movements are fixed in the film, allowing us to reflect upon the relationship between the observer, the observed and the viewer, through the resonance of their physical experiences.



25. © Doc. Educational Resources



26. © Doc. Educational Resources



27. © Doc. Educational Resources

Forest of Bliss distinguishes itself from many documentaries about other cultures due to the different methods of representation used. It has been criticized for its experimental nature: some scholars find this way of describing a culture as ineffective as visual anthropology. In his harsh attack of Gardner's work, Ruby (1991: 13) judges *Forest of Bliss* as a discontinuous and formalistic portrait intended to depict India as a mysterious and exotic country, which in his opinion is a cliché that is accepted or “forgiven” by various anthropologists due to the artistic qualities and universal themes of this author's films. Östör (1994: 80) believes that even if the film does not document every aspect of the religious activities, it still recalls the overall meaning of the events shown. He affirms that *Forest of Bliss* shows how the cycle of death and rebirth is described, accepted with detachment by the people of Benares through the power of ritual practice that permeates their life, allowing them to transcend everyday experiences in order to get in touch with metaphysical truths. Ritual practice acts as a support for the inhabitants of Benares when dealing with traumatic events, replacing the public manifestation of pain which is socially unaccepted here (Ibid.). This is an aspect of Hindu tradition rendered by *Forest of Bliss*: through the use of editing, it alternates simple material practices with funeral and religious ceremonies, showing how these situations are intimately related to the habitual customs of Benares. The contemplation of the flow and transformation of existence is preferred over the representation of anguish, which fleetingly emerges in only two shots of the film. *Forest of Bliss* does not aspire to achieve an exhaustive and straightforward description of indigenous society; instead, it organizes a complex experience where the world of the Benares people blends with the director's vision to involve the viewer, both emphatically and rationally, in the actions, the works, and the ceremonies of Benares. By borrowing an idea put forward by anthropology, the viewer becomes part of what Sarah Pink calls “ethnographic place”. This is not the real place of fieldwork but rather the place built by its representation (through a book, a film, a musical composition, or other form) which embodies the experiences, discourses, thoughts, theories, memories, and imagination of the ethnographer and the subjects studied: the reader or viewer is invited to participate with his or her own subjectivity and senses to imagine him or herself in this

conceptually abstract space already experienced by others, and to therefore understand its relationships (Pink 2009: 41-42/140-141).

The attention given to the body, its perceptions and its environment, allows us to consider *Forest of Bliss* in relation to the growing anthropological interest shown in the past twenty years regarding the relationship between human senses and culture. There are earlier examples of ethnographic research which examined the various sensorial aspects of human activity and their context², just as there were studies of psychology, philosophy, art, neurology, etc. that had investigated man's relationship with the way he perceives the world in which he lives. That said, this concept did not gain interest until the end of the 1980s and during the 1990s, also under the influence of two remarkable works that are considered landmarks of the anthropological study of the senses, *The Taste of Ethnographic Things* (1989) and *Sensuous Scholarship* (1997), both by Paul Stoller. That is when this discipline turned its attention to the complex role of bodily senses in the acquisition of knowledge and in the attribution of meaning to social practices. The growing interest in these themes and consequent large quantity of publications that were produced, brought about a consolidation of the concepts into a field of study that compelled anthropological research to consider new epistemological questions and often, to rethink the ethnographer's work in the field. Stoller criticizes conventions of ethnographic realism and the researcher's attitude towards indigenous cultures as if they were texts to be analyzed objectively, stripping research results of the complexity and intensity of the researcher's own sensorial experience, lived in the first person with the natives. In sensorial anthropology, the study of social phenomena does not privilege the senses of sight and hearing in field research and avoids a scientific approach that relies on severe detachment: even the senses of touch, taste, and smell—in other words the profusion of stimuli of reality—all come into play in the anthropologist's acquisition of knowledge and expression of theories. Therefore, these research communications modes are gradually more efficient in portraying this realm of experience. Various studies of the anthropology of the senses used an interdisciplinary approach and resorted to instruments for recording real life, in order to gain further knowledge and communicate the ethnographer's work about topics that are sometimes hard to describe, as is sensorial perception. From this point of view *Forest of Bliss* shows interesting possibilities; the film can be used to render environmental aspects as well as the physical and sensorial engagement of both the indigenous peoples and the observer, which would be difficult to communicate in other contexts through writing. As we previously examined, the effective perceptual evocation of the film occurs through inter-sensorial connections, the study of which is central to this type of anthropology, and they help to create a

² These topics occur, for example, in the research of Alfred C. Haddon (Pink, 2006, pp. 5-6), of Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead (Pink, 2006, p. 9-10) and of Bronislaw Malinowski (Stoller, 1989, p.8).

sense of being there. Ethnographic film may therefore be a means to engage the viewer at a physical and emotional level, in questions related to experience, the body and the senses, that are an inevitable part of any field research but are often removed from finished reports of anthropologists (Nichols 1991: 38-39).

Stoller (1997) pointed out how the places of research are not only inhabited by the anthropologist, but they can also penetrate his own body in unexpected, profound and sometimes traumatic ways. As we have seen, the portrait of Benares in *Forest of Bliss* transmits a set of sensorial stimuli, which gives the impression of a world that flows viscerally into the spectator's body. Stoller (1989: 153-156) recognized the evocative power of cinema. He cites the example of Rouch's film, to claim that also thanks to this channel it is possible to communicate the intensity and richness of the sensorial experience of living in another culture. *Forest of Bliss* is not a detailed description of Indian society. It explores several situations, particularly connected to the cycle of death and regeneration and holiness that permeates life in Benares, while transmitting a strong impression of the city's atmosphere. Clearly, the film was not designed as an analytical investigation of the city's religious rituals, nor as research into the senses. Gardner intended to communicate an experience of the city through those aspects that he felt were significant:

[...] the combination of sounds and images in "Forest of Bliss" was intended to highlight what I've felt were essential elements of my, and perhaps others', experience of Benares. You must remember that all such films as "Forest of Bliss" are highly subjective in the manner in which their subject matter is presented, and that there is nothing final or definitive about the content of "Forest of Bliss".³

As mentioned, the interest that anthropology has had in sensorial perception brought about a search for methodologies for effectively communicating it. Stoller gives a great deal of importance to a narrative approach—especially written narrative—in order to describe the sensorial experiences of the ethnographer and the native people and their cultural significance. However, this is but one of the possible approaches that can be used by anthropology of the senses. In fact, this discipline does not have any one methodology for the representation of the sensorial sphere. Through its abundant research, the discipline has also studied the role of perception from divers angles. Pink identifies three main questions that this field of research has focused on:

It explores the question of the relationship between sensory perception and culture, engages with questions concerning the status of vision and its relationship to the other senses, and

³ Personal Communication of Robert Gardner (28 June 2011)

demands a form of reflexivity that goes beyond the interrogation of how culture is ‘written’ to examine the sites of embodied knowing (Pink 2009: 15).

We have noted that *Forest of Bliss* does not employ a conventional narrative framework, and yet it presents a rich sensorial description of the local culture. The film does not pursue scientifically the way in which perception of the senses gains significance in the context of the social phenomena it depicts. An example of this type of film is the series of documentaries shot by MacDougall (2000-2004) in the residential all-male Doon School, the most prestigious secondary school in India. MacDougall (2006: 94-119) shows how the strict education received by the students is not expressed exclusively through formal, institutional precepts and teachings, but on a non-semiotic level, it is played out through the esthetics of daily experience: in an implicit and pervasive way in the organization of space and time, in movement and in the use of the body, in types of gesture and posture, in the use of clothing and colors and so on, that are all part of the institution’s daily life and whose order is deeply internalized by the students. MacDougall calls this aspect of culture *social aesthetic* and about it, he claims: “I should stress here that I do not mean a system of signs and meanings encoded in school life, but rather the creation of an aesthetic space or sensory structure” (Ibid., 105). Even though Gardner’s film was not conceived within a project that delves into anthropology of the senses, it is useful for an investigation of ways to depict perception that are alternative to words. In this essay, we have considered the processes that allow the spectator to experience the film in ways that involve his or her body in the description of Benares. The inter-sensorial effect that the film evokes is an example of the interconnection among the senses that gives a “global” perception of the places and actions that are presented. The topic of anthropology and research of perception was treated critically in recent years by Tim Ingold who referred specifically to sight and hearing when he championed the idea that sensorial perceptions by their nature do not occur separately from one another but concurrently, so that an interpretation of their function in terms of contrast or of a hierarchical classification on the base of differing social contexts is misleading (Ingold, 2000). This idea is supported, for example, by Stoller who in studying the Songhay people of Niger, hypothesized that for them the sense of hearing was primary over seeing, while in the Western world we usually recognize that sight has a central importance among human perception (Ibid., 250-252). If we follow Ingold in accepting the idea that the senses are necessarily inseparable, we can still note that for the subject area we are examining, there are film-making methods that can effectively involve this aspect of sensorial perception. In fact, *Forest of Bliss* shows how— thanks to the methods that we have described here—the film medium can give an impression of being there and an idea of the “sensoriality” of another place; this is an experience which is not only visual and auditory but it can evoke wider perception. This representational mode is also useful in the ethnographic realm, even though the film was not intended to serve that purpose. In fact, Gardner states that the *Forest of Bliss* project diverges from *Dead Birds* in this way:

In 1961, when I was planning work in New Guinea, I can remember how bound I felt by anthropological scruples. I had not yet formulated a working distinction between fact and truth, document and insight, observation and vision. This accounts for the tension I now see between the requirements of science and of art in my film *Dead Birds*. In Benares, I expected to be free of those kinds of concerns and yet [...] there was the conceptual predicament of how to make sense of the chaos I saw in Benares as a whole (Gardner 2006: 279-281)

Nevertheless, *Forest of Bliss* has provoked heated academic debates over its ethnographic value and it is interesting to re-examine the work in the light of a consolidation of the study of the senses in anthropology, which occurred after the film's release. Further, also the work of an author like Flaherty, while not motivated by scientific research, is now included in the field of visual anthropology, and its role in the development of the ethnographic film genre has been often studied. If we look at Gardner's work from the standpoint of a study of the senses, it acquires interest even *a posteriori*, because of its depiction of cultural practices that manage to transmit a sensation of actually participating in the situations displayed; re-enacting Benares' atmosphere and the multitude of stimuli it offers. While he was shooting the film, Gardner wasn't particularly interested in portraying the human body or its senses, he wanted to treat the theme of man's mortal destiny ("our animal fates"), stating: "I was also interested in the rituals surrounding the preparation of the dead (or bodies) for their onward journey".⁴ Like many of his other works, the film aspires to involve the spectator in reflections on his own existence:

Films like mine, I have hoped, would act in some manner or other, as a mirror of the viewer's own soul, that is to say, life experience. To the extent this occurs, I am confident that a viewer will examine his or her own life, which seems to me the most desirable goal of all.⁵

In our opinion, Gardner's priority in *Forest of Bliss* of communicating the experience, of communicating the world he encountered while in Benares, is an important motivation that orients the film towards depicting sensorial phenomena, spaces and the bodies that inhabit them, which is useful for a study of the relationship between the film and anthropology of the senses. In fact, as Pink noted, the study of an in-the-field experience, as lived out by both the ethnographer and the subject of the research, has often been significant in studies of anthropology of the senses, as are the possible modes of communicating such experience. (Pink 2009: 23-26). She proposes a type of ethnography that takes experience into account, investigating "the relationships between bodies, minds and the materiality and sensoriality of the environment" (Ibid., 25). While, "anthropologists cannot get inside other people's lives or have

4 Personal Communication of Robert Gardner (28 June 2011)

5 Personal Communication of Robert Gardner (28 June 2011)

their experiences. Nevertheless [...] we have a variety of techniques for getting close to them through *our own* lives and experiences” (Pink 2006: 134), referring also to the use of means of expression like film and video to reach this result, through various pathways and with supporting theoretic-anthropological references. It is from this point of view that *Forest of Bliss* can be considered a work that was ahead of its time. It showed the medium’s potential for portraying sensorial experience. This appears differently than Östör’s work, as Gardner’s activity was not intended for an anthropological analysis, but for other purposes. In his own words:

We shared many interests in the city of Benares. Östör’s main interests were, however, more in the Indo-logical aspects of his experience in that city. My own interests encompassed a different, and perhaps wider, concern for the city as an experiential whole.⁶

MacDougall (2001: 71) considers *Forest of Bliss* a documentary with an original approach that has the merit of indicating new concepts for visual anthropology. In fact, in his opinion ethnographic film can adopt various strategies for representing social realities: illustrative, didactic, narrative and associative. For MacDougall, *Forest of Bliss* uses the latter, and can be considered as a prototype of its genre:

An experiment in a radical anthropological practice which explores the largely invisible interrelations of the visible world through visual (and it must be added, auditory) means. Moreover, it seeks to do so in a fashion that resembles the way in which sensory awareness, cultural meaning, and metaphorical expression are combined in social experience, and which film can evoke so eloquently (Ibid.).

Forest of Bliss avoids a “transparent” description of Benares: although it is sometimes considered an example of “observational cinema”—due to the lack of narration explaining the images; the intimacy of observation; and the impression of witnessing reality—the filmmaker clearly expresses his interpretation of the local culture by using an expressive form of editing, which starkly differentiates this film from all others in this genre of documentary.

Gardner does not believe that film manages to record reality “as it truly is”:

All film-making consists in shaping something in such a way and with such materials and devices that it becomes an object with meaning, an object that is itself an invention; another item of culture with form and content (Gardner 1986: 23).

⁶ Personal Communication of Robert Gardner (13 July 2011)

Therefore, his films are not based on the attempt to describe social facts in the most neutral and comprehensive way possible, a method proposed by Heider—for example, in his famous formulation of principles for the use of film in the documentation of indigenous cultures (Heider 1976). However, this does not mean that Gardner's cinema abandons an attempt at depicting the meaning and transmitting the value of social experience. Ethnographic film can portray a culture through original cinematic language in order to capture various dimensions of the human condition. As is the case of *Forest of Bliss* and his exploration of the material, spiritual, and sensorial world of the people of Benares.

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L'Occidente in antropologia: Occidentalismo

Abstract

Anthropology is a discipline immersed in the study of difference. Since the publication of Said's Orientalism, a number of scholars have come to the conclusion that difference is what anthropology is expected to produce. The epistemological and moral attacks of Orientalism have contributed to anthropology's self-reflexivity about genre constraints and enduring rhetorical forms deployed in studying Others. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the categories by which the map of the world is represented within anthropology, providing a discussion of the ways in which anthropologists have Occidentalized the West. The paper aims to suggest that the spatial imageries deployed by anthropologists in orientalisng and exoticising the "culture" of alien societies are produced dialectically through the mobilisation of stereotypical representations of the West. The West, often identified and simplified as a commodity system or employed to mean Europe, operates within anthropology as stable geographical metaphor without an original referent.

Keywords

Anthropology, Orientalism, Occidentalism.

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Immaginazione geografica

E' stato scritto molto sul concetto di spazio e sul modo in cui il concetto fondamentale della geografia modella la socialità. Infatti, recenti sviluppi nell'ambito della geografia culturale hanno evidenziato e confermato che luogo, spazio e paesaggio danno significato alla nostra vita culturale e sociale attraverso le creazioni dell'immaginazione. Il nostro modo di abitare il mondo, cioè il nostro situarci nello spazio e nel tempo, è mediato da pratiche e processi immaginativi attraverso i quali conosciamo noi stessi organizzando e ordinando i fatti della geografia. Sebbene la geografia sia molto di più di un impulso a perseguire forme di potere celate nella volontà cartografica di mappare, la geografia culturale si è recentemente sempre più ispirata agli studi delle scienze umanistiche che hanno esplorato il ruolo dell'immaginazione letteraria e della scrittura nel forgiare complesse costellazioni di potere e conoscenza attraverso l'apprezzamento del significato dello spazio geografico. Numerosi geografi, abbandonata la pretesa di un distacco oggettivo e scientifico della propria disciplina, sono oggi interessati al rapporto fra immaginazione e geografia, ossia ai meccanismi di raccolta dell'informazione geografica esaminati in connessione a certi modi di interpretare e prestare attenzione alla spazialità di un luogo. In effetti, si può affermare che l'immaginazione geografica produce una geografia tangibile – risultato di azioni collettive e insieme individuali – spesso data per scontata, cioè difficile da afferrare per il tramite dell'attenzione cosciente.

È opportuno osservare in proposito che il rapporto fra geografia e immaginazione è un motivo ricorrente negli scritti di Edward W. Said.¹ Infatti, coltivando un profondo interesse per lo spazio e la spazialità Said ha contribuito a risvegliare la nostra consapevolezza circa il significato della spazialità intesa come territorio simbolico che permea tutti gli ambiti dell'esistenza sociale. Giova dunque specificare la nozione di geografia immaginativa, la quale costituisce una delle elaborazioni concettuali indispensabili e centrali nel pensiero di Said che ci consente di comprendere la portata delle complicità geografiche dell'orientalismo. Nei suoi tentativi di de-naturalizzare le mappe mentali occidentali relative al mondo arabo, Said ha ripetutamente attirato l'attenzione sui modi in cui la natura dei luoghi è impiegata per creare immagini spaziali che sostengono un'apprensione orientalista dello spazio basata sull'esclusione e la divisione del mondo in compartimenti che accentuano la distanza e la differenza. Da ciò segue che alcune comunità umane vengono rappresentate e contenute all'interno di una cornice dominante che serve a legittimare l'egemonia di altre comunità.

Concentrando la sua attenzione sulla dimensione differenziale dello spazio geografico, Said interpreta in modo critico la persistenza di un senso di fissità spaziale e l'accentuazione della differenza "radicale" dei popoli colonizzati prodotte dalle strategie rappresentazionali impiegate dagli intellettuali occidentali per descrivere un Oriente esotico e distante. L'immagine di luogo che emerge dall'impiego di queste strategie non si limita a perfezionare il senso di lontananza e di esclusione di un territorio non europeo e della sua gente: essa ha conseguenze materiali nel mantenimento e nell'esercizio di un dominio di tipo imperiale. L'allontanamento del paesaggio fisico e culturale dell'Oriente come "spazio altro" d'irrazionalità e arretratezza rispetto alla razionalità e al progresso dell'Occidente secondo una

¹ Said W. E., *Orientalism*, London: Penguin 2003 [1978]; Said W. E., 'Orientalism Reconsidered', *Cultural Critique*, No. 1, 1985, pp. 89-107, University of Minnesota Press.

divisione binaria del mondo è il risultato dei modellamenti di una geografia immaginativa. Perciò le geografie immaginative, secondo Said, sono il risultato di un processo che ordina e divide lo spazio del mondo attraverso la proliferazione d'immagini e rappresentazioni stereotipiche che sostengono una geografia di tipo coloniale. In altri termini, le geografie immaginative sono il risultato dell'interazione complessa di potere, rappresentazione e conoscenza. Esse sono più che mere percezioni, poiché riguardano le molteplici sfumature che costituiscono la difficile distinzione fra il reale e l'immaginario.

In particolare, si può affermare che, secondo Said, una produzione discorsiva artistica e immaginativa avente come suo centro l'Europa ha ispessito i contorni della stranezza ed estraneità della cultura del Medio Oriente attraverso un turbinio di rimandi, citazioni e rinvii testuali che hanno stabilito e naturalizzato un discorso coloniale, il quale ha in seguito allargato i propri orizzonti nelle riproduzioni ed elaborazioni di resoconti successivi. Da questo punto di vista, l'antropologia culturale, come disciplina specializzata nella differenza umana e luogo canonico di produzione di conoscenza sui popoli colonizzati, così come la letteratura di viaggio ed i resoconti prodotti da viaggiatori ed esploratori (soprattutto nel diciannovesimo secolo), ha rivestito un ruolo importante nell'installare convenzioni e i protocolli discorsivi impiegati nella descrizione e mappatura del senso europeo dello spazio alieno. Pensando criticamente la distanza fra osservatore e osservato e concentrando la sua attenzione su testi fra loro eterogenei (libri di viaggio, resoconti accademici, romanzi, etc.), Said sostiene che le cornici e le strategie di osservazione stabilite nel tempo dalla scrittura europea al fine di colmare l'abisso inesplorato di terre poco conosciute sono il prodotto di una normalizzazione pervasiva dello spazio che pone limiti a ciò che si può affermare sui luoghi quasi sconosciuti che sono oggetto di osservazione. Detto altrimenti, le geografie immaginative, intese come modi di pensare prodotti e **riprodotti** continuamente nella vita quotidiana, sono il frutto di processi di fabbricazione poetica che contengono e dividono i popoli. Esse contribuiscono a modellare sia i nostri atteggiamenti verso comunità e luoghi "altri", sia il nostro modo di costruire e comprendere il nostro senso del sé nello spazio attraverso la rappresentazione dell'"altro".

Eterotopie e comunità immaginate

E' opportuno ricordare in proposito che nel localizzare un certo modo di vedere europeo (essendo l'Europa il centro privilegiato in cui l'osservazione e scrittura dell' "altro" hanno avuto tradizionalmente luogo), Said si rifà alle riflessioni sulla poetica dello spazio sviluppate dal filosofo francese Gaston Bachelard² (Gregory 1995: 29), secondo il quale lo spazio può essere valorizzato immaginariamente attraverso significati che drammatizzano la distanza e la differenza fra ciò che è vicino e ciò che è lontano. Come ho avuto modo di osservare in precedenza, la nozione di geografia immaginativa elaborata da Said ha avuto un impatto enorme sulla riflessione umanistica relativa all'impiego di categorie spaziali. Ad esempio, essa riecheggia in modo sfumato nel lavoro di Benedict Anderson³ (1983) dedicato

² Bachelard G., *La poetica dello spazio*, 4ª ristampa, Bari: Dedalo, 1993; Gregory D., 'Between the Book and the Lamp: Imaginative Geographies of Egypt, 1849-50', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series*, Vol. 20., No. 1 (1995), pp. 29-57.

³ Anderson B., *Comunità immaginate: origine e fortuna dei nazionalismi*, prefazione di Marco d'Eramo, Roma: Manifesto Libri 2000.

alle cosiddette comunità immaginate. La nozione di comunità immaginata ha conosciuto recentemente numerosi impieghi nello studio geografico delle comunità locali, cioè popolazioni geograficamente localizzate su piccola scala. L'argomento di Anderson può essere brevemente riassunto in questi termini: Anderson ritiene che gli stati-nazione siano costrutti mentali sostenuti da un senso di cameratismo basato su un'immagine condivisa d'identità che si mantiene nonostante le asimmetrie di potere fra i cittadini di una medesima nazione. Contrariamente alla *communis opinio* che definisce le nazioni come entità basate sul territorio, Anderson sostiene che gli stati-nazione, indipendentemente dalle loro dimensioni, sono invece il risultato dei nostri modi di costruire e modellare la relazione fra "noi" e "loro" e dei processi, sostenuti nel tempo, attraverso cui immaginiamo i confini fra il "nostro" e il "loro" spazio d'appartenenza.

In merito alla relazione fra spazio e immaginazione, si può ricordare inoltre che Michel Foucault⁴ (1967) è, insieme a Said, uno degli intellettuali che più hanno influito sulla trasformazione dei modi di pensare il concetto di spazio, contribuendo ad avviare un filone di pensiero di critica sociale che mette in discussione la nozione astratta e immateriale, cioè la visione "architettonica" dominante, dello spazio e della spazializzazione concepiti in termini positivisti. Foucault ha gettato le fondamenta di un nuovo modo di pensare le logiche spaziali (da intendere come forme di conoscenza socialmente costruite) e il modo in cui esse agiscono sulla nostra immaginazione costituendo le nostre visioni del mondo. Insistendo sulla materialità dello spazio, Foucault ha sempre nutrito un grande interesse per il modo in cui le relazioni spaziali in cui siamo immersi tracciano le linee di luoghi eterogenei irriducibili gli uni agli altri. A questo proposito si può osservare che Foucault definisce gli "spazi altri", detti anche "eterotopie", come quei siti irriducibili della differenza che rispecchiano i luoghi in cui abitiamo nella loro relazione d'inclusione ed esclusione con l'alterità. A differenza delle utopie, le "eterotopie" hanno un luogo e una presenza materiale reali che riflettono letteralmente, quasi come specchi, i rapporti di giustapposizione e disomogeneità fra ciò che è vicino e ciò che è lontano. Perciò lo spazio, secondo Foucault, non è uno sfondo immateriale e astratto o un paesaggio neutrale, nonostante la sua ricchezza e suggestività. Lo spazio per Foucault è un luogo dell'alterità che seduce e stimola la ricerca di nuovi orizzonti di compensazione, illusione e possibilità della nostra immaginazione. In particolare, secondo quanto appena osservato, lo spazio geografico modella potentemente la socialità agendo su di noi in modi sostantivi e performativi. Lo spazio geografico quindi non è un riflesso oggettivo della realtà, ma piuttosto una costruzione culturale legata a filo doppio a relazioni complesse di potere e conoscenza, ossia un campo che, nominato e colonizzato discorsivamente, è parte vitale dei tentativi di disciplinare, sorvegliare e controllare gli individui. Lo spazio geografico è quindi riempito, costituito e normalizzato attraverso un sistema discorsivo fatto di divisioni, esclusioni e opposizioni che esercitano un controllo mentale sui nostri modi di conoscere, controllo che Foucault definisce come "governamentalità", evidenziando i rapporti d'interconnessione fra cultura, spazio e potere.

Essenzializzare l'Occidente

⁴ Foucault M., *Spazi altri: i luoghi delle eterotopie*, a cura di Salvo Vaccaro, Milano: mimesis 2001, p. 100.

Nell'analizzare l'enorme impatto del lavoro di Edward W. Said sulla disciplina antropologica, un impatto spesso accolto con atteggiamenti **spesso** ambivalenti e persino difensivi, Nicholas B. Dirks⁵ scrive che “*Orientalismo* non è stato solo un importante contributo, esso è stato uno dei testi più critici per il ripensamento dell'antropologia nel ventesimo secolo”. Come avrò modo di argomentare in questa sezione dell'articolo, uno degli aspetti del concetto di cultura – aspetto che sembra essere necessario e, per così dire, costitutivo della disciplina – è che esso organizza la diversità umana seguendo un ordine **civilizzazionale**. In primo luogo giova osservare che la critica socio-culturale dell'antropologia sembra emergere lungo le linee di faglia dell'Occidente, culturalmente definito in termini generali. Le categorie di Oriente ed Occidente, come vedremo, operano all'interno del discorso antropologico come slogan sistemici. Prima di presentare il mio argomento in modo più dettagliato mi sembra utile aprire una sorta di parentesi concettuale a proposito della nozione di “cultura”. Secondo una delle sue accezioni più consolidate, il concetto di cultura è concepito come l'insieme delle pratiche e dei modi di pensare che si manifestano in opposizione agli effetti negativi della modernizzazione e ai suoi sviluppi storicamente centrati nel continente europeo. Susan Wright⁶ (1998: 8) sostiene qualcosa di molto simile a quanto ho appena osservato quando scrive che “l'enfatizzare la coerenza ed autenticità di culture distinte fu un modo di resistere alla missione civilizzatrice fondamentale al progetto coloniale Europeo. Gli antropologi differirono profondamente nelle loro teorie e aspetti del pensiero occidentale che misero in questione, ma essi condivisero l'idea del mondo come formato da “popoli”, ciascuno con un proprio modo di vivere o “cultura”.” A onor del vero si può perciò sostenere che spesso gli antropologi descrivono la cultura come qualcosa che si forma contro le operazioni caotiche delle forze più o meno coordinate della globalizzazione e in contrasto con la razionalità del calcolo economico caratteristico delle società capitaliste. Il club dell'Occidente include le leggi del mercato, il regime fordista di accumulazione, le multinazionali e le violazioni del capitalismo globale. Come George E. Marcus⁷ (1986: 178) ha giustamente osservato, “il pregiudizio antropologico enfatizza ed attribuisce priorità alla realtà delle dimensioni precapitaliste dei soggetti etnografici”. Le virtù e i valori delle culture tradizionali – ciò che è andato perduto nell'Occidente – sono comparate per contrasto alla presunta decadenza del mondo civilizzato, cioè a una corruzione morale spesso considerata come intimamente associata al consumismo e all'organizzazione capitalista del lavoro. Storicamente, all'interno del contesto della rivoluzione contro l'industrializzazione, i modi di vita tradizionali della porzione d'umanità che vive in società per l'appunto tradizionali e/o tribali – spesso società che vivono in regioni e luoghi remoti, vale a dire popolazioni che, in condizioni di povertà endemica, coltivano e raccolgono direttamente dalla natura il cibo che consumano – sono stati studiati in quanto “cultura”. Le società tradizionali sono quindi state oggetto di studio per il modo in cui, pur essendo, per molti versi, relativamente ignare dei

⁵ Dirks N. B., ‘Edward Said and Anthropology’, in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 3, Special Issue in Honor of Edward W. Said (Spring 2004), pp. 38-54, p. 42.

⁶ Wright S., ‘The Politicization of ‘Culture’’, *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1998, pp. 7-15.

⁷ Marcus G. E., ‘Contemporary Problems of Ethnography in the Modern World System’, in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. by Clifford J. and Marcus E. G., London: University of California Press 1986, pp. 165-193.

modi di vita occidentali, hanno raggiunto a loro modo una onniscienza basata su credenze non scientifiche e visioni del mondo anti-razionaliste e anti-realiste.

A questo proposito è secondo me significativo richiamare l'osservazione di Christopher Herbert⁸ (1991: 22) secondo cui "l'idea di cultura appare sulla scena come l'elemento centrale di una lunga e molto unita tradizione inglese di critica sociale diretta contro gli effetti disintegranti dell'industrializzazione". Stando a quanto scritto da Herbert, non dovrebbe dunque stupire che numerosi antropologi rappresentino la "cultura" come l'insieme dei costumi e delle forme di apprendimento di popoli locali che comunicano resistenza nell'interazione con l'Occidente. A margine di questo mio commento si può aggiungere che la cultura come rivendicazione del proprio *modus vivendi* in antagonismo a una presenza imperiale esterna è ciò cui Sahlins⁹ (1994: 384) fa probabilmente riferimento quando scrive, in un passaggio spesso citato, che "i popoli integrano il sistema Mondo in qualcosa di ancor più inclusivo: il loro sistema del mondo". A prescindere dalle considerazioni di esegesi più o meno corretta delle parole di Marshall Sahlins, mi pare evidente che la nozione di cultura, in questa prospettiva, appare come una linea di difesa nei confronti dell'alienazione prodotta dall'economia di mercato. Nomi M. Soltzenberg¹⁰ (2001:443), per esempio, osserva come la nozione di cultura, intesa come costruito antropologico, "continua a giocare il suo tradizionale ruolo di antidoto all'attore economico egoista del mercato".

Dopo aver passato brevemente in rassegna alcuni dei punti di vista autorevoli riguardanti l'accezione di cultura come insieme di comportamenti e credenze locali in contrasto con i modi di vita alienanti che si accompagnano alle transazioni economiche del mercato pare utile ribadire che tali forze alienanti e disintegranti di forme di vita locali sono spesso rubricate sotto l'etichetta di "Occidente". A questo punto mi sembra interessante fare un passo avanti, e mettere in relazione l'accezione di cultura come linea di difesa e rivendicazione delle forme di vita di popoli locali in opposizione all'Occidente, con la critica della nozione di Occidente in antropologia sviluppata da James G. Carrier. Rammentiamo inoltre per chiarezza che secondo James G. Carrier la relazione che gli antropologi stabiliscono con l'Occidente è molto problematica. Infatti, in un passaggio rivelatore, egli sostiene che gli antropologi, invece di guardare il villaggio che sta loro davanti come sono soliti fare, dovrebbero guardarsi alle spalle e rivolgere il proprio sguardo all'Occidente. Questo punto è, a mio modo di vedere, particolarmente importante, e merita d'essere analizzato e discusso più approfonditamente. A proposito della relazione degli antropologi nei confronti dell'Occidente, James G. Carrier¹¹ (1992:205) scrive che essa:

è problematica perché la maggior parte degli antropologi hanno una comprensione delle società occidentali abbastanza ragionevole ed ingenua, poiché la maggior parte di essi

⁸ Herbert C., *Culture and Anomie: Ethnographic Imagination in the Nineteenth Century*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1991.

⁹ Sahlins M., *Goodbye Tristes Tropes: Ethnography in the Context of Modern World History*. In *Assessing Cultural Anthropology*. Robert Borofsky ed. Pp. 377-394. New York: McGraw-Hill 1994.

¹⁰ Solzenberg N. M., 'What We Talk About When we talk about Culture', pp. 442-444, in 'When: A Conversation about Culture', *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 103, No. 2 (Jun., 2001), pp. 432-446.

¹¹ Carrier J. G., 'Occidentalism: The World Turned Upside-down', *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (May, 1992), pp. 195-212, Blackwell Publishing on behalf of the American Anthropological Association.

non sono istruiti nell'analisi accademica dell'Occidente. Ciò che essi acquisiscono come parte della loro educazione accademica potrebbe ben essere niente più che un insieme di interpretazioni semplificate, racimolate dalle discussioni sulle società occidentali in Marx e Durkheim, Benedict e Mead, o Lévi-Strauss e Sahlins. Persino coloro che, come studenti o accademici, studiano l'Occidente, sono inclini a venir fuori con un modello semplificato, non fosse che per la probabilità che loro e i loro insegnanti tratteranno l'Occidente nei termini di una comune cornice all'interno della disciplina, una cornice di aree etnografiche relativamente distinte e internamente omogenee.

Questa critica definita e sviluppata da James G. Carrier¹² (1992: 199) è nota con il termine di Occidentalismo, il quale è appunto l'insieme di interpretazioni essenzialiste dell'Occidente da parte degli occidentali medesimi (in questo caso antropologi). Secondo James G. Carrier, gli Occidentalismi:

appaiono quando gli antropologi considerano le intrusioni occidentali sulle società da essi studiate. Frequentemente, queste intrusioni – lavoro salariale, dottrina missionaria e progetti estrattivi – sembrano essere considerate come manifestazioni locali di un “Occidente” piuttosto uniforme. Ed esse sono frequentemente viste con risentimento, apertamente o velatamente, proprio in questi termini. Vale a dire, esse sono viste segnare la dislocazione di un tipo di vita sociale fino a quel punto aliena, coerente ed uniforme da parte di una forma di vita egualmente coerente e uniforme, quella dell'Occidente.

Quanto scritto da James G. Carrier in questo passaggio può essere richiamato in questi termini. In merito alla questione dell'impiego della categoria d'Occidente da parte degli antropologi culturali, James G. Carrier sembra insinuare che essi potrebbero avere torto rispetto alle questioni che li riguardano più da vicino – i.e. l'accezione di “cultura” che ho analizzato in precedenza. Da quanto affermato da James G. Carrier, è come se gli antropologi avessero per lungo tempo guardato ai contributi delle particolari culture da essi studiate attraverso il vetro appannato di uno specchio distorcente. In altri termini, la prima e più ovvia osservazione che si possa fare leggendo i rilievi critici di James G. Carrier è che l'“Occidente”, esaminato attraverso l'occhio antropologico, è una formula onnicomprensiva, un'entità definita in modo uniforme sulla base di una sua supposta quintessenza. La questione qui in esame può essere così chiarita: quella di “Occidente” è una parola ambigua che assume di volta in volta connotazioni diverse. A volte l'Occidente è associato ai mali prodotti dalle società industriali e identificato con gli effetti dell'inesorabile espansione della logica imperiale e delle ambizioni economiche del capitalismo (sotto l'egida degli Stati Uniti). Altre volte l'Occidente è il punto di riferimento cardinale del razionalismo e del pensiero scientifico, ossia una entità astratta che designa categorie epocali come la modernità o addirittura un'intera tradizione metafisica che puntella lo *zeitgeist* o spirito del nostro tempo. Il termine “Occidente” viene così ad associarsi alle espressioni di demistificazione del mondo che hanno avuto inizio nell'epoca moderna. La concezione della scienza occidentale è quindi attaccata come una fonte ottimistica di verità conosciute dogmaticamente, e accusata dell'arroganza

¹² Carrier J. G., ‘Occidentalism: The World Turned Upside-down’, *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (May, 1992), pp. 195-212, Blackwell Publishing on behalf of the American Anthropological Association.

intollerante, illiberale ed etno-centrica dello scientismo del diciannovesimo secolo. In ogni caso, secondo quanto affermato da James G. Carrier, l' "Occidente" è una sorta di etichetta, una nozione antiquata e semplificante, ovvero una reificazione fantasiosa della struttura e del funzionamento dei sistemi avanzati di circolazione delle merci. Nei flussi discorsivi della scienza basata sulla ricerca di campo (*fieldwork research*) nota anche col nome di antropologia culturale, l' "Occidente" è una metafora senza un referente reale. Il crudo riduzionismo dell'Occidentalismo degli antropologi è basato sulla grossolana e acritica reificazione di un'area culturale eccessivamente ampia chiamata per l'appunto Occidente. Gli antropologi ascrivono routinariamente discorsi culturali e interessi molto generali ed insidiosi simili a forze senza un autore reale, ma rapaci ed insieme autonome, alla vasta concezione della civiltà Occidentale. In altre parole, gli antropologi culturali fanno riferimento implicito allo sfondo della vasta ed ampia area mega-culturale dell'Occidente inteso come una civiltà dalla solida e monolitica tradizione. Questo punto di vista soffre di una qualche deformazione semplificante, poiché l'Occidente, come sappiamo, non essendo mai stato una tradizione unificata, ma ospita numerose tradizioni all'interno del mondo industrializzato. Pertanto da quanto appena affermato in queste righe deriva che la nozione di Occidente, al pari di quella di Oriente studiata da Edward W. Said¹³, designa una mal definita civiltà pan-nazionale che trascura importanti aspetti comuni ad una pluralità di aree geo-culturali. Per questa ragione l'Occidente è una categoria che, come enfatizza James G. Carrier, essendo basata sul manicheismo del bianco e nero, rinforza lo iato fondamentale dell'opposizione dualistica fra la cultura metropolitana d'appartenenza dell'antropologo e la cultura periferica da lui studiata. Ebbene, l'aspetto più interessante di questa critica è che il discorso dell'antropologia rivela una tendenza orientalista che deriva proprio dal fatto che la cultura, esattamente come la nozione di Oriente intesa *à la Said*, è generata e definita in opposizione reciproca al cosiddetto Occidente. La relativa stabilità e omogeneità delle credenze ed opinioni di una cultura, al pari dell'Est stazionario ed arretrato descritto da Edward W. Said, sono giustificate dalla costruzione complementare dell' Occidente come regno, spesso oppressivo ed alienante, di progresso, autocoscienza e razionalità. Si può quindi affermare in conclusione, che non solo gli orientismi dell'antropologia hanno essenzializzato la cultura come un Oriente: essi hanno anche essenzializzato l'Occidente.

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¹³ Said W. E. 2003. [1978] *Orientalism*, London: Penguin.

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Marco Lutz

Conservatorio di Cagliari, Italy

Ignazio Macchiarella

Università di Sassari, Italy

Bi Cheret Boghe e Passione
(It Takes Voice and Passion)

Within the micro music world of Sardinian *A Chiterra* song (soloist song accompanied on guitar) they often talk about natural gift and passion for music. Generally, they agree that vocal endowments are not enough to make a “great singer”, whereas the mere enthusiasm for singing never overcomes the limit of natural talent. A “great singer” must have both *boghe e passione*, it is necessary that he has a special balance between voice and passion.

Filmed in two years, the documentary discusses the subject with two young singers: Daniele Giallara, an established semi-professional *cantadore* (singer) who gives dozens of concerts every year; and Francesco Fais who is moving his first steps as a semi-professional singer. In the discussions also a group of *tifosi* (fans: i.e. very passionate listeners and amateur music makers) are involved. Presenting some *A Chiterra* song’s most significant scenarios, the documentary presents different ideas about the discussed topic. Showing various ways to express the passion for the music of singers and fans, it outlines a very complex music making that is very lively in the today music culture of Sardinia. But, after all, the film wonders: what actually is the passion for the music? May we talk about it?

The “Cantos ‘e chiterra” (A Chiterra song - soloist song accompanied on guitar) is a musical practice spread all over the Sardinia, although it have evolved in the Logudoro (North Sardinia). It has many analogies with other Mediterranean forms of musical expression, first of all with the Flamenco. Nowadays, the *A Chiterra* song has two distinctive performing scenarios: a) on one hand, it’s practiced during daily after work meeting and private gathering by a very large number of male and female amateurs; b) on the other hand it is performed on stage and in Radio and TV broadcasts by professional (or semi professional)

singers (almost all men). The most important performance circumstance is the so called *gara*, i.e. a very long and ritualized competitions on stage during the village's feast or other festivals. Here, three singers are invited to compete with each other. Accompanied by only one guitar player, the *gara* normally last for over three hours. There is no an official winner, but the audience judges very carefully each part of the performance (till the smallest vocal particulars) and every the *cantadore* tries to convince the listeners that he does better than his adversaries. The instrumental accompaniment is realized on a special guitar, called "*chitarra sarda*" (Sardinian guitar), with the case larger than the normal guitar. It is usually tuned a fourth lower than the normal tune. Sometime an accordion joins the guitar in the instrumental accompaniment.

The *A Chiterra* song is divided in about ten definite genres each of them has its textual and musical pattern of its own. The most known and representative genre are: the *Boghes in re*, *Nuoresa*, *Muttos*, *Disispirada*. The texts comes from classical Sardinian Logudorese written poetry from XVII-XX century: they deal with lyrical and love themes.

Bi Cheret Boghe e Passione

Authors: Ignazio Machiarella
Directors: Marco Lutz and Ignazio Macchiarella
With: Francesco Fais and Daniele Giallora
Camera and editing: Marco Lutz
Post production: Andrea Lotta

Format: 16:9
Runtime: 29'40"
Color: Colore
Language: Italiano e sardo logudorese
Subtitles: Italiano e inglese
Year: 2008

Marco Lutz

ethnomusicologist and filmmaker, teaches ethnomusicology at the Conservatory of Cagliari. He attended courses of ethnophotography (with Marco Marcotulli) and Visual Anthropology (with Francesco Marano). In 2004 he won the prize AViSa (Visuan Anthropology in Sardinia) held by ISRE (Istituto Superiore Regionale Etnografico). He made documentaries on Sardinian music and anthropology.

Ignazio Macchiarella

is professor of Ethnomusicology at the Faculty of Humanities and Philosophy, University of Cagliari (Italy). His main theoretical interests are: Multipart Singing; Music and Ritual; Analysis of Oral Music Patterns; Improvisation in Vocal Music; Music and Identities. He held several specialist courses and seminars in Ethnomusicology at various Italian and European Universities (Milan, Bologna, Florence, Palermo, Rome, Lubljana, Barcelona). He participated in various meetings and colloquia in Italy and abroad (France, United Kingdom, Austria, Slovenia, Spain, Portugal, Wales,

USA and Iraq). He published about ninety works, including books, essays, articles and reviews in specialized national and international journals, and edited various long-playing records and CDs of traditional music repertoires collected during field researches.



visual ethnography

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Rossella Ragazzi

University of Tromsø, Norway

Firekeepers

A documentary film by Rossella Ragazzi.

Produced by Britt Kramvig.

Made in collaboration with Rachel Andersen, Ingeborg Solvang, Lawra Somby and Sara Marielle Gaup.

Place: Norway, Sápmi.

SONAR FILM Norway 2007 - 59 minutes.

Watch the film at this url:

<http://vimeo.com/46061235> (password= firekeepers)

This film narrates the meeting with Sara Marielle Gaup and Lawra Somby, two young performers of joik (Sami chanting technique), born in the north and the south of Sápmi (the cultural nationhood of Sami people in North Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia). They have come together through a creative musical project called “Adjágas” which in Sami means “the state between sleep and awakening”. In this peculiar state one can unveil reality and tune into the most profound and original joiks. Adjágas, in this way bring the musical-lyrical practice of joik toward the international musical scene by performing with musician of different horizons, and adapting its performances to the context of reception. The protagonists express different ways of life and concerns, relating also to what it means to be young artists with an indigenous background, having to work a way into the musical industry. It is also a film about what in the waves of the past is worth struggling for understanding, and how joik brings together everyday life, politics and spirituality and becomes a language healing the pain from the colonial history of the past.

Keywords

Joik, Endangered Minorities Languages and Saami Youth culture in contemporary Sápmi.

Selection of Screenings & Conferences held since release:

30.08.07 *Performing Nature in the worlds peripheries*, forskerkonferanse, Universitetet i Oslo

16.09.08 Premiere, Verdensteater

26.10.07 Institutt for flerkulturell kommunikasjon og kulturstudier, NTNU, Trondheim

01.10. 07 Siida Museum, Enare, Finland

18.10.07 Kino Athena, Tartu Estonia

01.12.07 Museumsnatt, Tromsø Museum, Tromsø

16 & 19.01.08 Tromsø Internasjonale Filmfestival, TIFF, Film fra Nord.

25.01.08 Inari Film Festival, Finland

26.01.08 Fondazione Cini (www.cini.it); Venezia, Italia

01.02.08 Visual Cultural Studies dept. ISA,. Seminar “Practice led research applied to anthropology”, Universitetet I Tromsø

04.02.08 Høgskolen I Tromsø. Seminar,Videreutdanning i Helse og Samfunnsvitenskap

07.02.08 Tromsø Museum, Forskningsseminar

03.02.08 KulturhistoriskMuseum,-Oslo

<http://www.khm.uio.no/program/index.php?showEvent=1565>

10.02.08 *Samisk søndag*; Norsk Folkemuseum; Oslo

22.02.08 Troms Fylkeskommune, Kultur-Avdelingen. Verdensteater

28.02.08 *Sami Linguistic Documentation Seminar*. Hum-fak. Universitetet i Tromsø

03.03.08 *Culcom* (Kulturell Kompleksitet i nye Norge) forskerseminar; Universitet i Oslo
<http://www.culcom.uio.no/aktivitet/seminar/index.html>

16.05.08 *Indigeneity and "Indianness" in the World: Old Stories, New Dialogues*, International conference, Oslo/Tromsø

31.05.08 *"Breaking the Barriers"* international conference, Isafiordur Museum, Iceland

02.06.08 Reykjavik Nordic House, Icelandic-Sami Forening, Island

17.07.09 Riddu Riddu, Indigenous and Sami Festival. Manndalen, Kåfjord.

05.-06.06 *Indigenous filmfestival in Katmandu*, NIFF, Khatmandu, Nepal

21-24 August 2008 *Native Cinema Showcase, Santa Fe*, Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian Film website: www.nativenetworks.si.edu

August 2008, Ljubljana, Slovenia: Easa, European Association of Social Anthropology International Conference.

Oktober 2008 Human dimension in Circumpolar Arctic Umeå

Oktober 2008 Moscow International Anthropological Film Festival and Symposium. University of Moscow

Oktober 2008 S. Gimignano, University of Siena, International Symposium: Ars Videndi

Oktober 2008 Taiwan International Indigenous Music & Film Festival

Oktober 2008: Joensuu, Carelia, Finland. Vis Cult Festival of Visual Culture

Oktober 2008 MEDIMED international festival Stidges, Barcelona

18.11.2008: Murmansk TV and Documentary Film Festival "Milkyway", Russia

20.11.2008 : The Road to Mental Decolonization. Tromsø Kunstforening Museum. Seminar and Exhibition

10.12.2008 Auckland, New Zealand. International Biannual Conference of the Commonwealth Association of Social Anthropology. University of Auckland.

23.1.2008 University of Tromsø, Master Program in Indigenous Studies. Lecture and screening.

4.2.2008 Sami Day Celebrations. Screening in collaboration with Folk Museum, Oslo.

03.02. 2009 Toronto.

09.03. 2009 ANU Australian National University Centre for Humanities. Seminar and screening series.

23.03. 2009 AIATSIS (Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islands Institute, Canberra) Screening and lecture. Follows debate.

00.04. 2008 Berkley university, California, US. Classes in Indigenous Literature and Art.

20.05 2009 Master class at Hum Fak, course Museum and Representation of Culture. In collaboration with Tromsø University Museum.

04.07. 2009: Leeds, Royal Anthropological Institute, RAI Film Festival and International conference: Emotions in Motion.

Special mention of the Jury for the Intangible Culture Heritage Prize, RAI

04.08. 2009, Canada. Toronto Harbour Front Centre.

27.08.2009 National Network of Diversity Museums: Neiden at Skolte Sami Museum, Seminar and Screening: Mangfold i Museene-MIM

22 .09. 2009 : Snåsa, Norway: Same Sitje Museum.

09.10. 2009 Movimiento Cinema in Berlin, Freie Universität Screenings series.

10.10. 2009: Nidaros Cathedral, Trondheim, Screening. Saami Church Assembly.

18.04. 2010: London Holloway Royal College of Music, international Seminar of Ethnomusicology.

03.08. 2010: August Gandsk, Poland. Summer Film Festival

17.05. 2011: May Trento International Film Festival, Italia

2011: 14 October, Warsaw, Poland, International Film Festival

... and some other screenings that are not listed here.



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PHOTO-ESSAY

Maica Gugolati

M.A. in anthropology at EHESS (Paris, France)

Tracce e invenzione della memoria. Il Carnevale di Trinidad e Tobago nel 2012

Abstract

Trinidad e Tobago, due isole di un'unica nazione situate all'estremo sud dell'arcipelago caraibico, sono il luogo "materno" dei carnevali diasporici anglofoni. Il carnevale è uno dei simboli nazionali e identitari post-indipendenza; tratto dai coloni e ripreso come mezzo di ribellione e di rivendicazione sociale, esso è la voce collettiva di del paese che si esprime annualmente nella libera creatività della danza delle arti visive-plastiche e in quelle musicali. Port of Spain, situata nell'isola di Trinidad è la capitale del paese ed epicentro del carnevale. I trinidadiani vivono la sindrome del carnevale in cui la carica emotiva dell'attesa annuale estremizza il desiderio catartico di pazzia e di libertà che distrugge temporaneamente i tabù sociali quotidiani. Ciascun cittadino vive esperienzialmente lo spirito multi-sfaccettato del carnevale che si dispiega in esperienza musicale, con i concorsi di alcune forme musicali locali come la Calypso, la Soca, il Rapso e il Pan, e in esperienza "teatrale urbana" nelle diverse forme del carnevale stesso come la Camboulay, il Jouvay, il Traditional Carnival e la Pretty Mas'. Il fervore esuberante permette, anche se solo per un momento circoscritto dell'anno, di vivere la città e le comunità in una pacifica e pubblica convivenza.



Dissecting hybridity within Experimental Ethnography

Review of the The international Conference “Nuovelles Visions: Anthropologie, Art and Film Experimental” organized by Caterina Pasqualino (CNRS, EHESS) and Arnd Schneider (University of Oslo) to the Museum Quai Branly, Paris, March 30-31, 2012.

Maica Gugolati

M.A. in Anthropology at EHESS (Paris, France)

Jasmine B. Liverpool

Independent ethno-experimental filmmaker and Degree in Cinema at Paris VIII.

Visual Anthropology contemporarily is understood as the study of pictorial representations of culture. Inclusive in this definition is the actual means of production through photography, film and video that depicts the anthropologist's methodology in observation of their subject.

Within the genre that is Visual Anthropology - where traditional ethnographic film is habituated – exist a subgenre known as experimental ethnography; in which the techniques are utilized in the production of avant-garde art & film and then applied in the production of ethnographic cinema.

In it self Visual Anthropology has not yet come to have a prominent identity within the practice of general Anthropology.

The impression from this Symposium is that this subject has a new malleable character, not empirically definable. Each invited explained and showed his work and ideology often in contradiction with each other, because of its new and hybrid status, as an unborn subject.

Within the Symposium, there were five panellists that we felt were prominent and influential.

Caterina Pasqualino opened the Dialogue focusing on her thinking about the hallucinatory images and the aesthetical visions of sensations explained through the experimental cinema.

She centered her research in living time, beyond the conception of linear time in film

shoots and in postproduction.

The traditional vision in this experience is broken down and expressed in a subjective and cyclical time, alternating in states of consciousness and unconsciousness without an ontological difference. Her experimental film wants to reproduce the process of possession from Palo Monte voodoo religion in Cuba in its alternates' states of consciousness. She wants by camera to show that within the out of body experience, there is disembodiment and lucidity through different kinds of time, created by montage. Also inclusive is the supra-temporality of the experience.

Time laps and slow-motion or time-slope are used for showing the infratime of the discontinuous movements during the possession by death.

This kind of approach suddenly was supported from a Japanese artist Yoko Fokushima, showing her work "Making Circles, Metamorphosis (France, 2002, 3'20")". She analysed the estate of madness in exchanging pictorials and oneiric images in her video performance and using oleographic images.

Rane Willerslev from the University of Oslo focused his discussion in a rejection of the conception that the camera, like a human eye, judged an illusion from the observational cinema. He argued that the montage could show and develop the visual abstraction -the invisible world present in the visible one - based on the notion of Merleau-Ponty's *Invisible*. The montage could evoke the gap between the visual manifestations and the magical-religious side of reality maintaining the limit of the invisibility in it self.

Moreover, it can film the invisible breaking the mimic dogma of the humanized camera.

One of the ethnographic filmmaker's deficiency, is the recognition of the invisible dimension in human life.

The mimetic vision takes just the visible side of social life. So words were essentially formless and were the only tool to express the invisible – like emotions - not captured by camera.

This observational cinema tends to show all the subjects in the same plane of embodied spatial and temporal existence with no manipulation. The experimental anthropological movie can be a medium capable to communicate and to substitute the words maintaining tensions between the visible reality and the invisible one of social human experience.

The tradition wanted to use the camera like a succession, like a prolongation of the human eye in a mimetic way of looking regarding a physical extension. Then preserving the integrity of the ethnographical science with observational filmmaking.

The montage, on the contrary, organizes a unity in the diversity, juxtaposing shoots to the normal perception of visual experience. Furthermore giving a superhuman vision that pushes the borderlines of the observable worlds, and it gives the possibility of evoking the invisible without reducing its visibility.

*"Every single image there lies a capacity of seeing the invisible"*¹.

This experimentation is between art -in it's widest scene- and also anthropology, trying to cross over the idea of a panopticon film dreamt by the firsts social scientists.

¹ Rane Willerslev (University of Oslo) during the Symposium.

Kathryn Ramsey is an Anthropologist/Filmmaker & a professor of media arts at Emerson College located in the U.S., is an avid supporter of Robert Asher.

Asher's holistic technique was painting directly on the celluloid of the film, representational images that correlated with the footage. The effectiveness of this technique -the superimposed texture of these images - aids the viewer in furthering the comprehension of the subject. Exemplifying that the animation contextualizes the film.

Robert Asher "would take a myth- that myths are common to all cultures and that everyone dreams- and there are certain continuity between all the kinds of dreams". They "exist ubiquitously through out culture and share space with a dream world and that dreams are central to all humans and all cultures."²

Brad Butler's film "*The Exception and The Rule*" (UK, 2009, 37'), was filmed in Karachi, Pakistan and Mumbai, India. He avoided traditional documentary modes using long shots & time lapses; in which the film frames everyday activities incorporating performances to the camera, public interventions and observations. Butler's use of spasmodic images, superimpositions, repetitive audio depicting a urban mantra and his voice acting as narrative were the components of the film. The viewers are never lead to any particular conclusion; they ascertain freely their own observations. These components enhance the subject in such a way that the spectator's perspective is expanded to explore other possibilities.

"*To understand Pakistan you must first understand that you cannot rationalize the non rational*".³

Along with filmmakers there were speakers at the symposium who expressed their perspective on the genre. Jean Paul Colleyn (EHESS, Ceaf) who talked about the sense of poetry in the documentary as new form between an artistic and ethnological film. Also again Kathryn Ramsey, with her film *Yanqui Walker and the Optical Revolution* (U.S.A., 2009, 33') and Arnd Schneider (University of Oslo) who talked about his contribution about photo-film: other speakers are visible on the Symposium's program⁴.

Visual anthropology's need to snatch the Husserl's Maya's veil expressed from the camera in the mimetical cinema in a collaboration between anthropological long observation fieldwork with an artistic and aesthetic language form, as a new possibility of representation and a new kind of positioning of the participant-observers.

The Symposium's authors-researchers proposed autonomous studies, searching to institutionalise the desire of determination of the subject that is in -a paradoxical way- of the ontological being in a continuous construction of experimental visual anthropology.

As oppose to having a finite definition like most other practices, experimental ethnography appears to be defined by a series of questions. At the Symposium the questions from the audience were of an ethical nature. For example, the subjectivity is portrayed in the use of montage where the filmmaker is continually making a choice. This subsection can cause inaccuracy. Emphasis on authenticity gives mandatory guidelines to uphold, but there

² Kathryn Ramsey during the Symposium.

³ Karen Mirza & Brad Butler : www.mirza-butler.net

⁴ <http://www.quaibranly.fr/en/programmation/scientific-events/past-events/colloques-et-symposium/nouvelles-visions-anthropologie-art-et-film-experimental.html>

can be an imposition when implementing our perception.

In conclusion, an answer possibly will be in the films themselves. These films encapsulate a delicate hybridist that depicts the actuality with additional aid from the filmmaker's imposition attempts to shine a light on the several invisible dimensionalities of reality being observed.

“Anthropology can be intrusive and provocative.”⁵

⁵ Caterina Pasqualino during the Symposium.



Una proposta di etnologia audiovisiva

Recensione a Vincenzo Esposito, Il fotografo, il santo, due registi e tre film. Temi e riflessioni di etnologia audiovisiva, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2012, pp. 170.

Francesco Marano

Università della Basilicata, Italy

In questo volume Vincenzo Esposito – prolifico e poliedrico autore di libri, fotografie e documentari – ripercorre alcune delle sue numerose esperienze di ricerca sul campo che la sua vita di studioso ha raccolto a partire dagli anni Ottanta per definire il campo di quella che abitualmente chiamiamo antropologia visuale proponendo un approccio che definisce di “etnologia audiovisiva”. Le riflessioni, sempre di ampia portata, partono da temi come i rapporti fra la fotografia e la realtà, l’uso della fotografia nel cinema, una ricerca di etnografia visiva sull’ultima fabbrica italiana di stoppa, il primo studio fotografico di Eboli, la virtualizzazione del corpo di Padre Pio, Gianfranco Mingozzi, Vittorio De Seta, film di Wayne Wang, Paul Aster e Giorgio Mazzacurati. I capitoli si presentano come approfondimenti teorico-metodologici dei temi che trattano; gli “oggetti” studiati vengono scandagliati alla luce dell’esperienza personale e dello stato dell’arte della disciplina antropologico-visuale, tanto che alla fine tutti o quasi i temi consueti dell’antropologia visuale sono trattati e il libro assume la veste del manuale, sia pure in una forma non tradizionale. Il fine complessivo è quello di fornire degli esempi di etnologia audiovisiva “una proposta che si colloca, nello spostamento tripartito di Lévi-Strauss sul piano della visione, tra l’etnografia visiva, con i suoi dati etnografico-visivi, e l’antropologia visuale, con le sue riflessioni, le sue teorie e i suoi modelli ‘visuali’ di ampio respiro interpretativo. Un’etnologia audiovisiva che si propone come resoconto etnologico costruito principalmente attraverso “immagini e suoni”, meno attraverso le parole della narrazione letteraria. Un’etnologia che si assume il compito di mostrare audiovisivamente ciò che è stato osservato sul campo e i discorsi che ne sono scaturiti, nel tentativo di ricostruire polifonicamente una rete di significati condivisi tra ricercatore e informatori. Un’etnologia che tenga conto, perciò, anche del sonoro” (pp. 12-13).

È la fotografia che coinvolge particolarmente la *verve* analitica di Esposito; di essa viene approfondito ogni aspetto, il suo valore nel metodo della photo-elicitation, il suo

effimero e polisemico rapporto con la realtà, la sua manipolabilità, la sua flessibilità che consente a un autore di mettere in atto un processo riflessivo e analitico nel momento stesso in cui usa le immagini inserendole in una sequenza, in un racconto che produce senso nel corso della sua costruzione – un senso parziale, pronto ad essere “manomesso” da coloro che successivamente utilizzeranno quel *testo*.

Il libro ha uno strettissimo legame con la memoria, sia perché diventa occasione per l'autore di ripercorrere e riflettere sulle sue esperienze di etnologo audiovisivo, sia perché il rapporto fra le immagini e il passato è continuamente sottolineato, essendo le prime non ingenua riproduzione di ciò che è accaduto, ma pre-testo per costruire narrazioni che hanno a che fare con intenzionalità, obiettivi, strategie, desideri appartenenti al presente. Cionondimeno ad esse è affidato il compito di conservare e attivare memorie. L'etnografia, implicitamente viene sottolineato in tutto il volume, è un metodo che comporta la relazione con altre persone, con le quali i significati degli oggetti di studio vengono ipotizzati e prodotti.

Particolarmente interessante, a mio avviso, il capitolo sul processo di santificazione di cui Padre Pio è stato oggetto, fondalmente una operazione di destorificazione del corpo che viene fissato nella sua forma presente attraverso pratiche di mummificazione che devono sottrarre il corpo biologico del santo a tutti i mutamenti che subisce un organismo non più vivo. In sostanza sul corpo di Padre Pio viene compiuto un processo di costruzione dell'immagine che deve sostituire la realtà materiale con una realtà ideale, virtuale, “incorruttibile” affidata a una azienda specializzata nella frabbricazione di manichini e maschere. Lo stesso clero che ha autorizzato queste operazioni ha ritenuto che la verità, l'essenza della vita di Padre Pio possa essere comunicata attraverso questo processo di dematerializzazione e conseguente virtualizzazione del corpo del santo. Il caso di Padre Pio mi conferma l'idea che se la fotografia (in essa si condensa il senso dell'immagine) nell'era della modernità ha avuto con la realtà un rapporto di veridificazione a posteriori proponendosi come traccia e testimonianza di un evento accaduto, la specificità della *immagine* (la fotografia nel vecchio senso della parola è una pratica in disuso) postmoderna è quella di anticipare la realtà, di precederla come aveva affermato Baudrillard. Le immagini (ma in fondo anche la scrittura giornalistica) modellano l'evento prima che esso si verifichi o addirittura lo simulano come accaduto: la realtà si risolve nell'immagine, l'immagine è la realtà o è più vera della realtà.

Il fotografo, il santo, due registi e tre film. Temi e riflessioni di etnologia audiovisiva è sostanzialmente un libro di racconti, basato sul montaggio, come metodo etnografico di costruzione di significati aperti. Peccato che, come spesso accade ai libri di antropologia visuale, le immagini non ci sono, per ragioni legate a maggior costo di stampa e copyright.



Amour et mondialisation, ou les affects de la modernité.

Chronique des films de Giovanni Princigalli : Ho fatto mio coraggio (J'ai fait mon propre courage, 50 min, 2009) et Les fleurs à la fenêtre (on veut bien l'amour) (50 min, 2010).

Suzanne Beth

Doctorante en études cinématographiques à l'Université de Montréal

En deux films, Giovanni Princigalli offre deux regards sur un phénomène qu'on pourrait appeler la mondialisation matrimoniale. *Ho fatto mio coraggio* (J'ai fait mon propre courage, 2009), le premier volet de ce diptyque, concerne la communauté italienne de Montréal. Il s'efforce d'y retracer la venue de jeunes femmes, pour la plupart, et de quelques jeunes gens depuis l'Italie de l'après-guerre pour rejoindre leur époux déjà établi au Canada. Le film se présente sous la forme d'entretiens, tournés en italien, avec des personnes déjà âgées, parfois veuves, qui évoquent ce passé articulé par l'exil. Pour en rendre compte, de nombreuses images d'archives accompagnent les images contemporaines. Le second film, *Les fleurs à la fenêtre (on veut bien l'amour)* (2010), a été tourné au Cameroun à la rencontre de jeunes femmes fréquentant des sites de rencontres sur internet visant expressément des hommes occidentaux, des blancs. Le réalisateur est allé filmer trois jeunes femmes camerounaises avec lesquelles il avait fait connaissance en passant du temps sur de tels sites depuis Montréal.

Il s'agit de deux films personnels, mettant en scène de manière différente leur lien avec leur auteur, Giovanni Princigalli, sa sensibilité et, de fait, ce qui semble être les préoccupations à la source de son travail cinématographique. Le cinéaste paraît ainsi penser sa position, qui confère au Canada la place d'un pivot entre un mouvement d'immigration ancien, en provenance d'une Italie alors source d'une émigration importante, et un mouvement de continuation, une migration qui se poursuit après « sa » propre immigration, son installation. Il ne s'agit pas tant de partir de nouveau pour s'installer ailleurs, du moins pas nécessairement, mais d'envisager aussi bien une figure de son départ et de son arrivée propres, que ceux des autres. Ce faisant, il dessine un portrait de notre monde au plus près des énergies qui le traversent et qui le forment. Tressant belle manière une documentation précise des processus

par lesquels le monde s'est globalisé, et continue de le faire, ainsi que les tensions qui s'y logent, les films sillonnent un affect construit et troublé par l'imaginaire de l'exil, entre un désir d'autre chose, le traumatisme de l'arrachement, l'amour de la patrie, et les transformations qu'il occasionne nécessairement.

Vivre sa vie ?

Le premier documentaire, *J'ai fait mon propre courage*, présente quelques personnes âgées de la communauté italo-canadienne de Montréal. Les premières images explicitent la fonction que le film leur attribue : elles seront un pont, une médiation, entre les personnes qui parlent et leur passé, ce moment de l'émigration, vieux d'une cinquantaine d'années. Conçu à partir de la vieillesse, permettant un regard rétrospectif, le film est organisé autour de la question lancinante de savoir ce que c'est de vivre une bonne vie. Sa beauté tient au fait qu'il maintient l'ambiguïté sur ce qu'on pourrait appeler l'expérience de l'émigration/immigration au Canada. Paradoxalement, il n'en est pas ainsi du fait de la diversité des trajectoires montréalaises, dont les points de ressemblance sont plus soulignés que leur divergence. L'ambiguïté est vraiment celle de l'expérience et elle apparaît dans la manière de se rapporter à des moments passés que tous ont vécus.

Le documentaire se place auprès de personnes assez âgées, dont on peut estimer qu'elles sont nées dans les années 1930. Deux cas de figure sont présents, soit la personne est née en Italie et a émigré pour rejoindre un époux qui y vivait déjà, soit, donc, la personne était déjà au Canada et a fait venir son époux d'Italie – souvent du village dont sa famille était originaire. Le film accorde plus d'importance à ceux, et surtout celles, qui sont venu(e)s d'Italie à ce moment-là et qui sont aujourd'hui de vieilles dames, éventuellement veuves. Se placer à ce moment de leur vie donne une teneur de bilan au film, sur les longues années écoulées depuis leur arrivée. Cette forme est assise par un recours à des images d'archives riches et variées, qui donnent du corps à ces évocations rétrospectives.

Il s'agit aussi bien d'images fixes : photos, cartes postales, publicités, etc., que d'images d'archive animées. Elles n'ont pas été choisies pour leur caractère éducatif ou didactique, mais illustrent assez librement les souvenirs convoqués. D'une manière intéressante, elles montrent aussi bien l'Italie des années 1950-1960, que le travail dans les manufactures textiles montréalaises des années 1960-1970. Ces traces témoignent d'un passé à la fois italien et canadien. Elles conduisent vers une origine de fait hétérogène et divergente, que le film ne tente pas de surmonter.

Au détour des conversations et des documents, il offre des coups d'œil sur l'histoire récente des deux pays, quand elle a touché les protagonistes. C'est particulièrement présent dans le dernier portrait, consacré à un travailleur agricole venu à Montréal suivant l'incitation de son oncle qui y était établi, et qui a épousé la jeune femme de la communauté italienne que ce dernier lui destinait. Le récit de son parcours est ainsi l'occasion d'évoquer les réformes agraires en Italie. Membre du Parti communiste italien (PCI), il se rappelle également les luttes et certaines grèves conduites à Montréal, dans les usines où les Italiens travaillaient. Ce passage fait échos aux souvenirs d'anciennes ouvrières textiles, pour qui les grèves étaient des souvenirs plutôt pénibles, taraudés par les inquiétudes de la vie quotidienne.

Le film propose un regard très nuancé sur la question des conditions de vie de l'époque, la recherche de circonstances matérielles plus favorables étant souvent une motivation avancée pour expliquer l'émigration. L'Italie de l'après-guerre n'y apparaît pas miséreuse.

Surtout, le Canada n'est pas dessiné comme un pays de cocagne, ayant tout à offrir à ses nouveaux habitants. S'il s'agissait effectivement d'un endroit où on pouvait exister, c'est-à-dire travailler, il est certain qu'aucun d'entre eux n'a fait fortune ! Cette nuance laisse ouverte une brèche dans le glacié du récit glorieux pour que s'immiscent la perte, les regrets et tout un imaginaire de l'émigration.

Le titre du film reprend les paroles d'une des anciennes ouvrières textiles réunies au Centre des femmes italiennes de Montréal. Lorsqu'elle dit qu'elle a « fait son propre courage », elle veut dire qu'une fois arrivée au Canada, elle n'avait plus la possibilité de revenir en arrière et qu'alors il lui a fallu faire face. Dans ses paroles résonne l'immense faille de la perte, de la manière la plus poignante et la plus directe du film. Décrivant sans détour son départ comme un traumatisme, son intervention explicite et cristallise les enjeux de la séparation au cœur de l'émigration. Son regret semble infini et oppose une intensité existentielle à une autre dame, qui revendique de manière véhémence sa satisfaction, celle d'avoir pu travailler et d'avoir vu s'élargir son horizon.

Mais le film ne s'installe pas dans cet antagonisme, même s'il offre une vue crue sur la question qui le travaille : la séparation. Bien sûr, l'émigration est un processus fondé par une mise à distance géographique qui est également affective. Le film rend bien compte de la lourdeur de celle-ci à l'époque considérée, lorsqu'elle était pratiquement irréversible. Les personnes interrogées insistent effectivement sur le fait qu'elles ne sont pas retournées en Italie depuis leur départ, même si certaines ont le projet de le faire, « avant de mourir ». Il s'agit peut-être d'un phénomène amplifié par le choix des interlocuteurs, mais il permet que se constitue à l'image la radicalité de l'entreprise.

Celle-ci s'appuie sur les nombreuses traces médiatiques devant couvrir la distance entre les futurs époux de part et d'autre de l'Atlantique : lettres, photos, cartes postales. Elles donnent corps aux récits effectifs des départs, empreints d'une émotion intacte, signifiant la ténacité de la blessure. Cette figure du traumatisme trouve sa résonance dans l'inquiétude, voire la certitude, de certaines de ces personnes de ne pas se retrouver s'ils retournaient en Italie, dans leurs villages. D'être perdus hors de leur Petite Italie montréalaise et de l'italien qu'on y parle. On se demande effectivement comment s'est passé le voyage de ceux qui le préoyaient, peut-être dans un prochain film ?

Cette vulnérabilité habite tout le film, tourné presque intégralement en italien, qui offre ainsi un regard en miroir de la perte, celle de la communauté, et de la manière dont ces gens ont tenté de reconstituer un lien de cette nature, hors-sol en quelque sorte. Ce jeu de regards éclaire bien le hiatus dont procède l'immigration et l'énigme de la discontinuité qu'elle occasionne.

Être librement au monde ?

Des fleurs à la fenêtre (On veut bien l'amour), la seconde partie de ce diptyque documentaire, trouve une grande partie de sa richesse dans l'ambiguïté de la place qu'y occupe son réalisateur. Les premières images introduisent directement la confusion de sa fonction et de sa recherche. D'emblée, une narration en voix *off* annonce que le film qui débute portera sur les sites de rencontres entre le « nord » et le « sud » – c'est-à-dire, en l'occurrence, entre des femmes africaines et des hommes blancs. Mais cette séquence montre Principalli s'inscrivant sur ces sites de rencontre, dans un mouvement double, qui vise, d'une part, à amorcer son sujet, et qui, d'autre part, le met en scène en tant qu'homme blanc du « nord », supposément

« romantique et aisé » comme le film les décrit plus tard. *Des fleurs à la fenêtre* constitue ainsi une mise en jeu personnelle pour son réalisateur, un face à face avec une objectivation extrême de sa propre personne. Quelle singularité, de fait, subsiste après qu'on a accepté une telle réduction ?

Celle-ci trouve néanmoins un pendant dans la part de contrôle qu'appelle le regard documentaire, dont l'objet n'est pas de rencontrer « l'âme sœur » mais bien de faire un film. Les images portent des traces de cet impératif, qui en signe une certaine cruauté – la violence propre aux images cinématographiques, à l'endroit de la réalité filmée et de leurs spectateurs. Cette tension est explicite dès le début du film, qui se déroule à Douala. L'une des trois jeunes femmes rencontrées sur internet, Nadège, ayant refusé de prendre part au documentaire, le réalisateur admet directement se servir du prétexte de la chercher dans les cybercafés de la ville. C'est pour lui l'occasion de rencontrer d'autres jeunes femmes camerounaises inscrites sur des sites de rencontres internationales et de les filmer.

Ce caractère prédateur du médium cinématographique, de son exigence vis-à-vis du monde filmé, se retrouve en partie dans les paysages captés, souvent en voiture, lors de déplacement à travers le pays. Mais il atteint son intensité maximale à la fin de la rencontre avec la première des « fleurs » rencontrées sur internet depuis Montréal : Amélie (à Yaoundé). La séquence se termine sur ce qui semble bien être la séparation effective du réalisateur et de la jeune femme, qui peine à contenir l'émotion qui l'habite et qui rend le départ manifestement douloureux. Lors de ce passage pénible, la caméra, qu'on devine à la main du cinéaste, ne cesse pas de filmer. Elle semble alors se dresser entre les deux protagonistes de la rencontre qui nous a été donnée à voir, qui ressort vivement en tant que sujet (du film). Ce moment est un chemin de crête, qui menace d'identifier Amélie à un objet dans la ligne de mire d'un point de vue.

Située à peu près à la moitié du documentaire, cette séquence en canalise l'enjeu, sous la forme d'une épreuve qui sort irréversiblement le spectateur de son extériorité observatrice. Quelles sont les responsabilités que prend le cinéma en s'approchant ainsi des gens ? La distance requise par la prise de vue, mise en scène ici, trouve son reflet immédiat dans les propos d'Amélie sur la présence de la télévision des Blancs au Cameroun – c'est-à-dire la diffusion de leurs images. Le médium télévisuel occupe une place centrale dans deux des « trois raisons » qui lui semblent pousser certaines femmes africaines à aller chercher « de l'autre côté » : les hommes blancs y apparaissent comme étant à la fois « romantiques » et riches.

Les images mondialisées, c'est-à-dire les images à partir de l'Occident, sont inextricables de cette recherche d'une vie amoureuse et matrimoniale vers le « nord ». Et celle-ci passe par une autre technologie mondiale : internet, qui repose également sur la mise à distance. La violence de ces échanges à travers ces « fenêtres », est directement éprouvée par les mots d'Amélie, dans l'extrait d'un de ses messages qui clôt le film. La circulation des images semble ainsi devoir lui passer littéralement sur le corps.

C'est de cette manière, toutefois, que les images du documentaire portent en elles-mêmes, les enjeux de leur sujet explicite – et qui soulève une panoplie de questions liées au lieu et à la distance. Elles acquièrent toute leur acuité dans le troisième chapitre, consacré à Léonie. À vrai dire, ces questions prennent leur forme dans la circulation des images entre Léonie et sa mère, figure imposante et charismatique. Celle-ci possède un point de vue assez

arrêté sur la question, qui semble néanmoins plutôt paradoxal, dans la mesure où il articule un impératif d'aller loin pour réussir sa vie et un attachement profond et déterminant au « pays ». Cette contradiction apparente ne semble pourtant pas la gêner et surtout ne pas prendre la forme d'une impasse. La manière propre à Léonie de faire face apparaît à l'image de manière presque pure, c'est-à-dire seulement par l'image, comme une manière de circuler librement mais intensément dans sa ville, qui émerge comme un réseau dense de liens – étendus aux morts de la communauté. Léonie semble ainsi trouver une manière puissante de vivre son aspiration à la liberté en l'articulant aux exigences d'un lieu devant être pleinement habité.

Et de fait, pour que ces rencontres aient lieu, il a fallu que Princigalli se rende effectivement au Cameroun. Cette épreuve du lieu continue le geste du réalisateur de se mettre littéralement en jeu. Elle occasionne ainsi ce qui paraît à l'image, qui sont d'authentiques rencontres, illuminées par leurs interlocutrices. Le passage se fait notamment lors de deux scènes en échos, où les deux jeunes femmes camerounaises s'inquiètent du linge du cinéaste, lui donnant l'occasion de remarquer (à Amélie) qu'elle va le convaincre qu'il a « besoin d'une femme africaine ». Aussi, alors que le film semble porter sur le désir d'ailleurs de ces jeunes femmes, un désir d'Occident, il trouve sa force dans la rencontre de la densité du lieu, dont les jeunes femmes portent la complexité. La question de la liberté, centrale aux deux rencontres, ne se réduit de fait pas à celle de partir pour « réussir sa vie », mais résonne dans leur capacité à nouer des relations à leur manière, selon leurs termes, avec les personnes qui se présentent à elles, de toutes sortes de manière.

Ces rencontres électroniques ne se résument de fait pas à une circulation à sens unique, répartissant des rôles prédéterminés et des victimes désignées. Ces rencontres sont authentiques, parce qu'il semble bien que Princigalli ait trouvé, notamment en Amélie, des *alter ego*, ce dont témoigne l'intermédialité qui habite le film. Au sein des images cinématographiques se trouvent en effet d'autres et nombreux médiums, en particulier des aquarelles, du texte écrit, des photos. Le début du film comporte également une séquence animée (avec des objets en volume). Léonie dirige une troupe de théâtre qui joue aussi bien des textes classiques que des pièces à visée éducative, principalement à propos du SIDA/VIH. Amélie est danseuse, et le magnifique portrait qui est fait d'elle est l'occasion de présenter l'ampleur de sa créativité, également manifeste dans ses poèmes et ses dessins. Les images du film semblent ainsi contaminées par la leurs présences artistiques et médiatiques.

Le médium filmique apparaît alors dans sa dimension de « pratique » faisant écho à celles des jeunes femmes. Particulièrement, pour Amélie la danse est l'occasion de « s'exprimer », et en particulier, de faire part d'un sentiment de solitude intensément ressenti, d'une manière que les mots ne permettent pas toujours. Mais danser est également l'occasion de faire des rencontres. Amélie fait d'ailleurs preuve d'une grande liberté lorsqu'elle évoque les raisons pour lesquelles on peut avoir envie de se « connecter » à des gens du monde entier grâce à internet, échappant naturellement au rôle auquel son « site » aurait dû l'assigner. La caméra de Princigalli donne ainsi à voir, paradoxalement, une forme de résistance à une mondialisation proliférant comme les images, une forme de sédentarité qui se constitue comme une base pour des relations authentiquement réciproques – ce que les dernières images, en forme d'épilogue, semblent chercher à prolonger.



visual ethnography

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Antonio Marazzi

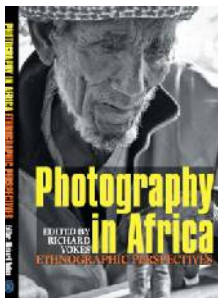
Uomini, cyborg e robot umanoidi. Antropologia dell'uomo artificiale

Roma, [Carocci Editore](http://www.caroccieditore.it)

2012, pp. 152, € 12

ISBN: 9788843065110

L'uomo contemporaneo va modificando sempre più le proprie dotazioni naturali, per correggerle, sostituirle, potenziarle. Le conseguenze sulla durata e la qualità della vita sono evidenti. Dalla nascita alla morte, aumentano gli interventi artificiali sul corpo e con essi le possibilità di manipolare la nostra esistenza. I robot, non più quei mostri cari alla fantascienza, assumono ruoli e funzioni umane, proponendosi come interlocutori e compagni di un futuro vicino. Stiamo passando da un'evoluzione naturale a un'evoluzione artificiale della nostra specie?



Richard Vokes

Photography in Africa. Ethnographic Perspectives

2012, James Currey Publisher

This collection of studies in African photography examines, through a series of empirically rich historical and ethnographic cases, the variety of ways in which photographs are produced, circulated, and engaged across a range of social contexts. In so doing, it elucidates the distinctive characteristics of African photographic practices and cultures, vis-à-vis those of other forms

of 'vernacular photography' worldwide. In addition, these studies develop a reflexive turn, examining the history of academic engagement with these African photographic cultures, and reflecting on the distinctive qualities of the ethnographic method as a means for studying such phenomena. The volume critically engages current debates in African photography and visual anthropology. First, it extends our understanding of the variety of ways in which both colonial and post-colonial states in Africa have used photography as a means for establishing, and projecting, their authority. Second, it moves discussion of African photography away from an exclusive focus on the role of the 'the studio' and looks at the circulations through which the studios' products - the photographs themselves - later pass as artefacts of material culture. Last, it makes an important contribution to our understanding of the relationship between photography and ethnographic research methods, as these have been employed in Africa.



Adriana Destro (a cura)
Rappresentare. Questioni di antropologia, cinema, narrativa
 Bologna, Clueb, 2012

Saggi di Francesca Ferrucci, Sara Pesce, Zeldia Alice Franceschi, Valentina Peveri, Francesca Sbardella, Adriana Destro, Mauro Bucci



Che tipo di attività è il "rappresentare"? Ininterrottamente, rappresentiamo mondi e fantasie, in modi complessi o addirittura densi e contorti: una rappresentazione non è mai lineare, neutra o solo descrittiva. Un'immagine o una narrazione non trasmettono mai le stesse sensazioni, inducono piuttosto effetti percettivi differenziati da individuo a individuo. Col nostro "rappresentare", in sostanza, cerchiamo di capire le traiettorie e le immaginazioni altrui e di riprodurle con disinvoltura con sensibilità e prudenza, a volte con timore. Il "rappresentare" che altri fanno, nel contempo, ci rende perplessi o ci affascina con l'intreccio d'immagini e figure, concetti, teorie e scritture. Ci sentiamo talora smarriti o irritati davanti a scenari brutali, a errori, a falsi, a prospettive sbagliate e reagiamo per mettere al riparo le nostre concezioni o contrattaccare. Tutto questo significa che quando cerchiamo di sondare e visualizzare vicende, ambienti, soggetti, le rappresentazioni che produciamo e di cui ci alimentiamo non diventano occasioni di pura riflessione.