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Archives of Pathos. Image and Survival in Ernesto De Martino's interdisciplinary ethnography¹

Abstract

By focusing on part of the iconographic production of Italian anthropologist Ernesto De Martino in the 1950s, this article proposes to sketch his objects of study through an insistence on their historiographical value. Within this context, the crises of possession triggered by the Arachnida bites function as so-called "folkloric-religious relics" of Tarantism, and thus come to be considered by the anthropologist as "surviving documents" of a tension between memory and oblivion. Not only does this open the door to a discussion on the relation between the archive and the discipline of anthropology, but also of the archival logistics behind various forms of pathos (close to Aby Warburg's notion of Pathosformel). These can be traced through the study of key elements of ritualistic mediation. This article investigates the "tools," such as photographic and filmic imaging devices, by which De Martino sought to contribute to a research on "survivals."

Keywords

Ernesto De Martino, Image, Archive, Survival, Possession, Tarantism, Aby Warburg, Italy, Memory, Photography

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Italian anthropologist Ernesto de Martino and his research team spent the winter of 1959 preparing for their upcoming encounter with tarantism, a possession ritual practiced in southern Italy that is oriented around a tarantula bite*. The ritual is articulated around the double meaning of “*rimorso*” in Italian, which evokes both the spider bite (literally a “re-bite”) and remorse, specifically in the form of a haunting past that returns to torment the victim anew each year. Come summer, De Martino witnessed firsthand the ritual he had been studying with his team over several months; he articulated his first impressions as follows:

“[...] Extending an ear, we could hear the echo of a rustic concertino dominated by the pressing rhythm of the tambourine. [...]. The team got moving to the trail of the rhythm [...] [which] revealed the melodic line of the ‘dance of the little spider’ —[...] the ancient tarantella of the South in its original therapeutic function.”²

That the ritual has been described as a “musical-choreutic-chromatic exorcism”³ is supported by De Martino’s description, in its evocation of music, rhythm, melody and dance as part of this ritualistic therapy. It is tempting to conclude, given these corporeal, affective displays, that no one would be immune to the inebriating “echoes” heard in the ritual’s music, not even the anthropologist and his specialists who, “hurled onto this other planet as [they] were, all had difficulty getting acclimated and taking on [their] respective roles.”

Upon arrival in the Apulian village of Nardò, the team’s first stop was the barbershop, in search of musicians who performed at tarantism exorcisms, most of whom were barbers by trade. Alas, the barbers weren’t there, as they were participating in the ritual that very day. Lacking directions, De Martino and his team intuitively followed the trail suggested by the

* My sincere thanks goes to my mentors and collaborators in Italy, who were crucial to this preliminary research. They are Francesco Faeta (Università di Messina), members of the Associazione Ernesto de Martino (Clara Gallini, Adelina Talamonti, Marcello Massenzio), Alessandro Proietti from the Bibliomediateca dell’Accademia Santa Cecilia in Rome, and members of the Associazione Franco Pinna. This paper emerges from my very first reflections on visual documents linked to possession rituals in Southern Italy in the 1950s. It was largely written prior to fieldwork in Rome (May 2012), and was later reworked based on archival documents and primary sources. This paper thus addresses only a few preliminary questions emerging from this research. A previous French version of this article was published as “Archives du pathos. Ernesto de Martino et la survivance,” in *Intermédialités* n°18 archiver / *archiving*, fall 2011, p. 45-69. A very special thanks also to Lisa Stevenson (McGill University) for her encouragements, and to Philippe Despoix (University of Montreal) for his unswerving support and guidance. A special thanks to Matt Sendbuehler and Christine Mitchell. This research received the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

² Ernesto de Martino, *The Land of Remorse*, London, Free Association Books, 2005, p. 38.

³ Tarantism’s specific form was fixed in the Middle Ages and is found mainly in southern Italian peasant communities. The bite possesses the “tarantulated” person, whose ritual exorcism is performed in public through dance set to music. For English sources on southern Italian rituality, see the works of Georges Saunders as well as Thomas Hauschild, *Power and Magic in Italy*, Berghahn Books, 2010 and Karen Lüdtkke, *Dancing With Spiders. Crisis, Celebration and Celebrity in Southern Italy*, Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2008.

sounds of the ritual. This “echo,” while recalling an ancient myth tinged with melancholy, also offered a first glimpse through a portal to what we might call the irrational, via the strangeness of the echo’s doubling. Echoes also change the listener’s relationship with time, as delayed sounds—traces of past intensity—are heard in the present. Added to this temporal (or “historical”) dimension is a lateral dynamism, “plural echoes” of the type that Baudelaire recognized as intermingling kinetic “correspondences” from passing through “forests of symbols / Which look at [man] with familiar eyes.”⁴ Such glances, like poring over family photographs in search of subtle resemblances, complete this portrait of the echo, synthesizing Éric Méchoulan’s call for a “*genealogy*,” where genealogy and analogy intersect.⁵ It is precisely in terms of this tension—between temporality and resemblance—that we might conceptualize De Martino’s interdisciplinary expeditions to southern Italian communities in the 1950s, where one could still encounter rituals transmitted through sounds, objects and bodies.

De Martino’s interdisciplinary ethnography expeditions,⁶ innovative for their time, involved multiple experts (including an anthropologist, ethnomusicologist, psychiatrist, photographer and, at times, a filmmaker) and gave rise to heterogeneous documents, which provide numerous entry points to the social phenomenon being investigated, unfolding into a multitude of pasts and blurry filiations. The observational and archival efforts of anthropological endeavour were certainly bolstered by new tools and devices adopted by the discipline. In the case of De Martino, these “tools” comprised—in addition to the usual field notebooks—an extremely diverse team using a variety of devices, whether these be notebooks, audiotapes, film and or a still camera. His works, *La terra del rimorso* (1961) and *Morte e pianto rituale nel mondo antico. Dal lamento pagano al pianto di Maria* (1958), constitute a core anthropological study, articles written by experts from relevant disciplines, as well as powerful photographic and iconographic series that rise far above the status of mere appendices.

This paper presents, first, an outline of the objects of De Martino’s study, and what he calls “*surviving documents*.”⁷ Such terminology may sound out-dated today, as it hides shades of

⁴ Charles Baudelaire, “IV. Correspondances,” in Claude Pichois (ed.), *Les fleurs du mal*, Paris, Gallimard, coll. Folio classique, 1996, p. 40, (my translation).

⁵ Éric Méchoulan, “Intermedialité : ressemblances de famille,” *Intermedialités*, n° 16 Rythmer / Rhythmise, fall 2010, p. 233.

⁶ Ernesto de Martino, “La ricerca indisciplinare nello studio dei fenomeni culturali,” *De Homine*, 17-18, 1966, p. 227, re-edited in Clara Gallini, *I rituali dell’Argia*, Padova, 1967, p. XI.

⁷ It is important to note that concepts such as “relics,” “vestiges,” “traces,” and “survivals” may recall a particular phase of anthropological thought strongly influenced by sociologist Auguste Comte and functionalism. However, it would be imprudent to read De Martino only with the historical references of English, French or American anthropology, seeing as the discipline simply did not exist in Italy before him. Before the 1950s, foreign anthropological works were hardly even available in the country. De Martino, who is considered today the main founder of Italian anthropology, was originally a historian with close ties to philology, philosophy and even archaeology, who later developed his own ethnographic practice which was strongly driven by political action. Despite his problematic terminology, it is quite clear by reading *The Land of Remorse*, that Ernesto De Martino was aware of the dangers of evolutionary concepts. In fact, his introduction describes with irony the various trajectories of positivist doctors and missionaries in Southern Italy, while letting the reader understand that his method will strive

modernist and evolutionary ontologies which were widespread at the time. Yet it is interesting to notice nonetheless how, by their nature, these ritual phenomena balance the tension between memory and oblivion through their immanent mnemonic qualities, and the haphazardness of forgetting. This allows us to explore not only the possible relationship between archives and anthropological discipline, but also the archival logic inherent in an object of study that is composed of body, voice and colours—key elements in the mediation of the tarantism ritual over centuries. The aim is also to implicitly interrogate technological devices, such as photography and film, which “captured” and “reproduced” these possession rituals, by confronting them with the rituals’ own repetition processes and temporality, as well as their so-called “artificial” performativity.

Second, the paper investigates the methodology and devices, both linguistic and visual, that De Martino employed to describe what he saw as ethnographic “survivals.” By concentrating on only a few of the numerous images of de Martino’s corpus, this essay explores a visual repertoire that has almost escaped scholarly attention,⁸ perhaps more generally due to the discipline’s former “iconophobia.”⁹ My attempt is that of understanding both how the researcher’s use of a particular tool or medium leads to a specific type of observation and how the very nature of the object under study might suggest a means of organizing knowledge.

to avoid their mistakes by regulating a well-defined historical-religious problem. For example, he criticizes 1880s Italian folklorist and doctor Giuseppe Pitrè in these terms: “But in Pitrè, as his immediate disciples and collaborators, romantic Risorgimental (nationalistic) and positivistic themes co-existed in a contrast which was never settled by a coherent methodological resolution.” (De Martino, 2005, p. 6). In order to understand fully the incredibly eclectic and quite singular intellectual influences of Ernesto De Martino, as well the political nature of his project on Southern Italy, it is important to refer to Giordana Charuty, *Ernesto De Martino. Les vies antérieures d’un anthropologue*, Marseille, Parenthèses-Éditions de la MMSH, 2009. Other important sources have analyzed the intellectual trajectories of De Martino, such as Clara Gallini (ed.), *Ernesto De Martino e la formazione del suo pensiero*, Liguori, 2005.

⁸ The function of images (in photographs, films, etc.) found and used for research purposes or produced in the course of De Martino’s fieldwork was traditionally glossed over in commentary on his work. To learn more about the visual components of Ernesto de Martino’s corpus, see Clara Gallini, Francesco Faeta (eds.), *I viaggi nel Sud di Ernesto De Martino*, Turin, Bollati-Boringhieri, 1999, p. 49-93; Francesco Faeta, *Strategie dell’occhio: Saggi di etnografia visiva*, 3^e édition, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2003; Giovanni Agosti, Maurizio Sciuto, “L’Atlante del pianto di Ernesto De Martino,” in Riccardo Di Donato (ed.), *La contraddizione felice? Ernesto De Martino e gli altri*, Pise, ETS, 1990, p. 185-195. Francesco Faeta, Antonello Ricci (eds.), *Lo specchio infedele. Materiali per lo studio della fotografia etnografica in Italia*, Roma, Documenti e ricerche del Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari, 1997; Francesco Faeta, *Fotografi e fotografie. Uno sguardo antropologico*, Milano, FrancoAngeli/Imagines, 2006; Clara Gallini, « Il documentario etnografico ‘demartiniano’ » in Enzo Minervini (ed.), *La Ricerca Folklorica 3* « Antropologia visiva. Il cinema », Edizioni Grafo; Diego Carpitella, « La registrazione fotografica nelle ricerche etnofoniche » in *Popular Photography Italiana*, 1968, p. 130-131, re-edited in *Musica e tradizione orale*, Flaccovio, Palermo, 1973, p. 183-196; Antonello Ricci, *I suoni e lo sguardo. Etnografia visiva e musica popolare nell’Italia centrale e meridionale*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2007; Gianluca Sciannameo, *Nelle Indie di quaggiù. Il cinema etnografico di Ernesto De Martino*, 2006, Bari, Palomar. Very recently, Georges Didi-Huberman has stressed the relevance of the photographs of Ernesto De Martino’s corpus in his book *Peuples exposés, peuples figurants. L’Oeil de l’histoire*, 4, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 2012.

⁹ Lucien Castaing-Taylor, “Iconophobia,” *Transition*, vol. 6, n° 69, spring 1996.

(In)voluntary resistances. Ethnography and archival practices

Repetition is one of ritual's strength, giving it durability over time. It may seem paradoxical that despite their inherent power of transmission, rituals have been the object of "salvage ethnography"¹⁰—the intriguing practice of the anthropologist/collector whose mission included, as Mauss suggested, "compil[ing] in scientific fashion the archives of societies."¹¹ Indeed, it is not only part of ethnography's methodology—the collection, cataloguing and taxonomic classification of data, as detailed meticulously by Mauss in his *Manuel d'ethnographie* (1947)—that the practice had come to resemble archival science, but also in its ethos. In a sense, the ethnographer's work implicitly encompasses the duality inherent in the Derridean concept of archiving and its dual status as both authoritative "*commandment*" and "*commencement*,"¹² in the sense of providing access to an original. When thinking about De Martino's work, two types of archives come to mind. On the one hand, there are "involuntary" resistances, in the form of what he saw as "surviving" rituals, whose "documents" are the expressive bodies of the communities he studied. Indeed, this problematic idea of body as document is particularly striking in his study of tarantism, and reveals his original training as a historian of religion¹³. In the preface to his analysis of tarantism, he warned that, "[b]y its very nature, a study such as this one is indebted to many. First of all, there are those 'living persons' who were forced to take the unnatural role of 'historical documents' in the process of ethnographic investigation."¹⁴ Such documentary violence was, he explained in the book's fifth appendix, tempered by Vittoria De Palma, the social worker who kindly "took on the task of reminding the members of the team that their 'documents' were really 'living persons'."¹⁵

The other type of archive is the post-facto document created purposefully by the researcher; a document that would defy death, transcend time and give future generations a meticulous portrait of their past—or of other people's past. The emergence of recording technologies and the use of the camera during fieldwork only intensified this ideal in anthropological discourse, activating what Robert Gardner has called "the impulse to preserve"¹⁶

¹⁰ Jacob Gruber, "Ethnographic Salvage and the Shaping of Anthropology," *American Anthropologist*, New Series 72, 6, December 1970, p. 1289–1299. Elizabeth Edwards traces the links between survival and photography in "Salvaging our past: photography and survival," in Christopher Morton, Elizabeth Edwards (eds.), *Photography, Anthropology and History. Expanding the Frame*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2009.

¹¹ Marcel Mauss, *Manual of Ethnography*, New York, Oxford, Durkheim Press/Berghahn Books, 2007.

¹² Jacques Derrida, *Mal d'archive. Une impression freudienne*, Paris, Galilée, 1995.

¹³ In order to understand the complex intellectual influences of Ernesto De Martino, first a historian and then a self-taught anthropologist, who founded Italian anthropology by drawing from various schools of thought in Italy, mainly the ones of Benedetto Croce and Antonio Gramsci, see the astonishing book by Giordana Charuty, *Ernesto De Martino. Les vies antérieures d'un anthropologue*, Marseille, Parenthèses-Éditions de la MMSH, 2009.

¹⁴ De Martino, 2005, p. viii.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

¹⁶ Robert Gardner, "The Impulse to Preserve," in Charles Warren (ed.), *Beyond Document: Essays on Nonfiction Film*, Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 1996.

Margaret Mead's "Visual Anthropology in a Discipline of Words," a classic article from the dawn of the discipline, provides an admirable illustration of the renewed desire to immortalize cultures, and was sparked by the rise of image-capture tools that went beyond traditional note-taking:

Anthropology, as a conglomerate of disciplines [...] has both implicitly and explicitly accepted the responsibility of making and preserving records of the vanishing customs and human beings of this earth. [...] The recognition that forms of human behavior still extant will inevitably disappear has been part of our whole scientific and humanistic heritage.¹⁷

De Martino is well aware, in 1959, that tarantism would soon disappear almost entirely from the Salentine Peninsula and that his documentary efforts represented an opportunity to archive. He had also observed, with a certain degree of irony, an archival urge in his own predecessors. In the introduction to *La terra del rimorso*, he includes a lengthy acknowledgment of those who had documented southern Italian religious practices well before his day. They included late 19th century folklorist Giuseppe Pitré, whose colossal works, with evocative titles such as *Biblioteca delle tradizioni popolari siciliane* (1882) and *Archivio per lo studio delle tradizioni popolari* (1885), illustrated a delight in identifying elements of religious folklore that he "idolized as 'relics' to 'salvage'."¹⁸ De Martino without entirely sharing such positivist ideologies, recognized nonetheless the tension between these conservation efforts and the fact that he was himself accelerating the disappearance of these phenomena that were "already condemned to disappear completely in the space of a few decades."¹⁹

Nevertheless, De Martino was more interested in the rituals' mnemonic power than in the fear of their being forgotten. The rituals' internal resistance, anachronism and, especially, their greatly undervalued contribution as "religious-folkloric relic[s]" not only to the history of southern Italy, but to the history of Christian world—that very same religious culture that tried to keep them out of view. Thus, he saw these cultural demonstrations as a kind of "document," not of a parallel history in opposition to that of the cultural elite, but "of a single history: that of the religious civilization of which it is a relic, or of the religious civilization in which it *survives* [emphasis added] or is more or less profoundly remolded."²⁰ As a historico-religious phenomenon, tarantism is thus, for De Martino, contiguous with those phenomena opposed by the Christian religion, which unwittingly became steeped in them. De Martino richly evokes this contagion: "The Mother of God—the Christian symbol of grief—assumed some of the forms of ancient lamenting women."²¹ The question of survivals²² has already entered the picture.

¹⁷ Margaret Mead, "Visual Anthropology in a Discipline of Words" [1975], in Paul Hockings (ed.), *Principles of Visual Anthropology*, New York, Mouton de Gruyter, 1995.

¹⁸ De Martino, 2005, p. 8.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 33.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 7.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 7.

²² *Ibid*, p. 23. The term "sopravvivenza" ("survival") is used by De Martino in his original text: "sopravvivenze pagane come documenti di una certa storia religiosa da ricostruire" ("pagan survivals of a certain religious history to

The tarantula as an ahistorical hybrid symbol

De Martino thus undertook a reconstruction of this marginalized phenomenon, this supposed incoherent fragment, irreverent hoax, and ahistorical fact. On the one hand, he stressed the ritual's potent, cyclical durability over time: the Salentine choreutic-musical exorcism has its own, highly codified, temporality. Its normative precision allows oral and ritual forms to survive over time—the ancient poets would have enjoyed limited posterity if not for this formal verse structure. On the other hand, De Martino reveals the power of this molecular, ritual fragment through its correspondence with a much larger territory—what he calls “a history of high points.” He developed a true cartography of tarantism, which Carlo Ginzburg, an early reader of De Martino, could probably identify, with its attention to detail and analogy as “constellations by isomorphism.”²³

With impressive philological rigour, De Martino used diachronic literature and sources from as far back as the Middle Ages—when the only witnesses to these “historico-religious” phenomena were missionaries and clerics—to identify “traces” that participate fully in his present-tense analysis of his subject. The temporality of tarantism, which is not explicitly provoked, but rather, “experienced” by the victims of tarantula bites, turned out to have a seasonal pattern. Specifically, the number of “tarantulated” people rose in Apulia around June 29, the feast day of St. Peter and St. Paul. This surprising consistency was one of the first clues that allowed De Martino to systematically debunk the conventional wisdom that held that tarantism was a “real” disease, a belief that his team's physician was also able to refute. The Christian cultural influence had thus sought to make these phenomena fit into its own religious calendar, and had partly succeeded by disciplining the possession attacks. This first temporal consideration allowed De Martino to undertake his historical anthropological research on syncretic processes and the dominance mechanisms that engendered them. This therefore constituted another fundamental part of De Martino's thinking, which Daniel Fabre crystallized around the concept of the “crossroads” (*carrefour*) in an article addressing the originality of the anthropologist's work.²⁴

In the case of tarantism, the crossroads is manifest at the level of both religious syncretism and symbolic complexity. Regarding the latter, this is an illness that constantly oscillates between the real and the represented. The figure of the tarantula, along with its bite, is a hybrid anchoring point whose symbolic autonomy was thought to have emerged progressively. Latrodictism “carries” the cultural forms of tarantism, and vice versa, in a sense becoming the historical condition of the latter. The figure of the tarantula is “grafted” onto a nervous breakdown, at which point it becomes impossible—and futile—to know which form is the original. De Martino knows it is impossible to identify an “essential core” or “root cause” of tarantism, but he does

be reconstructed”; my translation), Ernesto De Martino, *La terra del rimorso. Contributo a una storia religiosa del Sud* [1961], Milan, Il Saggiatore, 2009, p. 48

²³ Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies. Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1991.

²⁴ Daniel Fabre, “Un rendez-vous manqué. Ernesto De Martino et sa réception en France,” *L'homme*, tome 39, n° 151, 1999, p. 207-236.

not dwell on this fact. At the same time, an awareness of this impossibility is implicit across the entire project. In contrast, Aby Warburg, an early 20th century Italian Renaissance art historian, image theorist and predecessor of De Martino, who was strongly influenced by anthropology's controversial notion of *survival*, had a more radical view on the question of "origins." While we will consider Warburg in more detail below, it suffices here to state his position regarding the question of "origins," which is present as a subtext in De Martino's work and summarized as follows in a suggestive article about "archives of intensities" by Georges Didi-Huberman : "The 'original words' exist only as *surviving*, that is to say, as impure, masked, contaminated, transformed, or even completely inverted forms."²⁵ The "contaminated" origin of this ecstatic practice, which implies a form of corporeal device—the body as medium—, reminds us of this same idea, in an intermedial perspective, of the incremental autonomy of a new technical device or emerging medium, and its constant cross-pollination with previous media. It is perhaps possible to consider the "apparatus of choreutic-chromatic-musical exorcism" as a communications "device", or "apparatus"—such a parallel has even been established quite surprisingly by De Martino himself in a rather ambiguous and scholarly overlooked article he wrote about "mass media" in which he tackles Marshall McLuhan's theories²⁶. Yet what, precisely, is this archaic mediation of the ritual, which De Martino does not hesitate to call an "apparatus," and whose effects he is measuring?

Reproducible possession: the "choreutic-musical apparatus" and the technical eye

As might be deduced by its name, tarantism references the spider—most often a tarantula, or other biting creature—a species whose symbolic meaning remains nebulous, even superfluous, from the perspective of symbolic efficiency. As a recurring symbol of the ritual, the tarantula's role is to evoke, to represent and it relives through a range of properties that are specific to the spider: "she communicates to her victim a set of corresponding choreutic, melodic and chromatic tendencies."²⁷ She has multiple names, and several affective nuances; she is a "dancer," a "singer," or "sad and mute." During the summer (re)biting, as De Martino described it, the "tarantulated" person engaged in a complex, choreutic-mimetic performance organized into several "phases,"²⁸ in which exorcism and erotic drives mingle—first at one's home with only musicians and family, then at the church of St. Paul in Galatina, in front of a larger audience. The choreography in the church acted out the actions of the tarantula, and every ritual element was

²⁵ Georges Didi-Huberman, "Aby Warburg et l'archive des intensités," *Études Photographiques*, numéro spécial "La ressemblance du visible/Mémoire de l'art," n° 10, novembre 2001, p. 146. "Les 'mots originaires' n'existent que *survivants*: c'est-à-dire impurs, masqués, contaminés, transformés, voire antithétiquement renversés," (my translation).

²⁶ Ernesto de Martino, "Simbolismo mitico-rituale e mezzi di comunicazione di massa," *Ulisse*, XIV, vol. VII, fascicolo 41, July, p. 25-29.

²⁷ De Martino, 1966, p. 62.

²⁸ For more on the order of dance movements, see ethnomusicologist Diego Carpitella's appended account, "The Choreutic-Musical Exorcism of Tarantism," in De Martino, 2005, p. 286-315.

synchronized to it: the musicians played appropriate tunes, the audience provided “true colours” by throwing particular coloured ribbons on their relatives. In people’s homes, there were certain constants in the décor: the ceremonial perimeter was very often enhanced with foliage and small water fountains and a white sheet was laid on the ground to mark off a “stage” for the tarantism victims and “brightly coloured” images of St. Peter and St. Paul were placed at their disposal.

When the Italian official religious instances first attempted to neutralize these forms of possession, the figures of these saints were incorporated into the ritual, in a sense “ordering” the “tarantulated” person to return to the church of Galatina. Victims congregated there in hope of being granted grace, a key element of the final resolution—exorcism. The apparatus is thus constituted by the operative alliance of choreutic movements, vivid colours, sounds—all of which are crucially important—and an audience. The tarantella musicians are, for De Martino, “mediators,” “stimulators” and guides in evolving the *body-taranta* into a melodic and rhythmic *body-instrument*. This therapy is not accomplished “solely through sounds and colors,” writes De Martino, “but even scents could play a part.”²⁹ These media of exorcism could also, however, prove ineffectual: De Martino relates an incident in which a tarantulated woman, disturbed by the unexpected appearance of a man wearing the “wrong colours” (in this case, a yellow and red striped sweater), interrupted her choreutic cycle. In response, the audience suddenly showed her new colours to counteract the spontaneous interruption, allowing the performance to get back on track: “The damage was repaired, the speck of dust which had filtered into the gears was eliminated, and the apparatus functioned again to the satisfaction of all.”³⁰ It is here that we see the eloquent internal workings of possession for De Martino, and the ingenuity of his choice of the term “apparatus” to describe this complex, polymorphous and socially multifaceted ritualistic “machine” that consisted of a series of techniques, including those of the body,³¹ capable of hearing, seeing, feeling and moving.

As hinted previously, there is an subtle mirroring effect between this reproducible ritual apparatus, which was substantially “captured” (photographically) during De Martino’s 1959 expedition, and the “technical eye” itself. In fact, this comparison can be imagined in several senses, as possession rituals and image-making apparati are reproducible in character, have performative and mimetic qualities and they are both potentially, perhaps inevitably, on the blurry frontier between fiction and reality. For De Martino, the “real” character of ritual was utterly superfluous, to the extent that it was a performance; an apparatus that, once activated, no longer depended on the conditions of its creation³². Thus, the anthropologist does not hesitate to

²⁹ De Martino, 2005, p. 90.

³⁰ De Martino, 2005, p. 41.

³¹ See Marcel Mauss, “Les techniques du corps” [1934], in *Sociologie et anthropologie*, Paris, PUF, coll. “Bibliothèque de sociologie contemporaine,” 1968. De Martino has also written about the “techniques of the body,” partly in dialogue with Mauss, in the posthumous work *La fine del mondo*, Clara Gallini, Marcello Massenzio (eds.), Turin, Einaudi, 2002, in particular Chapter 5.2.2 “Le tecniche del corpo,” p. 600.

³² This ability to move in and out of states of crises or altered consciousness through ritual practices is expressed by De Martino’s concept of *destorificazione*, when one temporarily moves “out of History”. See Marcello Massenzio, « Il

include photographs of lamentations he describes as “artificial” productions staged for the purposes of illustration in the research volume, *Morte e pianto rituale nel mondo antico. Dal lamento pagano al pianto di Maria*. And yet, this artificiality is not entirely on display, as the photographs have been cropped to remove all visible signs of researcher intervention (microphones, anthropologists’ bodies, etc.), as evidenced by the photographer’s red editing marks on the contact sheets³³.

In fact, the photographs, and particularly the films made about these southern Italian rituals, enlisted tarantulated people and mourners, who took the occasion to relive their grief or their possession in a staged context. The choreutic-musical apparatus and its cycles were meticulously reproduced, for example, in major photographic series by photographer Franco Pinna. One of these series, called “Raccolta 48 – Ricostruzione del tarantismo,”³⁴ differs from the more well-known photographic appendices in De Martino’s books; it is fascinating despite its marginal status and what is, on the surface, extremely repetitive imagery. The shoot was conducted in the ethnographer’s room at the *Cavallino bianco* hotel, and the ritual performed was described by De Martino as having being done “*in vitro*”³⁵. Pinna produced the frenetic visuals, while an audio portion is recorded by an RAI³⁶ technician who appears in the photograph with his recording machine. In this highly repetitive, even monotonous, series of images, we recognize a rite excised from its original context and experienced fully by two women under the watchful eyes of anthropologist Ernesto De Martino and ethnomusicologist Diego Carpitella, who take notes and sketch the ritual gestures taking place before them in an intuitive, mimetic flurry³⁷.

Managing time: between oblivion and mnemonic forces

Thus was articulated this complex therapy, this remorse—*rimorso*—whose very name suggests a predisposition to resist³⁸ the passage of time. Repetition, fundamental to this ritual, is at its core, as the very existence of the curse presupposes its return. The people De Martino

problema della destorificazione », *La Ricerca Folklorica* 13, avril 1986, ; « Destorificazione istituzionale e destorificazione irrelativa », Ernesto De Martino, *Studi e materiali di storia delle religioni*, 51, 1985.

³³ I refer to a series of photographs by Franco Pinna depicting “artificial” mourning scenes, with red editing marks, available at the *Archivio fotografico dell’Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia* in Rome. The microphones which were being suppressed from the image were used by ethnomusicologist Diego Carpitella.

³⁴ Available at the Accademia Santa Cecilia’s Bibliomediateca.

³⁵ This “staged” and performative nature of photographs was very common in early 20th century anthropological works, as evidenced by Elizabeth Edwards, “Tracing Photography,” in Jay Ruby, Marcus Banks (eds.), *Made to be Seen. Perspectives on the History of Visual Anthropology*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2011.

³⁶ RAI, Radiotelevisione italiana, is Italy’s main radio and television broadcaster.

³⁷ These photographs are in the Raccolta 48 – “Ricostruzione del tarantismo,” *Archivio fotografico dell’Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia* in Rome.

³⁸ Mariella Pandolfi offers a highly relevant analysis of the political aspect of “resistance” signified through the traces of possession ritual among women. This resistance, which also involves the idea of temporal survival, takes the form of an “iconic language” and narration about the body. Mariella Pandolfi, “Le *self*, le corps, la ‘crise de la présence’,” *Anthropologie et sociétés*, vol. 17, n 1-2, 1993, p. 57-77.

observed were afflicted with sufferings and frustrations that the bite symbolically channelled to a fixed point, allowing them to forget their afflictions for the remainder of the year. Forgetting in fact plays a central role in the possession ritual. This “return” is memorized: it happens every year and resists erasure. Marc Augé, in his anthropological study of oblivion and memory processes, places “*remorse, obsession, or resentment*, in line with memory.”³⁹ His study evokes the proximity and reciprocal influence of life/death and memory/forgetting by recalling the idea of salvation, the Christian idea, on the one hand, and the idea of return, the pagan idea of successive reincarnations, on the other. Following Augé’s definition, tarantism involves the wait for an inescapable return, placing it among so-called “pagan” concepts, and involves repetition, which inevitably inscribes the rite in social memory. Paradoxically, it is the identification with the tarantula that provokes the literal and inexplicable forgetting in the possessed, and through the suspension of their “reason” that the possessed accesses an alternative form of communication. This forgetting contributes to therapeutic effectiveness, and Augé (though only touching on the question of forgetting as it arises from states of possession) underscores the inherent and active role of forgetting in the preservation of mnemonic traces, as well as in healing painful memories.

When Augé enumerated the three forms of forgetting, it is striking that he drew support and examples from the “great African rites, which thus present themselves before all else as systems intended for thinking and managing time.”⁴⁰ In fact, Augé uses the following phrasing in the original French version “*dispositifs destinés à penser et à gérer le temps*.” The term “*dispositif*” could also, and perhaps more accurately, be translated by “apparatus,” or “device” which is useful for this analysis. Ritual’s role as apparatus appears to reside, therefore, and as noted above, in its evocative power, its power of corporeal communication, its therapeutic power. But ritual also operates on a temporal level, “to the extent that it organizes the passage from a before to an after, of which it is at once the interpreter and the landmark.”⁴¹ The first of the three figures of forgetting suggested by Augé is the return, of which possession is emblematic, and “whose primary ambition is to find a lost past by forgetting the present—as well as the immediate past with which it tends to be confused—in order to reestablish a continuity with the more remote past, to eliminate the ‘compound’ past in favour of a ‘simple’ past.”⁴² If the great rituals open the door to this past, they do so with the knowledge of future repetition: transmission.

Opening the text: deciphering the analogies of *pathos*

Starting from these considerations, this study will take a closer look at the analytical methods De Martino used to document the “survivals” he intuited, specifically the echoes between the ritual reality he was observing and Augé’s “simple” past. These reflections take up the final third of *La terra del rimorso*, under the heading of “Historical Commentary.” In this

³⁹ Marc Augé, *Oblivion*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2004, p. 13.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 55.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 55.

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 56.

section, De Martino switches to a different scale by removing tarantism, as molecular object, from the isolation in which he had temporarily placed it, while maintaining a cautious approach. “Although we must avoid these two reductions so as to keep tarantism from disappearing into a type or antecedent, the comparison with similar phenomena or the search for classical or ancient antecedents are in and of themselves beyond criticism.”⁴³ Subsequent chapters⁴⁴ are devoted exclusively to parallels between ancient Greek texts and active constituents of the ritual in Apulia, a land that was once part of *Magna Graecia*.

Even though De Martino posited the fixing of tarantism’s symbolic autonomy in the Middle Ages, it is the “traces” of tarantism as embodied in figures that interest him. It is here that he turns to ancient literary texts to highlight the parallels. The first “family resemblance” consists, for example, in what he calls the “symbolism of the bite,” which is central to the idea of *rimorso*. In the first instance, the anthropologist relies on the mentions of animal bites (spiders, snakes, rabid dogs) in the erudite medical-literary genres⁴⁵ popular in the Greek world. To the figure of the bite is added that of the *oistros* (often involving *errores*, that “anguished, delirious, hallucinating and furious flight”⁴⁶), which is indissociable from it. It is a form that he finds in Aeschylus, not only in the myth of Lyssa and the Erinyes (indeed, Lyssa’s stinger was called the “scorpion’s sting”), but also in the myth of Io, the wayward virgin pursued by the horsefly sent by Hera to sting her. Through the Aeschylean vision of the myth of Io, De Martino succeeds in going beyond the simple bite and discovers a symbolic space filled with endless correspondences, where even the sensory elements that set off the choreutic-chromatic-musical apparatus find their equivalents. He evokes the episode in *The Suppliants* in which Io is finally delivered from her furious flight by being impregnated by Zeus, and reclaims reason in a landscape dominated by luxuriant trees and the infinite flow of healing waters. This place recalls the leaf and water decorations used in home-based tarantism ceremonies, in which flight (*errores*) takes place in a circumscribed rhythmic form, its space limited to the perimeter of the white sheet. With the support of these images recorded by Aeschylus and found in “real historical”—even documentary—testimonials from Pseudo-Hippocrates,⁴⁷ Plutarch⁴⁸ and Aristoxenus of

⁴³ De Martino, 2005, p. 177.

⁴⁴ Specifically chapter II, “The Symbolism of *Oistros*,” chapter III, “The Symbolism of *Aiôresis*,” and chapter IV, “The Musical Catharsis.”

⁴⁵ In Nicander, he found a description of a spider-bite crisis whose symptoms were consistent with a skull-spider bite. Philoumenos, a historian of religious life, confirms the contagiousness of this physical state following a bite. Texts by Pliny allowed him to recognize the arbitrary and purely symbolic character of the territorial location of the bite and its effects, which reminded him of the tarantula-free territory around the Apulian town of Galatina.

⁴⁶ De Martino, 2005, p. 220.

⁴⁷ “A fragment of a short pseudo-Hippocratic treatise on women’s illnesses describes some forms of crisis in the Greek world which frequently afflicted maidens and women whose equilibrium had been altered by remaining childless. Such crises [...] were characterized by a form of stupor, followed by fever and then *mania*,” *Ibid*, p. 191

⁴⁸ De Martino relates, via Plutarch, the suicide of the virgins of Miletus.

Tarentum,⁴⁹ De Martino succeeds in bringing recurring elements into alignment, traced back to a mythological foundation:

Animal-type possession accompanied by a violent retreat from social life and the refusal of the civil order of human world, [...] the hypnotic melody which accompanies the running about [...] the resolution of the crisis in an arboreal paradise flowing with perennial healing waters, where the reintegration of the unsettled female destiny is carried out and human form and reason are regained symbolically.⁵⁰

In the passages from ancient literature, it is these vibrant, if not “iconic,” analogous forms of which tarantism preserves traces that De Martino locates and brings into dialogue in his textual research. We cannot help but note a correlation between these fertile images and Warburg’s concept of “afterlife” (*Nachleben*), developed specifically around recurring images in iconography. It is important however to recall the terminological distinction noted by Giorgio Agamben⁵¹ between “survival” and Aby Warburg’s concept of “*Nachleben*,” which means “afterlife” rather than “survival,” and thus does implies the (symbolic) interruption of death. Francesco Faeta, in a comparative study of the approaches of Warburg and De Martino, reminds us of the possible influence on Warburg of the concept of “survival” as defined by anthropologist Edward B. Tylor⁵². In addition to the problematic nature of connections between ethnographic facts and records from antiquity, Faeta discerns a “crypto-evolutionist” spirit in anthropology, which De Martino of course approaches with his attention to “survivals” and “relics.”⁵³ If “survival,” is for Warburg a profoundly fertile rupture, for De Martino it suggests a certain “lag” with respect to modernity, a connotation that makes his posture even more ambivalent when we consider that he enthusiastically dedicated his career as an anthropologist to these surviving forms.

In De Martino’s final analysis, entitled “Historical Commentary,” he argues that a lucid study of tarantism requires us to recall the Greek experience of *pathos*, which involved a constant passage, as he described it,

from the somatic sphere to the psychic one and to the moral and religious one, and, in relation to this, the therapeutic use of music (and of dance) always implied a catharsis, embracing within a common horizon of symbolic efficacies, illness that we would qualify from case to case as illnesses of the body, disorders of the psyche or moral conflicts.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Aristoxenus of Tarentum relates an episode in which a group of women is suddenly struck with ecstasy, and the remedy proves to be music.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 191.

⁵¹ See Giorgio Agamben, *Image et mémoire*,” trans. Marco Dell’Omodarme, Paris, Hoëbeke, 1998

⁵² According to Faeta, this influence from anthropology would appear, in Warburg’s time, to have already been outdated. Regarding the concept of survival (*Nachleben*) for Aby Warburg, it is essential to refer to Georges Didi-Huberman, *L’image survivante. L’histoire de l’art et le temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg*, Paris, Minuit, 2002.

⁵³ See Faeta, 2003, p. 89.

⁵⁴ De Martino, 2005, p. 204.

Using primarily textual sources, he therefore attempts to capture an intensity whose effectiveness plays out on the body. For Warburg, the idea of *pathos* reappears in his “formulae” (*Pathosformeln*), which constitute what Didi-Huberman called an “archive of intensities.” Such an archive is essential to the study of tarantism as a choreutic-musical apparatus in that it is fixed, as Didi-Huberman explains, into a *choreutic* paradigm

responsible for interrogating, more radically, the status of the “formula” to the extent that it gives rise to a “pathos,” i.e. a physical and emotional crisis in the human body. We could hypothesize that the “bodily techniques”—greetings, dances, rules of combat, sports, relaxed postures, sex positions—offer a privileged articulation of this ‘connaturality between word and image’ sought by Warburg.⁵⁵

The power of the image: De Martino and the archive of gesture

The correspondences between Ernesto De Martino and Aby Warburg⁵⁶ thus go beyond the question of transmission and move into the forms that encourage transmission and the means of identifying these forms; the relationship between these concerns seems to play out in the researchers’ (implicit or explicit) reliance on images. Warburg, an art historian who, in his search for “survivals,” took an ethnographic detour into the world of the Hopi Indians, casually shot a series of photographs in 1895, which he then put on display almost 30 years later at the Kreuzlingen sanatorium as part of a conference intended to prove to his doctors and psychiatrist he was now ready to leave the psychiatric institution in which he had been placed. The analogies Warburg identified between Ancient Greek animal cults and the Hopi Indians’ ritual use of snakes were presented here in their fully visual dimension. During his presentation, words were assigned a secondary role, as *image-by-image* presentation was seen to reveal deep correspondences and allow him to confirm his intuition about the “afterlife” (*Nachleben*) of the symbolic and corporeal image of the snake.⁵⁷ De Martino, as an anthropologist leading a multidisciplinary expedition, not only directed his research team to take countless photographs, shoot many feet of footage and make audio recordings—bearing witness to what he saw as “ancient traces” coming to life before his eyes—but engaged the image even before his fieldwork encounter with tarantism, in the form of drawings he made in his preparatory notebook.

⁵⁵ Didi-Huberman, 2001, p. 144. “[P]our charge d’interroger plus radicalement le statut de la ‘formule’ en tant qu’elle donne existence à un ‘pathos,’ c’est-à-dire à une atteinte physique et affective du corps humain. On pourrait faire l’hypothèse que les ‘techniques du corps’ – salutations, danses, règles de combat, sports, attitudes de repos, positions sexuelles – offrent une articulation privilégiée pour cette ‘connaturalité entre le mot et l’image’ que cherchait Warburg,” (my translation).

⁵⁶ See the work of Francesco Faeta, but also of Riccardo Di Donato (ed.), *La contraddizione felice? Ernesto De Martino e gli altri*, Pise, ETS, 1990, p. 185-195.

⁵⁷ Aby Warburg, *Le rituel du serpent*, Paris, Macula, 2003.

Photography plays an important role in De Martino's work, despite some skepticism, on the researcher's part, as to its communicative value. *La terra del rimorso* includes a substantial photographic appendix containing the rich photographic work of Franco Pinna, carried out according to De Martino's detailed instructions. A reading of Pinna's work contract⁵⁸ and those of other team members gives a clear indication of the level of control De Martino exercised over the production of images in the field. Team members were not to take any photographs unless they were strictly for personal use. And for each photograph that illustrated tarantism, Pinna was required to refer to De Martino's instructions and notes, as if the anthropologist were in some sense asserting rights to an entire "picture of tarantism."

These countless photographs seem to have had a consistent role only during the research phase. The task of restoring the ethnographic data and giving them meaning post facto, however, was left to words. This fact becomes more obvious when we recall the sources De Martino used in dealing with his "survivals," relying exclusively on ancient written texts, from Pliny⁵⁹ to Aeschylus to Plato. And yet, he writes of "Aeschylus' *image* of Io"⁶⁰. Francesco Faeta provides some insight into this relationship between words and images, and the curious tension it produces:

[...] De Martino's writing is literarily astute and graced with complex poetic allusions; at the same time, it is rigorously incisive, giving the appearance of resulting from a preference for speech and the primacy of the *verbum*. [...] The truth is that speech often recovers the visual experience, almost by swallowing it whole.⁶¹

The photographs of chorographic cycles in *La terra del rimorso*, shot during "real" exorcism sessions in the tarantulated women's homes, can be understood as dynamic materials in deep complicity with the text; laid out in the sequence of the performance, it is difficult to determine whether the image shaped the text or vice versa. Photographic action and anthropological writing are brought very close together, becoming, according to Faeta, the site of synthesis of *a priori* anthropological ideas and hypotheses. It is quite clear De Martino carefully selected them to illustrate his written work. During fieldwork, however, it is not with De Martino's text in mind that Franco Pinna shot such a large number of photographs. The absence of a moving picture camera during fieldwork might partially account for Pinna's extreme photographic productivity; film would have enabled the researchers to archive and analyse gesture in more detail. The fact that Gianfranco Mingozzi's famous film *La taranta* (1962) was released so soon after De

⁵⁸ All the work contracts of the members of the 1959 expedition are found in Ernesto de Martino's digital archive, kept by the Associazione Ernesto de Martino in Rome.

⁵⁹ Pliny, *Hist. nat.* VIII, cited in De Martino, 1966, p. 219.

⁶⁰ De Martino, 2005, p. 189.

⁶¹ "Queste [...] indicano una peculiare tensione, una vigilanza e una misura rivelatrici, a mio avviso, di un atteggiamento ideologico: la scrittura di De Martino, letterariamente consapevole, colma di una complessa allusività poetica e, al contempo, rigorosamente incisiva, appare come conseguenza della preferenza della parola, del primato del *verbum*," Faeta, 2003, p. 73, (my translation).

Martino's *La terra del rimorso* (1961) was published and that both documents are very similar in content might lead one to think that Mingozzi was present during fieldwork. In reality, there was no filmmaker on De Martino's 1959 multidisciplinary expedition. Pinna's photographs of the tarantulated persons' choreutic cycles thus seem to make up for this marked absence of moving images. Indeed, Pinna's series of photographs pay special attention to bodily motions and break down those movements analytically. His previously mentioned photographic series of the "reconstruction of tarantism" (*Raccolta 38 - Ricostruzione del tarantismo*) in the hotel room is a case in point: the series only makes sense when the images are laid out side by side and as a group. This series offers a reverse portrait of the images selected for *La terra del rimorso*, which sought to capture reality. They precisely contrast by taking the viewer backstage, into the workings of a tenacious "*in vitro*" anthropological study. Although the *Raccolta 38* can be seen as a form of documentary excess, yet despite their scientific staging, these photographs allow us to understand the novelty of De Martino's approach for Italian scholarship: his profound interest in performance and its fully corporeal, sonic and visual dimension. At a time when in Italy, ritual was mainly studied philologically (hence purely as texts), De Martino asked to see it re-enacted in a privileged context, only for the researchers' eyes.

It is not surprising that on these photographs ethnomusicologist Diego Carpitella is proceeding to observational drawings of the choreographic cycles, as he will later elaborate extensive reflections on gesture, a study he calls "*cinesica*"⁶² (kinesics), reminiscent not only of Ray Birdwhistell's theories on kinesics,⁶³ but more importantly of Andrea De Jorio's 1800s work on Neapolitan gesture.⁶⁴ In fact, Carpitella largely compensated for the lack of theoretical reflections made by De Martino specifically on the production of images during fieldwork, and he authored several sharp ontological analyses of photography and film⁶⁵, discussing their contribution to ethnographic research. As an ethnomusicologist, his sensitivity to sound and its technical reproduction were, so to speak, transposed into the field of vision as he theorized what De Martino had intuitively set in motion with his "interdisciplinary ethnographies." Carpitella's fascination with moving images proved so visceral that precisely one year after the 1959

⁶² See for example Diego Carpitella, "I segni a Napoli ricerche sulla cinesica popolare (documenti filmici), *Sociologia della letteratura*, Acts of the first National Congress (Gaeta, October 1974), Fernando Ferrara, Michele Rak, Alberto Abruzzese, Romolo Runcini, Roma, Bulzoni (eds.), 1978, p. 204-207 ; "Cinesica 1. Napoli. Il linguaggio del corpo e le tradizioni popolari codici cinesici e ricerca cinematografica," *La Ricerca Folklorica*, vol. II no. 3, 1981, p. 61-70 ; "Cinesica e cultura. L'uso scientifico del cinema nello studio del linguaggio del corpo," *Bollettino dell'AICS*, December 1986, p. 27-28.

⁶³ Ray Birdwhistell, *Introduction to Kinesics: an Annotation System for Analysis of Body Motion and Gesture*, 1952 ; *Kinesics and Context. Essays on Body Motion Communication*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970.

⁶⁴ Andrea De Jorio, *La mimica degli antichi investigata nel gestire napoletano*, Naples, Fibreno, 1838.

⁶⁵ Diego Carpitella, "La registrazione foto-fonografica nelle ricerche etnofoniche," *Popular Photography Italiana*, no. 129, 1968 ; "Franco Pinna e la fotografia etnografica in Italia," in *Viaggio nelle terre del silenzio: reportage dal profondo Sud 1950-1959*, Milan, Idea Editions, 1980 ; "De Martino e le nuove discipline," *La Ricerca Folklorica*, vol. VII, no. 13, 1986, p. 69-70. Carpitella reflects upon media in numerous other articles, and was very involved in the Associazione Italiana di Cinematografia Scientifica (AICS), where he organized conferences and screenings for about a decade, contributing to the advancement of visual anthropology studies in Italy.

expedition, he decides to return in Apulia with a camera, in order capture images: the result of this solo expedition is an unclassifiable black and white 16 mm short film, *Meloterapia del tarantismo*⁶⁶, which is the only “demartinian” film produced exclusively with the scientific intention of a research tool. More than a decade later, in a slightly conflictual debate of a symposium entitled *Cinema, fotografia e videotape nella ricerca etnografica*⁶⁷, Carpitella continues to defend the use of film in anthropology by stating: “There are many things that can be seen in the editing room that cannot be seen by the naked eye.”⁶⁸ This attention to bodily gestures, and faith in photography and film as reliable tools to record and observe them with precision is central to understand the substantial production of images in De Martino’s research phases, and could almost be summed up in that utterly simple phrase.

Although De Martino has explicitly written very little about images, various scholars have considered his books as sites of endless visualist metaphors. It also becomes clear, in exploring his personal archive,⁶⁹ that his unspoken attraction to images as a source of knowledge preceded his use of film and still photography in the field, and may have preceded his fieldwork altogether. While his team was put through intensive preparation before going into the field, De Martino spent countless hours studying analogous forms of *pathos*, particularly by copying images from then-contemporary German works on classical antiquity.⁷⁰ His personal notebooks are full of preliminary sketches that presage his direct study of forms of possession and mourning in southern Italy. In reviewing his journals, we find stick figures kneeling, with open arms and minutely detailed mimetic typologies of weeping mourners. We find lists of gestures headed “RAGE, HUNGER, LIBIDO” or “AMNESIA,” or small human figures copied from designs on ancient vases, “shaking a bough over death.” Some pages have sketches both rough and precise, with marks scratched out and redrawn as De Martino sought to pictorialize exact ritual postures. This reproducibility echoes the very essence of the ritual, whose image contains a true “afterlife” (*Nachleben*) through the hand of the anthropologist who so meticulously copies it. Where Michael Taussig demonstrates how fruitful the analysis of drawings in fieldwork notebooks can be,⁷¹ De Martino’s case demonstrates the same productivity, but in a preparatory sense—his drawings do not seem to record events observed in the field. Moreover, De Martino’s drawings are reproductions of reproductions consulted beforehand, in books. Though there exists as yet no

⁶⁶ Diego Carpitella, *Meloterapia del tarantismo*, 1960, 16mm, 14’.

⁶⁷ *Cinema, fotografia e videotape nella ricerca etnografica*, Nuoro, 1977.

⁶⁸ “Ci sono molte cose che si possono vedere in moviola e ad occhio nudo non si vedono,” *Cinema, fotografia e videotape nella ricerca etnografica in Italia*, Atti dell’omonimo Convegno Nazionale, ISRE (Nuoro, October 1977).

⁶⁹ Archivio Ernesto de Martino de l’Associazione Ernesto de Martino, Rome. Grateful acknowledgments to Clara Gallini and Adelina Talamonti, as well as Marcello Massenzio, without whom this study of these materials would not have been possible.

⁷⁰ We find notes and drawings based on the works of specialists of classical antiquity such as Marcelle Webrouck, Hans Bonnet, Edward William Lane, Gustaf Dalman, H.V. Sedilitz. E. Littman, Ignác Goldziher, Gertrud Thausing, P. Khale, Alexandre Moret, A. Erman, H. Ranke and Willy Zschietzschmann, among others.

⁷¹ Michael Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This. Drawings in Fieldwork Notebooks, Namely my Own*, University of Chicago Press, 2011 ; “What Do Drawings Want?,” *Culture, Theory and Critique*, vol. 50, n° 2, 2009, p. 263-274.

detailed analysis of De Martino's drawings, it is nonetheless obvious that they reflect an "intimate" relationship with images that were essential to his intuitive understanding of the ritual phenomenon he was preparing to observe.

Not only do these examples allow us to judge the ambivalent role of iconographic sources in De Martino's search for survivals, they reveal deeper links with Warburg concerning the route toward the identification of analogies with the past. It is undeniable that the choreutic-chromatic-musical apparatus obliged De Martino to confront the problem of the image, whether openly or not. In effect, this choreutic paradigm is, according to Didi-Huberman, the privileged site of the articulation of the "connaturality between word and image."⁷² Nevertheless, the most explicit example of confidence in the productive comparison of historically varied iconographic materials is found in *Morte e pianto rituale nel mondo antico. Dal lamento pagano al pianto di Maria*,⁷³ which closes with a surprising "Figurative Atlas of Mourning" (*Atlante figurato del pianto*) comprising 66 images. The title is reminiscent of Warburg's *Mnemosyne* atlas⁷⁴ (unfinished, 1929) and stands in contrast to the anthropological vocabulary of the time. Indeed, De Martino describes this section of the book as "relatively new." It is an extremely heterogeneous iconographic collection (including photographs, film stills drawn from film strips, reproductions of pottery, etc.), the first part of which comprises a series of so-called "folkloric" photographs that are mainly presented as "artificial"⁷⁵. The second part includes examples of archaic gestures and the third part consists of iconographic representations from the medieval era.

Morte e pianto rituale is a study of what De Martino calls *tecnica del piangere*⁷⁶ ("technique of lament"), a performative mourning ritual that he considers as linked to antiquity, whose echoes can be found both in literature, ancient iconography and Christian representations—which, as Warburg notes, carry "traces" while simultaneously repressing them—and in certain regions of southern Italy in the 1950s. De Martino's historico-religious perspective thus aims to create a comprehensive portrait of this ritual mimicry, which is why he states philological attention to ancient Greek texts is insufficient to understand this form of lamentation in its true light, across its verbal, gestural and melodic orders. "Folkloric documentation *allows us to see* [emphasis added], in all its dramatic obviousness, what the ancient documents only allow us to glimpse or imagine,

⁷² Georges Didi-Huberman, "Aby Warburg et l'archive des intensités," *Études photographiques*, n° 10, novembre 2001. <http://etudesphotographiques.revues.org/index268.html> (last consultation on January 30th 2012).

⁷³ Ernesto De Martino, *Morte e pianto rituale nel mondo antico. Dal lamento pagano al pianto di Maria*, Turin, Einaudi, 1958.

⁷⁴ See the recently edited Aby Warburg, *L'atlas Mnemosyne* (with an essay by Roland Recht), Paris / London, L'équarquillé – INHA and The Warburg Institute, 2012.

⁷⁵ As noted above, "artificial" lamentations are those done by weepers out of context, by De Martino's request. There is nothing unusual about this guileless performative act, which has been constitutive of the ritual since classical antiquity. Some of the mourners were chosen for their talent at this kind of performance, and were even occasionally paid to mourn total strangers.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p 57.

i.e. the lamentation as an active rite.”⁷⁷ And so reappears the importance of “living documents” in the study of funerary lamentations, which, thanks to their visual and corporeal presence, gave the researcher the *enargeia* (“clarity, vitality,” in Ginzburg’s sense⁷⁸) to fully understand the phenomenon. It may be this same *enargeia* that De Martino seeks to translate into his work, by collecting a series of audio and photographic recordings, “both [which are] indispensable for not losing the concrete relationship with ritual lamentation as a dynamic unit of speech, monotonous chant and gesture.”⁷⁹ This attention to the gestural components of performance is recognizable in the meticulous observation methods described above, and furthermore explains De Martino’s overall enthusiasm for photography and its power, especially during research phases.

De Martino’s atlas thus reflects the infinite scope of his definition of funerary lamentation. Given its taxonomic aspect, his approach reminds us of Mauss’s manual of ethnography : these are not just collections that simply illustrate theory, but are curated objects that—through their assemblage—reveal abstract principles. Yet De Martino’s primary divergence from conventional ethnographic data collection is his transcultural and profoundly transhistorical juxtaposition of iconographic elements (Greek, Egyptian, Phoenician and Italian). His series display multiple relationships articulated around the body: “mourning tends to be reflected in human faces and bodies in mimetic expressions.”⁸⁰ It is important to think of this collection of images not simply as an attempt to archive gestures, and particularly not for the sole purpose of preservation (moving pictures would have served better than photographs for this). Warburg’s method provides an interesting insight into the unique logic of this atlas, and Faeta identifies important intersections between the two methods:

[...] the central importance of the image in the demonstration of cultural processes (as not merely parenthetical [...]), the productive confidence in a comparison of iconographic sources of differing depth, [...] the critical presupposition of substantial continuity between the classical world, the Italian renaissance and the “primitive” world (in De Martino’s case a Lucanian and Transylvanian ethnic reality).⁸¹

For the purpose of our study, we add a final key parallel: the desire to build an “archive of intensities” of symbolic forms, in the sense that Didi-Huberman ascribes to Warburg’s lists of

⁷⁷ “[...] È ciò che la documentazione antica ci lascia soltanto intravedere o immaginare, cioè il lamento come rito in azione, la documentazione folklorica ce lo pone sotto gli occhi in tutta la sua evidenza drammatica [...],” *Ibid*, p. 58-59, (my translation).

⁷⁸ Carlo Ginzburg, *Le fil et les traces. Vrai, Faux, Fictif*, Verdier, 2010, p. 27.

⁷⁹ “[...] le une e le altre indispensabili per non perdere mai il rapporto concreto con il lamento rituale come unità dinamica di parola, di melopea, di gesto,” De Martino, 1958, p. 76, (my translation).

⁸⁰ “[...] l’evento luttuoso tende a riflettersi nei volti e nei corpi umani secondo espressioni mimiche,” *Ibid*, p. 385.

⁸¹ “la centrale importanza dell’immagine nel testimoniare i processi culturali (e non una sua mera funzione didascalica [...]), [...] una feconda fiducia nella comparazione di fonti iconografiche di origine e spessore diverso, nel presupposto critico di una sostanziale continuità culturale tra mondo classico, Rinascimento italiano, mondo « primitivo » (nel caso di de Martino realtà etniche lucane e transilvane), Faeta, 2003, p. 99 (my translation).

“mimetic degrees.” De Martino’s work also seems to “reconstitute the link of (anthropological) connaturality between word and image,”⁸² a connaturality that, as we have seen, is inscribed in the history of bodies to which literary sources alone do not seem to do justice.

The inherent mnemonic power of ritual thus offers De Martino fertile ground for thinking about the question of so-called “pagan survivals.” In part because of its codified, repetitive structure, ritual has durability over time. That continuity, in the case of tarantism, is not only inscribed in memory, but is articulated in “remorse” (*rimorso*)—both remorse and the re-bite—and becomes manifest in the “return.” The role of forgetting in this process is incontestable—it is through possession in the present that the possessed gains access to a “simple past.” De Martino established correspondences by working mainly from literary sources, including texts from antiquity, in which he discovered a multitude of apparently familiar symbols. In these sources, elements such as the bite (*oistros*) clarify the reality playing out before him in Apulia, despite all the epistemological perils inherent in making such connections. These figures are reminiscent of those in Warburg’s atlas of Dionysian forms, in which he used iconographic comparison to identify the formula of *pathos* in the famous “figure of the nymph as Maenad, whether she be pagan or Christian.”⁸³ This method lends itself perfectly to the identification of a choreutic-chromatic-musical exorcism apparatus, as it questions the image as the site where “survivals” are inscribed. At the same time, images are not peripheral to De Martino’s research process. In the opening pages of *La terra del rimorso*, he even admitted that the idea of organizing the 1959 expedition was sparked by a photographic impulse:

The initial idea of carrying out an ethnographic investigation of Apulian tarantism [...] came to me as I was looking at some of André Martin’s excellent photographs. [...] These photographs could be seen as images of strange, eccentric behavior, arousing a momentary curiosity [...]; but for me, they were a stimulus for anchoring the planned religious history of the South [...] to a phenomenon which recalled the commitment to historiographic coherence in an exemplary manner precisely because it appeared as a knot of extreme contradiction.⁸⁴

It is as though this image of “folkloric-religious” detail, a *molecular* history captured by photography, was enough to generate De Martino’s profound desire to put together a more comprehensive plan and adopt a transcultural and transhistorical perspective. How can one not foresee quite literally the power of Barthes’ *punctum*, caused by these muse-like images: photographs that also operate within a complex “evidential paradigm”⁸⁵? This intense triggering feeling of being “hit,” “pointed” (*pointé*), emerges curiously, in the questionnaires used to interview the victims of tarantism during the 1959 field research. The notebooks of the team, and

⁸² Didi-Huberman, 2001.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ De Martino, 2005, p. 11.

⁸⁵ The concept of “evidential paradigm” is explained thoroughly in Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.

the various archives of the research phase have recently been edited in a fascinating and complex publication by Amalia Signorelli⁸⁶, who was present as Ernesto De Martino's assistant, and actively took notes herself when interrogating and observing the possessed women of Apulia. In these interviews, which are in great part absent from *La terra del rimorso*, a question is asked systematically, until it formed an important category that haunted the whole team: "When did your first (spider) bite occur?" So began the narrations of the first *punctum* of tarantulated women who didn't know their own photographic image, had already passed on "these pain spots ; precisely these marks, these wounds"⁸⁷ to the anthropologist several years earlier through André Martin's pictures.

The importance of the image is of course also evident in light of the *Atlante figurato del pianto*, which concluded De Martino's study of funerary lamentation. Curiously, the anthropologist comes close to a defensive stance towards this new form of analysis in this work, by arguing in the introduction that the images did not serve to answer purely "aesthetic" questions of style required for art historical purposes. Rather, they are to be seen as "archaeological" material, documents supporting ritual forms that the researcher is attempting to preserve within the disciplinary scope of an anthropology with undoubtedly blurry boundaries. We are to understand that the creation of an "archive of intensities," the juxtaposition of fossilized images of bodily expressions, easily extends beyond the interest of a single discipline. Indeed, the formulas of pathos identified by De Martino and Warburg, authors from different fields, ended up closely intersecting. Where De Martino undertook an archaeology of ancient mourning, Warburg revealed the Dionysian eroticization of the *Ninfa* through Mary Magdalene's convulsive sobs at the foot of the Cross, in an act of "orgiastic mourning." Lamentation thus becomes the site of ideal concordances for thinking about *Pathosformeln*. Late in life Warburg characterized such *Pathosformeln* as "'original words' of mimetic expression, in light of a veritable 'tragedy of the soul' (*Seelendramatik*) in which the 'ecstatic' – or 'demonic' – dimension of images is revealed."⁸⁸

We thus return to one of our initial questions concerning the medium studied by the researcher and the types of conclusions the medium affords. The question is complex and essential to understand the nature of the "object" of study: does it suggest a specific mode of organization of knowledge? It is the question of mourning that De Martino attempts to elucidate conceptually in the introduction to his *Morte e pianto rituale*, though it is Benedetto Croce's *Frammenti di etica* (1922) that inspired De Martino's research. He quotes a passage from Croce that he believes contains a fundamental human truth:

What should we do with the dead, beings that were dear to us and were part of us? "Forget

⁸⁶ Ernesto De Martino, *Etnografia del tarantismo pugliese. I materiali della spedizione nel Salento del 1959*, Amalia Signorelli, Valerio Panza (eds.), Lecce, Argo, 2011.

⁸⁷ "ces points sensibles ; précisément, ces marques, ces blessures" (my translation) in Roland Barthes, *La chambre claire. Note sur la photographie*, Paris, Gallimard, 1980, p. 49.

⁸⁸ Didi-Huberman, 2001.

them,” says the wisdom of life somewhat euphemistically. “Forget them,” ethics confirms. “Flee the tombs,” exclaimed Goethe and, in chorus with him, the great spirits. And man forgets. We say it is the work of time, but too many good things, too many difficult works are credited to time, that is, to a non-existent being. No, this forgetting is not the work of time, it is our work. It is we who want to forget, and we forget.⁸⁹

So begins a work that concludes with a collection of bodies afflicted with loss, in petrified movements even as evidenced by photographs, or carved right into tombs. It is possible that this human truth, as evoked by Croce, in some sense calls naturally for the creation of an archive of intensities. Does this confrontation with death not remain part of the archival ghost? Could anthropology not be, at times, infused with this desire to compensate for the disappearance of peoples, of which most are already extinct? Mourning may be what the archive both conceals and generates, as it saves one series and leaves the rest to die, proceeding to the necessary practice of what archivists call the “art of destruction.”

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⁸⁹ “Che cosa dobbiamo fare degli estinti, delle creature che ci furono care e che erano come parte di noi stessi? “Dimenticarli”, risponde, se pure con vario eufemismo, la saggezza della vita. “Dimenticarli”, conferme l’etica. “Via dalle tombe!” esclamava Goethe, e a coro con lui altri spiriti magni. E l’uomo dimentica. Si dice che ciò è opera del; ma troppe cose buone, e troppo ardue opere, si sogliono attribuire al tempo, cioè ad un essere che non esiste. No: quella dimenticanza non è opera del; è opera nostra, che vogliamo dimenticare e dimentichiamo,” De Martino, 1958, p. 4. Excerpt of Benedetto Croce, *Frammenti di etica* [1922], (my translation).

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What dust will rise? Il museo sotto assedio (o in esodo...)¹

Abstract

Questo articolo presenta una lettura posizionata di un processo aperto e irrisolto, che vede da decenni accendersi un forte confronto intorno al ruolo e all'identità dei musei contemporanei, rispetto alla loro vocazione di istituzioni preposte alla formazione dei cittadini. Un ruolo che, in un contesto caratterizzato da una situazione economica e culturale complessa, sta attraversando inedite conflittualità, ma che sta anche sperimentando nuove modalità di ridiscutere alcune questioni, come quelle della rappresentatività e dell'accessibilità del museo in quanto spazio pubblico, del patrimonio, della cittadinanza, dell'autorità delle narrazioni museali. L'articolo consiste in una rielaborazione di "appunti di campo" relativi all'incrocio tra ricerca teorica e pratica curatoriale che ho accumulato negli ultimi due anni, lavorando su due piani sovrapposti: la ricerca in un ambito che incrocia antropologia culturale, studi culturali e postcoloniali, museografia, e la pratica curatoriale, sperimentata attraverso l'attività di Routes Agency, l'agenzia indipendente di curatela della quale faccio parte.

English Abstract

This article presents a reading of an unsolved process about the role and the identity of contemporary museums, and their vocation as institutions devoted to citizen education. This role, in a difficult economic and cultural situation like the present one, is experiencing new unrests, but it is also experimenting new ways of discussing old questions, like representativeness and accessibility of the museum as a public place, heritage, citizenship and authority of museum narrations. This article is structured as a sort of fieldwork notes about the link between my theoretical research in the last two years in the fields of cultural anthropology, cultural and postcolonial studies and museography, and curatorial practice, experimented through the activities of the independent association of contemporary art curators Routes Agency, to which I belong.

Keywords

Museo, Museo Etnografico, Postcoloniale, Documenta (13), Museo dell'Oro di Bogotá, Arte Contemporanea, Curatela.

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colonial stereotypes and contemporary art”, examined the works of the Afro-American artists Lorna Simpson and Kara Walker, focusing on colonial representation, the concept of embodiment and emotions as field of knowledge’s production. She is currently research fellow at “L’Orientale” (Naples, Italy) as a member of the EU Project “Mela – European Museums in the Age of Migrations” (founded as FP7-SSH-2010/2012), where she is working on the relation between museums, curatorial practices, contemporary anthropology and contemporary art. Her research interests include anthropology, cultural and post-colonial studies, with a focus on contemporary art and on representations of the body. She teaches Photography – social communication at the Fine Arts School of Brera (Milan, Italy), Visual anthropology and Sociology of communication at the European Institute of Design (IED) in Rome. She is also co-coordinator and Professor of Visual Anthropology and Contemporary Art for IED Master’s Program in “Museum and Events Curator - Contemporary Arts and Performing Arts”, directed by Professor Viviana Gravano. She is editor-in-chief of the on-line journal rootsroutes – research on visual culture (www.roots-routes.org). She works in a team of independent curators based in Rome, called Routes Agency - Cura of contemporary arts (www.routesagency.com). She has published *La Rappresentazione Incorporata. Una etnografia del corpo tra stereotipi coloniali e arte contemporanea* (Bonanno 2010).

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Premessa: il museo sotto assedio (o in esodo...)

“A theorist is one who has been undone by theory”
(Rogoff, 2003)

Quando si tratta di teorizzare o esprimere il mio pensiero su un argomento specifico, intorno al quale da tempo *faccio* ricerca, spesso mi trovo catturata nel piacevole imbarazzo di un posizionamento doppiamente sbilanciato: né radicato in modo esclusivo (e a volte escludente) in uno specifico ambito disciplinare, né focalizzato solo sull’aspetto teorico-critico, speculativo, ma sempre con un occhio attento alle “pratiche”, al “fare”. Potrebbe sembrare un equilibrio troppo instabile per permettermi di fondarvi un discorso – un posizionarsi senza avere sotto i piedi un appoggio davvero sicuro, con il rischio di perdere aderenza e stabilità, di finire magari per scivolare o cercare di mantenersi in piedi attraverso operazioni piuttosto scomposte. Ma per certi versi è proprio questa *scompostezza* che potrebbe essere auspicabile trovare: una posizione cruciale, a partire dalla quale lavorare sugli *smarginamenti* come luoghi liminari che, proprio in quanto tali, possono suggerire inedite aperture e stupori produttivi. Innanzitutto gli smarginamenti tra diverse discipline, che consentono di assumere quell’approccio radicalmente interdisciplinare imprescindibile di

fronte all'analisi di qualunque oggetto o processo culturale. In secondo luogo si tratta di riconoscere che il confine tra il fare (la pratica artistica o curatoriale, ad esempio) e il produrre conoscenza attraverso il teorizzare si è da tempo e progressivamente sempre più assottigliato, come sottolinea Irit Rogoff: "the old boundaries between making and theorising, historicizing and displaying, criticising and affirming have long been eroded. Artistic practice is being acknowledged as the production of knowledge and theoretical and curatorial endeavours have taken on a far more experimental and inventive dimension, both existing in the realm of potentiality and possibility rather than that of exclusively material production" (ivi).

Seguendo l'affermazione di Foucault, secondo la quale il sapere non è fatto per comprendere, ma per prendere posizione, questo articolo intende presentare una lettura posizionata (in quello smarginamento di cui sopra) di un processo aperto e irrisolto, che vede da decenni accendersi un forte confronto intorno al ruolo e all'identità dei musei contemporanei, innanzitutto rispetto alla loro vocazione di istituzioni preposte, tra le altre, alla formazione dei cittadini. Un ruolo che, in un contesto contemporaneo caratterizzato da una situazione economica e culturale estremamente complessa, sta attraversando inedite conflittualità, ma che sta anche sperimentando nuove modalità di ridiscutere alcune questioni basilari, come quelle della rappresentatività e dell'accessibilità del museo in quanto spazio "pubblico" (Bennett, 1995) – questioni che aprono ad altre ulteriori e cruciali domande, che riguardano la definizione del concetto di patrimonio, di cittadinanza, la costruzione e il racconto di memorie culturali più o meno conflittuali, cioè l'autorità delle narrazioni museali.

Seguendo di nuovo le suggestioni di Irit Rogoff, si tratta qui di presentare un approccio che slitti "from criticism to critique to criticality – from finding fault, to examining the underlying assumptions that might allow something to appear as a convincing logic, to operating from an uncertain ground which while building on critique wants nevertheless to inhabit culture in a relation other than one of critical analysis" (ivi). Passare cioè da un approccio centrato sulla rigidità del giudizio e delle opposizioni dicotomiche, a uno centrato sulla decostruzione attiva di discorsi e pratiche, che tuttavia tenga sempre presente la molteplicità dei punti di vista e l'instabilità del terreno dal quale ci si dispone all'analisi, ma che soprattutto si proponga di valorizzare le potenzialità del cambiamento culturale, piuttosto che le sue staticità, sostituendo i binarismi con campi di referenzialità aperti. È necessario anche assumersi il rischio di questo posizionamento, legato a un approccio teso più a sollevare questioni che a individuare nette e chiare risposte, a riconoscere e rendere visibili le fratture piuttosto che le continuità, lavorando con il materiale vivo del contemporaneo, con una processualità culturale nell'adesso che spesso sfugge alla possibilità di essere articolata con chiarezza: "a cultural inhabitation that performatively acknowledges what it is risking without yet fully being able to articulate it" (ivi).

"Il museo come modo di vedere; come forma di spettacolo teatrale; come baraccone, circo Barnum del moderno; come strumento di trasmissione di valori e contenuti politici; come saccheggio civilmente istigato a fine di formazione di nuovi malloppi di idee; i luoghi-museo, come Venezia; i musei come 'monumenti alla fragilità delle culture, alla decadenza delle grandi istituzioni, al tracollo dei rituali, alla scomparsa dei miti, agli effetti distruttivi delle guerre, della trascuratezza e dei dubbi corrosivi.'" (Drugman, 1995: IX, X)

Il museo come dispositivo moderno e coloniale ha fornito le risorse immaginative e performative, gli orizzonti cognitivi e le pratiche utili alla costruzione del cittadino europeo moderno, intronizzandolo come soggetto “universale”, sempre in relazione con un’alterità rispetto alla quale definirsi per differenza, ancorandosi a una serie di dicotomie fondanti (sé/altro, natura/cultura, deviante/normale). D’altra parte il museo è uno dei dispositivi che hanno storicamente articolato la foucaultiana dimensione del potere attraverso il sapere, e che hanno formato quello che lo studioso di cultura visuale Timothy Mitchell definisce “exhibitionary order” (Mitchell, 2002): un approccio fondativo dell’identità Europea moderna che organizza e comprende la realtà nei termini di un sistema visuale classificatorio di conoscenza, traducendola e mettendola in scena in tutti quei dispositivi eterotopici (Foucault, 2006) attraverso i quali l’Europa inizia a organizzare la propria rappresentazione di sé e della diversità (le Esposizioni Universali, i documenti delle amministrazioni coloniali, i musei, il turismo o l’industria del tempo libero, la pubblicità, i parchi zoologici, i giardini botanici, il teatro, i Freak Show).

L’attitudine a classificare, raccogliere e categorizzare la realtà, organizzando e istituzionalizzando in un regime visivo il gioco delle identità e delle differenze, diventa una prerogativa Occidentale nella misura in cui queste attività sono associate ai concetti di accumulazione e preservazione (piuttosto che a quelli di redistribuzione o dissolvimento), a nozioni di temporalità e di ordine che hanno le loro radici nella cultura occidentale. In questo senso il collezionismo o la costruzione di archivi, cioè quel complesso insieme di pratiche che comprende il raccogliere, l’accumulare, il classificare, il conservare e l’esporre, è identificabile sia come una specifica “forma di soggettività occidentale” (Clifford, 1992: 255), sia come una serie di potenti pratiche istituzionali tese all’appropriazione di oggetti, immagini, significati *altri*: “in Occidente il collezionismo è stato a lungo una strategia del dispiegamento possessivo dell’io, della cultura, dell’autenticità” (ivi: 252).

Come suggerito da Fredi Drugman nella citazione in esergo, il museo istituzionalizza un modo di vedere, organizza lo spazio della visione, normalizza e controlla i corpi che lo attraversano, e *costruisce* il suo oggetto precisamente nell’attività del mostrarlo. La neutralità del dispositivo museale è da tempo stata sottoposta a critica, proprio a partire da questo atto di “mostrazione”²: con questo termine intendo evidenziare quel complesso insieme di pratiche attraverso le quali l’identità di un oggetto o di un soggetto mostrato viene definita tramite le modalità della sua stessa esposizione. Si tratta di un mostrare che al contempo agisce, di un’azione che viene compiuta attraverso l’atto stesso della rappresentazione, un atto essenzialmente performativo (Danto, 1988).

Nel decostruire il museo come dispositivo non neutrale e coloniale di rappresentazione e costruzione di identità e di potere, da tempo e da più parti si insiste sul fatto che il Museo è morto, o sta per esserlo. Ma prima di decretare l’irreversibile dipartita del dispositivo museale, sarebbe opportuna forse una riflessione sulla possibilità di riattivare in modo inedito alcune delle sue funzioni sociali, prima fra tutte quella di costruire delle narrazioni in grado di

² Ringrazio la storica dell’arte Viviana Gravano, per aver elaborato con me il senso del termine “mostrazione”. Il riferimento è al concetto di enunciato performativo (*performative utterance*), elaborato da John L. Austin negli anni ‘40 (si vedano Austin J.L., *Philosophical Papers*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, tr. it. Milano, Guerini, 1990 e *How to do things with words*, Oxford, Oxford U.P., tr. it. *Come fare cose con le parole*, Genova, Marietti, 1987).

produrre un processo di identificazione, una “comunità immaginata” (Anderson, 1996) non più, auspicabilmente, in senso nazionale o coloniale, ma in senso postcoloniale, interculturale e transnazionale, offrendosi come laboratorio sperimentale di nuovi sensi della cittadinanza – di una diversa “comunità che viene” (Agamben, 2001).

In questo senso l'*assedio* che stringe i fianchi del dispositivo museale sembra avere a che vedere con una delle “posizioni” che Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev pone a fondamento dell’ultima edizione di Documenta, la quinquennale esposizione di arte contemporanea istituita a Kassel nel 1955 (nell’ottica di “ricostruire” una Germania devastata dagli orrori della Seconda Guerra Mondiale), da lei curata tra giugno e settembre 2012: “under siege. I am encircled by the other, besieged by others” (Christov-Bakargiev, 2012: 35). Una posizione piuttosto scomoda, che tuttavia può rivelarsi produttiva: essere sotto assedio, essere circondati dagli sguardi di “altri” (quelli che spesso il museo stesso ha contribuito a definire come i propri “altri”, e che dunque non si sentono rappresentati o non riescono a identificarsi con la comunità immaginata che esso propone) trasforma il museo da dispositivo di costruzione degli “oggetti” esposti, di costruzione del suo pubblico e di produzione di sapere-potere attraverso l’istituzione di un regime visivo, ad essere esso stesso oggetto osservato, sottoposto a critica, vivisezionato, in un’ottica attiva di inversione e di trasformazione. Le quattro posizioni individuate da Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev come quattro tra le possibili condizioni in cui ci si può trovare oggi nell’atto di produrre conoscenza (sia da un punto di vista artistico che curatoriale che teoretico) mi sembra articolino in maniera estremamente pregnante anche la condizione di crisi che le istituzioni museali stanno attraversando, sospese tra l’essere “on stage”, sul palcoscenico, giocando un ruolo e mettendo continuamente in scena la mostrazione di identità e differenze, costruendo il proprio pubblico ma al contempo accettando che esso possa “ricambiare lo sguardo”; il sentirsi assediato in un tempo compresso e di emergenza, nel quale c’è una pressione critica ma anche una domanda di cambiamento; il sentirsi “*on retreat*” – espressione che può voler dire sia “in esodo” che “in ritiro”, ed è qui che si gioca il posizionamento del museo, in questa indecisione tra l’estrema chiusura e introversione nella rigidità delle proprie pratiche, e invece l'*exodus*, l’uscita dal luogo proprio, l’andare fuori strada, il deviare verso il fuori, l’allontanarsi dal conosciuto; e infine il potersi lasciar andare a uno *stato di speranza*, di ottimismo, per il quale “I dream, I am the dreaming subject of anticipation” (ivi), a partire dal quale poter sperimentare inedite potenzialità, gettare lo sguardo in un tempo decompresso e proiettato verso il futuro – il tempo della promessa o del desiderio.

“Dire qualcosa sull’aspetto metodologico della stesura stessa: quando si attende a un lavoro, tutto ciò a cui si sta pensando deve a ogni costo esservi incorporato”. (Benjamin, 2000: 510)

Questo articolo si configura nelle mie intenzioni come una rielaborazione di “appunti di campo” relativi all’incrocio tra ricerca teorica e pratica curatoriale che ho accumulato negli ultimi due anni, lavorando su due piani, continuamente e produttivamente sovrapposti. Il primo riguarda la ricerca in un ambito che incrocia antropologia culturale, studi culturali e postcoloniali e museografia, all’interno del progetto quadriennale di ricerca europeo *MeLa* –

*European Museums in an Age of Migrations*³, che si propone di delineare la situazione attuale e nuovi possibili approcci rispetto alla relazione tra i musei europei e le migrazioni di persone, culture, idee, conoscenze e informazioni. Il secondo piano riguarda la pratica curatoriale (soprattutto, per quel che riguarda questo articolo, nei suoi aspetti concettuali), sperimentata attraverso l'attività di *Routes Agency* – cura of contemporary arts, l'agenzia indipendente di curatela della quale faccio parte, e con la quale ho curato diversi eventi (talk, rassegne video, esposizioni) negli ultimi due anni, intorno alle tematiche del postcoloniale e delle migrazioni⁴.

I due piani sopra descritti non possono fare a meno di essere a loro volta attraversati, messi in comunicazione e ridiscussi attraverso riflessioni elaborate durante alcuni recenti viaggi di ricerca a Kassel, per Documenta (13)⁵, e in diversi altri luoghi⁶, che mi hanno consentito di approfondire le implicazioni delle questioni trattate in questo articolo soprattutto in riferimento ai musei etnografici.

Nel luglio 2012 ho partecipato con Routes Agency al bando di concorso “Idee migranti”⁷ (aperto a artisti, cineasti, collettivi, ricercatori, studenti, associazioni, centri di

³ Lavoro al progetto MeLa all'interno del gruppo di ricerca del prof. Iain Chambers, presso l'Università L'Orientale di Napoli <http://www.mela-project.eu/>.

⁴ Routes Agency (<http://www.routesagency.com>) è un attivatore di processi e collaborazioni tra diversi contesti culturali, sociali, istituzionali e produttivi, italiani e internazionali, con un approccio sperimentale e interdisciplinare. L'obiettivo di Routes Agency è porre l'arte contemporanea in una relazione diretta con ogni ambito della società, investendo sulla produzione di trasformazioni responsabili e di occasioni di sviluppo produttivo attraverso la creatività e la ricerca. Routes Agency cura inoltre la rivista on line *RootsRoutes* – Research on Visual Culture, che si propone come piattaforma di riflessione e di ricerca internazionale, per individuare le aree teoriche e metodologiche tra pratiche estetiche e antropologiche. Tra gli eventi curati, faccio qui riferimento alla serie di incontri al MAXXI BASE intitolata *Found in Translation, Visioni Postcoloniali*, svoltasi tra ottobre 2011 e gennaio 2012: <http://www.routesagency.com/found-in-translation>.

⁵ La produttiva discussione, durante questo viaggio, tra i componenti di Routes Agency su alcuni aspetti curatoriali relativi a Documenta (13) è diventata l'editoriale in formato audio del n. 8 della rivista (coordinata dallo stesso team dell'agenzia) *rootsroutes research on visual cultures* (ottobre-dicembre 2012): *What dust will rise? Conversazione su Documenta (13) a cura della redazione di rootsroutes*: <http://www.roots-routes.org/2012/11/12/what-dust-will-rise/>.

⁶ Tra gli altri: il Museo Ettore Guatelli di Parma; il Museo degli Sguardi di Rimini; il Museo Cesare Lombroso di Torino; il Museo Etnografico e il Museo delle Culture Europee di Berlino; il Musée du Quai Branly a Parigi; l'esposizione *Intense Proximity*, sulla relazione tra arte e antropologia, curata da Okwui Enwezor al Palais de Tokyo di Parigi nel 2012; l'esposizione *Fare gli Italiani*, realizzata da Studio Azzurro a Torino per le celebrazioni del cinquecentenario della repubblica Italiana.

⁷ Per maggiori informazioni rimando al sito del museo: http://www.pigorini.beniculturali.it/mostre_eventi.html#idee_migranti, nel quale si legge che il bando Idee Migranti è stato lanciato come completamento dell'esposizione *[S]oggetti migranti: dietro le cose le persone*, realizzata con il sostegno dei fondi europei destinati alla ricerca (<http://www.soggettimmigranti.beniculturali.it/index.php>). Il Museo Pigorini infatti è parte della rete europea dei musei etnografici RIME (<http://www.rimenet.eu/>), nella quale ha potuto prendere parte a un progetto di ricerca europeo, che ha portato i musei partner a produrre e curare delle esposizioni, anche sperimentando, come nel caso del Pigorini, pratiche di co-curatela grazie alle quali il Museo ha invitato alcuni rappresentanti delle comunità diasporiche del territorio romano a lavorare con il patrimonio del Museo. Nel sito internet del museo si legge: “La sezione “Idee Migranti” della mostra *[S]oggetti migranti: dietro le cose le persone* intende accogliere, nel periodo dell'esposizione (fino al 16 giugno 2013), le proposte di artisti, ricercatori, associazioni, centri di ricerca, ecc. che hanno partecipato al concorso lanciato dal Museo “Luigi Pigorini” nel luglio 2012. “Idee Migranti” è un ampliamento della mostra *[S]oggetti migranti* e della sua missione: aprire gli spazi museali al dialogo tra diversi attori del territorio nazionale per rafforzare la vocazione del museo ad essere contenitore e catalizzatore di multivocalità, prospettive critiche, contaminazioni di linguaggi”.

ricerca), lanciato dal Museo Preistorico Etnografico *Luigi Pigorini* di Roma per selezionare “proposte di installazioni (assemblaggio di oggetti, video, etc.), performances e iniziative sui fenomeni migratori contemporanei, i diritti di cittadinanza e la promozione del patrimonio culturale nell'era delle diaspore”⁸. Il progetto che abbiamo presentato come Routes Agency, *Crossing bodies – Immaginari Postcoloniali*, è stato selezionato ed è stato in mostra al Museo Pigorini dal 1 al 15 dicembre 2012.

Crossing Bodies e la relazione con il Museo Pigorini sono stati un territorio di sperimentazione di alcune delle riflessioni sopra accennate. In questo senso parlavo di “appunti di campo”: quello che vorrei far emergere in questo testo è proprio la processualità di questa ricerca, il suo essere articolata in una costellazione di questioni che emergono in tutta la loro irrisolutezza, senza la pretesa di arrivare ad alcuna sintesi – seguendo piuttosto la massima citata da Clifford Geertz “se non sai la risposta, discuti la domanda” (Geertz, 2001: 10), cercando cioè di esplorare questa processualità, di “abitare” le domande, prima ancora che dare delle risposte. Lasciando infine che la scrittura proceda da qui, dalla radicale irrisolutezza di un'esperienza, raccontata nel momento stesso della sua rielaborazione.

“Oh, ma con i versi si fa ben poco, quando li si scrive troppo presto. Bisognerebbe aspettare e raccogliere senso e dolcezza per tutta una vita e meglio una lunga vita, e poi, proprio alla fine, forse si riuscirebbe poi a scrivere dieci righe che fossero buone. Poiché i versi non sono, come crede la gente, sentimenti (che si hanno già presto), sono esperienze. Per un solo verso si devono vedere molte città, uomini e cose, si devono conoscere gli animali, si deve sentire come gli uccelli volano, e sapere i gesti con cui i fiori si schiudono al mattino. [...] Si devono avere ricordi di molte notti d'amore, nessuna uguale all'altra, di grida di partorienti, e di lievi, bianche puerpere addormentate che si richiudono. Ma anche presso i moribondi si deve essere stati, si deve essere rimasti presso i morti nella camera con la finestra aperta e i rumori che giungono a folate. E anche avere ricordi non basta. Si deve poterli dimenticare, quando sono molti, e si deve avere la grande pazienza di aspettare che ritornino. Poiché i ricordi di per se stessi ancora non sono. Solo quando divengono in noi sangue, sguardo e gesto, senza nome e non più scindibili da noi, solo allora può darsi che in una rarissima ora sorga nel loro centro e ne esca la prima parola di un verso.” (Rilke, 2000: 14)

Del prendersi cura

Museo

Ci sono i piatti, ma non l'appetito.
Le fedi, ma non scambievole amore
da almeno trecento anni.

C'è il ventaglio – e i rossori?

⁸ Tratto dal bando del concorso di Idee migranti.

C'è la spada – dov'è l'ira?
E il liuto, non un suono all'imbrunire.

In mancanza di eternità hanno ammassato
diecimila cose vecchie.
Un custode ammuffito dorme beato
con i baffi chini sulla vetrina.

Metalli, creta, una piuma d'uccello
trionfano in silenzio nel tempo.
Ride solo la spilla d'una egiziana ridarella.

La corona è durata più della testa.
La mano ha perso contro il guanto.
La scarpa destra ha sconfitto il piede.

Quanto a me, credete, sono viva.
La gara col vestito non si arresta.
E lui quanta tenacia mi dimostra!
Vorrebbe viver più della mia vita!

(Szymborska, 2009: 109)

Il Museo dell'Oro⁹, situato nel centro territoriale, politico ed economico di Bogotá, contiene trentottomilacinquecento pezzi di oro lavorato – custoditi con la stessa determinazione con la quale viene raccontato, per mezzo loro, l'incanto di un tempo mitico di "autentici indigeni" felici tra la natura, l'oro e le foglie di coca, e la storia gloriosa della Nazione Colombiana. Michael Taussig, durante una delle sue ricerche in Colombia, si è occupato del Museo dell'Oro e del modo in cui esso riesce a fatica a trattenere i rumorosi fantasmi che si aggirano nelle sue stanze e le rimozioni sulle quali è stato edificato: i fantasmi degli schiavi portati dall'Africa e il loro lavoro nelle miniere (che per più di tre secoli ha garantito ai coloni spagnoli l'oro e all'Europa l'avvio dell'accumulazione capitalista) non prendono corpo in nessun racconto, in nessuna didascalia, nelle sale del museo. Certe rimozioni sono mostruose, avverte Taussig, perché si servono "del bottino agrodolce del genocidio e del saccheggio" (Taussig, 2005: 3), e ignorano le storie dei corpi e delle cose, la loro relazione tattile e violenta con la politica economica e con La Storia della Colonia (e

⁹ "El Museo del Oro del Banco de la Republica preserva, divulga y exhibe una de las mas importantes colecciones de metalurgia prehispánica del mundo. A lo largo de su historia, esta institución se ha convertido en un emblema de la memoria cultural de Colombia" (dalla guida del Museo dell'Oro, pag. 6-7, edizione 2008). La collezione del Museo dell'Oro nacque nel 1939, quando la Banca della Repubblica acquistò un popolo quimbaya. Negli anni '40 venne inaugurata la prima mostra della collezione, aperta al pubblico a partire dal 1959. Il Museo in quanto tale nacque nel 1968 con la costruzione di un edificio dedicato. Nel 1998 il Museo dell'Oro ha visto un radicale ripensamento nell'allestimento e nella programmazione, che ha delineato il Museo nella sua forma attuale, caratterizzato da quattro sale: El trabajo del los metales, La gente y el oro en la Colombia prehispánica, Cosmología y simbolismo e La ofrenda. Il Museo è anche un centro di ricerca accademica, e presenta una sala per esposizioni temporanee e un auditorium.

dell'Europa). Il Museo dell'Oro costruisce *finzioni* (nel senso di “fictio”), identità e classificazioni mistificandole come rappresentazioni adeguate: i processi storici che hanno reso possibile quella mostrazione (la diaspora africana e lo sfruttamento nelle miniere) vengono resi trasparenti, le relazioni di potere occultate per costruire una organizzazione del mostrato tesa a produrre un effetto di realtà, affinché la validità scientifica e l'autorità di una specifica versione della storia risultino evidenti e decodificabili in maniera immediata, innocente (Clifford, 1992).

Il carattere finzionale, narrativo di un archivio non è dunque solo relativo al suo contenuto, al modo in cui una particolare storia viene raccontata o una mostrazione di oggetti costruita, ma alla grammatica di costruzione dell'archivio stesso, fondata su una attività strategica e selettiva tesa a costruire “l'illusione della rappresentazione adeguata di un mondo, dapprima separando gli oggetti dai loro contesti specifici e facendoli stare «in luogo di» totalità astratte (...). Successivamente si elabora uno schema di classificazione per immagazzinare o esporre l'oggetto, in maniera tale che la realtà della collezione stessa, la coerenza del suo ordine, si sovrappongano alle storie specifiche di produzione e di appropriazione dell'oggetto. (...) Il mondo oggettivo è dato, non prodotto, e così i rapporti storici di potere insiti nel processo di acquisizione risultano occultati. La costruzione del significato nelle classificazioni e nelle esposizioni viene mistificata come rappresentazione adeguata. Il tempo e l'ordine della collezione cancellano il concreto lavoro sociale del suo farsi” (Clifford, 1993: 254).

Il pezzo di maggior valore del Museo dell'Oro di Bogotá è un *poporo* d'oro¹⁰, una piccola ampolla con quattro sfere poste intorno alla sua apertura, usata dagli indigeni colombiani, prima dell'arrivo degli europei, per consumare le foglie di coca insieme a una poltiglia di conchiglie polverizzate e cotte che veniva prelevata in piccole quantità dal *poporo* grazie a un bastoncino inserito nella sua apertura. Si trattava di un rituale collettivo di estrema importanza, in cui il gesto ripetuto di mescolare con il bastoncino il contenuto del *poporo* produceva non solo un suono ritmico, corrispondente al movimento del pensiero di chi lo usava, ma anche un residuo di saliva impastata di coca, che si depositava intorno alla bocca del *poporo*, incrostandosi via via in un'alterazione “carnale” dell'oggetto stesso, rimodellandone i contorni nel tempo, rendendolo una sorta di protesi, di estensione del corpo-mente di chi lo usa. Nel Museo dell'Oro non vi è alcuna traccia di questo profondo impasto di pensiero e corpo che rende il *poporo* un oggetto per certi versi vivo. Il *poporo* d'oro, esposto in una teca illuminata dalla penombra della sala e dal feltro nero sul quale si appoggia, è ripulito e lucido, nudo in un certo senso, privato com'è della sua pelle incrostata, di ogni traccia di utilizzo umano. Quel *poporo* non parla, non racconta la bassezza corporea di questa storia; è per suo tramite, piuttosto, che viene recitata un'altra storia, La Storia Istituzionale, Ufficiale, Nazionale. Nella didascalia si legge: “questo popolo proveniente da Quimbaya, che è stato il primo pezzo della collezione del Museo dell'Oro, identifica i colombiani con la loro

¹⁰ Si legge nella guida del Museo, a pag. 200: “El “poporo Quimbaya”, o “el poporo”, tiene una biografía memorable que se inicia en Antioquia hacia comienzos de nuestra era, y que a partir del siglo XIX se entrelaza con la de la arqueología colombiana y en especial con la del Museo. Según anotaciones del geógrafo Agustín Codazzi, ya para 1850 el poporo había sido descubierto en el sitio de Pajarito, entre Yarumal, Campamento y Angostura, en el noreste antioqueño, como parte de un rico ajuar funerario. (...) En 1939, el Banco de la Republica adquirió el poporo para iniciar con él su colección de orfebrería del Museo del Oro”.

nazionalità e la loro storia”. Ecco la seconda cruciale rimozione nella costruzione della Storia della Nazione da parte del Museo: quella della corporeità, del vissuto emozionale legato agli oggetti esposti, sulla quale pone ironicamente il suo sguardo anche Wislawa Szymborska nella poesia in esergo – nel museo dove sono finiti l’appetito, l’amore, i rossori, l’ira? ci sono al loro posto, in una sorta di chirurgica e asettica operazione metonimica, i piatti, le fedie, i ventagli e le spade, ma esattamente questi oggetti quale storia raccontano? la storia di chi? e chi è l’autore del racconto? quale la sua autorità/autorialità? (del resto, si chiede Taussig, che posto avrebbe mai potuto occupare, nell’atmosfera rarefatta e ordinata di un Museo , “uno sputo disseccato”?).

“L’allestitore e l’ordinatore non possono – o non dovrebbero – mai rivendicare per sé una presunta neutralità d’intenti. Anzi, gli andrà ascritto a merito il dichiararsi esplicitamente di parte, nelle scelte, e l’avere esposto gli oggetti procedendo per contrasti e comparazioni, segnalando al pubblico, anziché pretestuose continuità, nette differenze tra giudizi estetici e contesti. Il che richiede, da parte di entrambi, autoconsapevolezza non da poco” (Drugman, 1995: X).

Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev descrive Documenta come “a state of mind” (Christov-Bakargiev, 2012: 30). La storia di questa esposizione internazionale di arte contemporanea in effetti è molto diversa dalle altre biennali o fiere, per lo più legate all’idea e al modello delle fiere commerciali o delle esposizioni universali e coloniali del XIX secolo, con il loro portare nel cuore dell’Europa il “cuore di tenebra” e le meraviglie del resto del mondo. Documenta nasce dopo la Seconda Guerra Mondiale, sulle macerie di una Germania devastata non solo dai bombardamenti (Kassel era il centro dell’industria bellica tedesca), ma dal trauma dei campi di concentramento e dell’*inimmaginabile* progetto dello sterminio di massa nazista. Ma Georges Didi-Huberman esorta a fuggire dal meccanismo della disimmaginazione, perché “per sapere occorre immaginare” (Didi-Huberman, 2005: 15) e dunque non parliamo di *inimmaginabile*:

“Non difendiamoci dicendo che immaginare una cosa del genere, in qualsiasi modo ci proviamo, è un compito che non possiamo assumerci, che non potremo mai assumerci – anche se in fondo è vero. Poiché comunque dobbiamo provarci, dobbiamo confrontarci con questa cosa difficile da immaginare. (...) Immagini *malgrado tutto*, allora: malgrado l’inferno di Auschwitz, malgrado i rischi corsi. E noi abbiamo il compito di contemplarle, di renderne conto, di assumerle. Immagini *malgrado tutto*: malgrado la nostra incapacità di guardarle come meriterebbero, malgrado il nostro mondo, un mondo rimpinzato, e quasi soffocato, da merce immaginaria” (ivi).

Documenta nasce proprio da qui, emerge dal trauma come uno spazio “where collapse and recovery are articulated” (Christov-Bakargiev, 2012: 30), da una ferita che non è possibile rimarginare e della quale tuttavia è possibile *prendersi cura*, proprio affinché quel taglio irrimediabilmente aperto possa diventare uno spazio intermedio dal quale, *malgrado tutto*, mostrare immagini, ricostruire la propria identità e raccontare ciò che sembra non lasciarsi dire. Ed emerge infine dall’idea, o dalla speranza, che l’arte possa essere un linguaggio internazionale in grado di riarticolare ideali e prospettive condivise.

Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, nella sua Documenta (13), recupera e traduce nel contemporaneo questa radicale istanza, penetrando (attraverso luoghi e temporalità disseminate) lo shock successivo al trauma vissuto dalle persone o dai popoli appena dopo un forte conflitto, “where the gaps in speech, the silences, and the words not even said under hypnosis find meaning. In that silence, emotions emerge that are able to break through the clutter of our times. [Documenta] leaves space for the inoperative and the imperceptible, for the not-quite-appearing” (ivi: 34).

L’ottica curatoriale di Documenta (13) è dunque molto chiara: fondata sulla scelta di cento “consiglieri” (scienziati, filosofi, curatori, psicanalisti, antropologi, storici dell’arte, archeologi, poeti, scrittori e artisti) che, in un’ottica fortemente transdisciplinare, hanno contribuito alla sua costruzione nei cinque anni di preparazione, Documenta (13) si sviluppa tutta intorno a una processualità, e a partire da una esplicita assenza di tema. Nelle parole della curatrice:

“La mia è un’intenzionale assenza di tema (...) perché viviamo in una fase in cui i concetti, i temi e i contenuti sono prodotti che vengono trasferiti ovunque nel mondo. (...) Gli operai del XIX secolo sono ora i lavoratori cognitivi, coloro che operano nel settore del cognitivismo capitalista, ovvero in tutti quei settori che fanno parte del sistema dell’informazione (...). In tutti gli ambiti il motore della nostra economia oggi è la conoscenza, l’informazione. (...) Ebbene, credo che a fronte di questa situazione ci sia la necessità di una sorta di resistenza alla trasmissibilità di un concetto.” (Christov-Bakargiev, 2012a)

Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev parte così dal riconoscimento del diritto all’opacità come pratica conflittuale, della necessità di opporre resistenza alla coazione a *trasmettere* il sapere, non potendo fare a meno di leggere in queste pratiche un atteggiamento funzionale al sistema economico capitalistico legato alle nuove forme di lavoro immateriale¹¹. Tuttavia questo non significa affatto chiudersi in una ritirata strategica e rinunciare all’autori(al)ità del proprio punto di vista curatoriale; piuttosto vuol dire articolarla in tre aspetti fondamentali e fortemente interrelati: una esposizione del proprio posizionamento nella sua processualità; una condivisione dell’idea di “*commitment*”; un’apertura ad altri punti di vista, a sguardi e racconti *altri*.

A proposito dei primi due aspetti, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev ha previsto una sezione nella rotonda del Fridericianum (l’edificio principale, tra i vari in cui è dislocata Documenta a Kassel) intitolata “The Brain”, che raccoglie ed espone “una serie di elementi i quali non si possono trasmettere come informazioni o concetti, né esprimono un tema preciso” (Christov-Bakargiev, 2012a). Si tratta piuttosto di una costellazione di opere d’arte, oggetti e documenti provenienti da diverse parti del mondo e appartenenti a diversi periodi storici (da antichissime sculture afghane alle fotografie di Lee Miller nella vasca da bagno di Hitler, alle bottiglie di Morandi), scelti dalla curatrice secondo un suo itinerario concettuale, che tuttavia

¹¹ “Cognitive labour produces goods of the intellect, and the control over and ability to use these flows of information determines forms of power, suggesting that the artist is caught between the emancipatory potential of artistic practice – the potential of imagination – and the fact of being a prototype of the alienated, precarious creative labourer of the twenty-first century” (Christov-Bakargiev, 2012: 35).

non viene verbalizzato. Il visitatore è chiamato così a ricostruire un *proprio fil rouge*, a trovare affinità e contrasti tra i vari elementi, a elaborare narrazioni a partire dalle biografie degli oggetti esposti, a stabilire corrispondenze o conflitti tra “opere d’arte”, “documenti” o “artefatti culturali” di epoche e culture differenti, aprendo a una molteplicità di possibili traiettorie di senso – interrogandosi prima di tutto sullo statuto dell’oggetto e sulle dinamiche legate al potere di definirlo in un modo piuttosto che in un altro. Se, come afferma l’artista Paul Chan, “a thing is not a thing but an assembly of relations”¹², questa operazione apre alla possibilità di costruire una zona di transizione, quello che Homi Bhabha chiamerebbe un “terzo spazio”, nel quale l’idea di *commitment* (che può essere resa in italiano come coinvolgimento, responsabilità, dedizione o impegno totale) possa essere una pratica di ricerca di senso attiva, provvisoria, parziale e condivisa, e che possa riguardare il curatore, tanto quanto il visitatore o l’artista. Si tratta dunque di una chiamata a un coinvolgimento e un posizionamento etico e politico, rivolta a tutti i soggetti in gioco nel processo espositivo.

Per quanto riguarda il terzo aspetto dell’impostazione curatoriale di Documenta (13), e cioè l’apertura a sguardi e racconti *altri*, l’operazione cruciale proposta da Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev è stata quella di de-localizzare Documenta, di farla uscire materialmente e simbolicamente (in un vero e proprio *exodus*) dai luoghi istituzionali di Kassel deputati alle esposizioni – pur utilizzandoli ampiamente –, non solo disseminandola nel resto della città, in luoghi scelti per il loro valore simbolico e culturale; ma anche dislocandola in *altri* territori, molto lontani (per certi versi solo geograficamente) da Kassel e dalla Germania.

Le quattro posizioni individuate dalla curatrice come quattro possibili condizioni in cui oggi è possibile esercitare il pensiero corrispondono anche a quattro possibili dislocazioni spazio-temporali per Documenta, che è disseminata in quattro location diverse: Kassel, Kabul, Alexandria/Il Cairo e Banff in Canada. Ognuna di queste posizioni comporta degli slittamenti ad altre temporalità e altre narrazioni di micro-storie connesse in qualche modo con le storie degli altri, in uno scenario globale e transnazionale di apertura e intenso dialogo. Non si tratta qui semplicemente di “portare” Documenta in Afghanistan per un breve periodo di tempo (magari semplicemente spostando lì parte delle esposizioni), in un rituale nel migliore dei casi ingenuo, già mappato in altri scenari del mondo dell’arte¹³. Si tratta piuttosto di una operazione più radicale di tessitura di relazioni profonde tra le radici storico-culturali di Documenta, e uno scenario di conflitto e distruzione come quello che recentemente l’Afghanistan aveva vissuto. Nei cinque anni di preparazione di Documenta,

¹² Paul Chan, intervistato durante Documenta (13): <http://d13.documenta.de/#/research/research/view/paul-chan>, visionato il 16 marzo 2013.

¹³ Ad esempio, a margine di Manifesta 8, che si è tenuta nel 2011 nella regione di Murcia, nel sud della Spagna, in dialogo con il Nord Africa, si è svolto un incontro in cui i curatori della Biennale (Alexandria Contemporary Arts Forum, Egitto; Chamber of Public Secrets, Danimarca e Medio Oriente; tranzit.org, Europa Centrale) avevano invitato alcuni giovani curatori o operatori culturali di diversi paesi dell’Africa a discutere della possibilità di “esportare” in Africa il modello di biennale itinerante sperimentato da Manifesta in Europa, proponendo di dare l’avvio a un “incubatore” per una Pan-African Roaming Biennial (<http://www.manifesta8.com/manifesta8.artist?nombre=&codigo=126>). Questa proposta ha ricevuto diverse contestazioni da parte dei curatori invitati, che sottolineavano in primo luogo come rischiava di diventare una sorta di operazione neo-coloniale, ma anche come non tenesse in alcun conto le condizioni infrastrutturali, politiche ed economiche dei diversi paesi africani invitati, che sarebbero state già di per sé sufficienti a comprendere l’inattuabilità di una manifestazione d’arte “itinerante” in Africa.

sono stati realizzati molti incontri con istituzioni e operatori culturali afgani, che hanno dato vita a workshop di vario genere, tenuti da artisti “di Documenta” e da artisti afgani, e sviluppato progetti di lunga durata – la sola temporalità, secondo Arjun Appadurai, che possa sostenere la capacità di aspirare, l’immaginazione e il desiderio come motori di cambiamenti culturali e sociali profondi, i quali necessitano di tempi lunghi e di quella che lo studioso definisce “una politica della pazienza costruita lottando contro la tirannia dell’emergenza”¹⁴. L’artista iracheno-americano Michael Rakowitz ha tenuto uno di questi workshop nella zona di Bamiyan, ricca di cave, vicino al luogo dove i Talebani nel 2001 distrussero le enormi statue di Buddha del VI secolo. I partecipanti al workshop hanno ricostruito con la pietra delle cave alcuni dei libri distrutti a Kassel nell’incendio del Fridericianum durante i bombardamenti del 1944. Una parte di questi volumi sono stati esposti a Documenta, mentre una parte sono stati donati al Kabul National Museum, proprio per testimoniare del forte legame tra due atti di feroce iconoclastia e distruzione di importanti patrimoni culturali, pur avvenuti in condizioni, tempi e luoghi molto diversi, e dell’opportunità di ricostruire un possibile patrimonio (di memorie disseminate e plurali) per il futuro.

In questo senso Documenta (13) propone quello che Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev definisce “locational turn”:

“Documenta (13) thus takes a spatial or, rather, ‘locational’ turn, highlighting the significance of a physical place, but at the same time aiming for dislocation and for the creation of different and partial perspectives, (...) an exploration of micro-histories on carrying scales that link the local history and reality of a place with the world. Like a matryoshka doll, it cracks open to reveal hidden spaces and narrations behind, inside, and underneath its surface. It speaks from the inside out in an act of ventriloquism – a second voice that comes from the belly, from inside the body” (Christov-Bakargiev, 2012: 35).

Si tratta della possibilità di intervenire sulla narrazione della storia e del contemporaneo in modo da non attestarsi sulle sue continuità, ma evidenziandone le ambivalenze, le fratture e i punti di rottura, o le possibili affinità, in modo da far emergere visioni e narrazioni *altre*. Si tratta di aprire l’archivio come dispositivo che autorizza una determinata visione della storia, per costruire un diverso archivio: diasporico, deterritorializzato eppure fortemente radicato nelle micro-storie, condiviso, un archivio in cui “le cose che possono essere dette”, come le chiama Foucault, “non retrocedano con lo stesso passo del tempo, ma [faccia sì che] che alcune che brillano forte come stelle vicine ci vengano in realtà da molto lontano, mentre altre nostre contemporanee sono già di un estremo pallore”¹⁵.

Documenta (13) infine esplora un’alterità ancora più radicale, più perturbante perché si presenta in forma di fantasma – uno di quei fantasmi che per Taussig si aggirano sempre nei musei, evidentemente non solo in quelli etnografici o nazionali. Per Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev è molto importante che i visitatori di Documenta percepiscano la presenza di questo fantasma, che si sentano a disagio nell’apparente neutralità degli spazi espositivi istituzionali, come se questi fossero incompleti e contemporaneamente assediati da un’assenza: “nervously lacking – at every step, one needs to know that there is something

¹⁴ Arjun Appadurai, *Le aspirazioni nutrono la democrazia*, Et al., Milano 2011, p. 479.

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *L’archeologia del sapere*, Bur, Milano 2005, p. 173.

fundamental that is not known, that is invisible and missing – a memory, an unresolved question, a doubt” (Christov-Bakargiev, 2012: 36). A Guxhagen, circa venti minuti da Kassel, si trova il monastero Benedettino di Breitenau, del XII secolo, che dopo essere stato trasformato in una prigione a metà del XIX secolo, durante il nazismo è stato utilizzato come campo di lavoro e poi di concentramento; negli anni '50 è diventato un riformatorio femminile chiamato Fuldata, mentre oggi i suoi spazi ospitano un memoriale della seconda guerra mondiale e una clinica psichiatrica. Breitenau non è stato una sede espositiva di Documenta, tuttavia nella volontà della curatrice è stato un punto di riferimento fondamentale: tutti coloro che hanno lavorato in vario modo alla costruzione dell'esposizione sono prima passati per Breitenau. Breitenau è l'altra Kassel, il suo subconscio, familiare ed estraneo al tempo stesso (*unheimlich*), invisibile eppure presente, è la volontà di Documenta (13) di esplorare la propria alterità interna, il proprio trauma ripetutamente messo in scena e giocato ogni volta su livelli repressivi diversi (fisico, psicologico, sessuale, politico, estetico). Documenta (13) è anche il tentativo di aver cura di quelle memorie intrattabili, di dare forma al trauma illuminando il modo in cui precipita nell'oggi e nell'altrove, di dare corpo a quel fantasma, al proprio sé alterato.

Crossing Bodies – Immaginari Postcoloniali

“La mostra: luogo sociale di incontro, più ancora che tra oggetti e visitatori, tra i visitatori stessi; forma di narrazione, in cui si riattualizza il passato e si rende presente ciò che normalmente non è tale; occasione rituale, in cui appare magicamente visibile l'invisibile; evento cui il pubblico è chiamato a partecipare collaborando direttamente alla creazione di un significato, un arricchimento in mezzi di scambio sociale” (Drugman, 1995: X).

Sulla scia del surrealismo etnografico di Leiris e Bataille degli anni Venti e Trenta del Novecento, a partire dalla seconda metà degli anni Ottanta l'arte contemporanea viene attraversata da quella che Hal Foster ha definito una “svolta etnografica” (Foster, 2006). Molti artisti contemporanei hanno iniziato a tracciare i loro percorsi collocandosi negli spazi interstiziali di una costellazione di ricerca aperta tra la rilettura di Fanon da parte degli studi culturali e postcoloniali e la rilettura critica dello stesso approccio antropologico, inaugurata dal lavoro del gruppo di *Writing Culture* (Clifford e Marcus, 1986), e di *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (Marcus e Fisher, 1986), riaprendo le traiettorie da questi lasciate inesplorate, soprattutto riguardo alle arti visive. In una vasta area di ricerca teorica e artistica, caratterizzata da una fortissima interdisciplinarietà, si è affermato un sempre maggiore riconoscimento di queste sovrapposizioni e una consapevolezza della loro produttività. Nell'approccio contemporaneo alla relazione tra antropologia e arte non si tratta né, come in una visione ormai superata, di mediare oggetti e estetiche non-occidentali a beneficio del pubblico occidentale (Price, 1992); né di costruire nuove feticizzazioni dell'Altro come subalterno che produce la sua “arte etnica”, chiedendogli di esplicitare se stesso proprio in funzione di una sua pretesa “autenticità”; né tantomeno di costituire l'arte contemporanea come oggetto di ricerca di una rinnovata antropologia dell'arte, trattando il mondo dell'arte come l'antropologia tratterebbe un'altra cultura; e dall'altro lato non si tratta neanche di fare arte

sull'antropologia. Piuttosto si tratta di considerare l'antropologia e l'arte come due discipline *indisciplinate* che fanno della mobilità dei loro confini un terreno produttivo di nuovi discorsi critici sulla costruzione e la rappresentazione delle identità, esplorandone il potenziale epistemologico e le implicazioni critiche (Schneider, Wright, 2006). Del resto, come afferma Clifford Geertz, “uno dei vantaggi dell'antropologia come disciplina è che nessuno, nemmeno chi la pratica, conosce esattamente cosa essa sia” (Geertz, 2001(a): 107), il che può portare a svariati risultati, più o meno pericolosi, il più interessante dei quali è una permanente e produttiva crisi di identità.

Una rinegoziazione e una ridefinizione contestuale e plurale della relazione arte/antropologia, inserita nel contesto di un museo etnografico come il Pigorini di Roma, può consentire di mettere in discussione le divisioni binarie, etnocentriche e essenzialiste che hanno fondato le narrazioni europee sulla modernità (Montezemolo, 2002), di cui i musei sono insieme soggetto e oggetto; di mandare in pezzi la monumentalità di concetti come quelli di autenticità e primitivismo; di contestare la presunta neutralità del display etnografico, attraverso un'operazione curatoriale critica che sappia portare alla luce la centralità del colonialismo nella formazione di quel patrimonio e delle relative narrazioni. Ma un progetto del genere può anche essere utile nel diagnosticare l'attuale, problematica relazione della nostra cultura con le migrazioni, con le culture diasporiche, e con la propria visione di sé, strettamente legata proprio a un mancato riconoscimento di quanto quel passato coloniale non sia affatto *passato*. Parlo non a caso di “diagnosi”, per sottolineare quanto la relazione della cultura italiana con il proprio passato coloniale sia presa in una forma di vera e propria repressione: non si tratta di una *rimozione* inconscia di quel passato traumatico e difficile da trattare, ma di una *repressione*, cioè di un allontanamento (conscio) di una memoria difficile o spiacevole dalla coscienza, e dello spostamento degli affetti ad essa legati (aggressività, narcisismo, razzismo, senso di superiorità) in un altro luogo del quotidiano, minimizzando (ad esempio, come nell'idea popolare degli “italiani brava gente”), alterando o dissimulando il potere di quel passato nel dare forma alla cultura italiana contemporanea rispetto alla propria relazione con l'altro. Si tratta perciò di affrontare una memoria estremamente conflittuale, che sembra non trovare abbastanza spazio nelle stanze dei musei:

“the modern museum, as a European-derived modality of knowledge and cultural power, has to register the highly charged pertinence of excluded times and spaces to the making of modernity, particularly in the harsh light of the intertwined centralities of colonialism, imperialism and global migrations. At this point, the museum becomes another space, a heterotopia; an unsuspected site for the critical diagnoses of the modernity it seeks to exhibit and explain” (Chambers, 2013).

Il progetto *Crossing Bodies – Immaginari postcoloniali*, curato da me e dai miei colleghi di Routes Agency e esposto al Museo Preistorico Etnografico Luigi Pigorini di Roma a dicembre 2012, si fonda proprio a partire da questa consapevolezza critica, e dalla basilare presa di coscienza che la nostra stessa identità (come Europei e come Italiani) è un'identità radicalmente migrante, per la sua storia e per gli immaginari che questa storia ha generato. Lo scenario postcoloniale ha prodotto innanzitutto una dislocazione del soggetto del discorso, di chi cioè è “autorizzato” a parlare. Questa nuova configurazione, conflittuale ma anche

produttiva, ha generato inediti immaginari critici, che aprono il racconto della modernità alle fratture e alle discontinuità di storie e punti di vista *altri*, che sfidano l'ottica dominante euro-americana di narrazione della Storia, esponendola a una radicale interrogazione critica. *Crossing Bodies* ha esplorato gli immaginari prodotti dalle e sulle migrazioni contemporanee in un'ottica postcoloniale, con l'obiettivo di riaprire il racconto del passato, della storia e delle memorie, alla luce delle sfide e delle voci di un presente radicalmente *alterato*, abitato cioè dall'alterità, per far emergere altri modi di raccontare e punti di vista spesso oscurati, per far "ritornare" il rimosso su cui si fonda la nostra cultura, portando alla luce e analizzandone le dinamiche repressive¹⁶, per prendersene carico e responsabilità: "esporre la repressione che abita il cuore di tenebra della modernità significa toccare il rimosso che permette un'immagine coerente e omogenea da sostenere in pubblico e in privato. La modernità si è costruita su questa rimozione, sulla negazione dei corpi, delle storie e delle culture su cui l'economia politica dell'Atlantico, e con ciò dell'Europa moderna, si è fondata" (Chambers, 2003: 139).

Il progetto si è sviluppato in una rassegna video¹⁷, una installazione fotografica di Mauricio Lupini (*Observing Ethnography*, 1996-97), un'opera d'arte relazionale di Massimiliano Di Franca (*Spazi Vocali*, 2012), una performance di danza contemporanea degli MK (*Quattro danze coloniali viste da vicino*, 2012) e la proiezione del video *Traces* (2012), dell'artista-antropologa Fiamma Montezemolo, presentato dall'artista in conversazione con Iain Chambers, Lidia Curti, Viviana Gravano e la sottoscritta.

Per una estetica della giustapposizione e una politica del rovesciamento

"The boundary between collection and fetishism is mediated by classification and display in tension with accumulation and secrecy" (Stewart, 1984: 163).

L'installazione fotografica *Observing Ethnography* (1996-97) di Mauricio Lupini mette in scena un doppio rovesciamento. Le immagini ritraggono porzioni di diversi *display* museali etnografici: oggetti, reperti o fotografie esposti dietro le vetrine di diversi musei etnografici, rifotografati per intero o in un dettaglio. L'occhio dell'osservatore è costretto a una doppia focalizzazione per poter leggere queste immagini: esposte al Pigorini, esse apparentemente sembrano delle fotografie etnografiche come altre esposte nello stesso museo, ma a ben guardare si intravede un'ombra o un riflesso sulla grana dell'immagine, la traccia che quella che stiamo guardando è la fotografia di una fotografia esposta in un'altra vetrina, in chissà quale altro museo come questo¹⁸. Mauricio Lupini qui non discute il "reperto", ma i criteri di

¹⁶ "Gli storici della sessualità non hanno mai utilizzato altra nozione che quella di repressione, e questo per una ragione molto semplice: questa nozione mette in evidenza i contorni sociali che determinano la rimozione. Possiamo dunque fare la storia della rimozione a partire dalla nozione di repressione" (Foucault, 1998: 168).

¹⁷ I video inseriti nella rassegna erano i seguenti: Zineb Sedira, *MiddleSea*, 2008; Isaac Julien, *Western Union: Small Boats*, 2007; Lida Abdul, *In Transit*, 2008; Adelita Husni-Bey, *Gestures of Labour*, 2009; Marco Baroncelli e Enzo Orlandi, *Parole crociate*, 2001.

¹⁸ Questa installazione di Mauricio Lupini è stata esposta in passato in contesti per lo più legati all'arte

mostrazione elaborati per restituirlo all'interno di una narrazione dominante. In queste immagini che, con Benjamin, possiamo definire *immagini dialettiche*, il passato “converge” con il presente non per un senso di continuità, ma di contiguità o di giustapposizione. Presentate sotto le mentite spoglie di “pezzi da museo”, le fotografie di Lupini sembrano citare quell’atteggiamento oggettivante nei confronti dell’oggetto museale di cui parla Taussig a proposito del Museo dell’Oro. Ma nell’atto dell’essere ri-fotografate e di nuovo mostrate, in questa operazione di ripetizione, decontestualizzazione e ricontestualizzazione, aprono uno spazio di contraddizione delle visioni legate al *displaying* etnografico classico, bloccato sotto il peso delle sue rimozioni. Si tratta dunque di gettare un diverso sguardo sul passato, contestando i ruoli di chi osserva e chi viene osservato: in un doppio rovesciamento sia dei dispositivi dell’osservazione che dei dispositivi della mostrazione su se stessi, l’etnografia e il suo metodo fondato sull’osservazione-esposizione diventano a loro volta oggetto dello sguardo dell’artista prima, e dello spettatore poi. È possibile così entrare in quel “terzo spazio” che rende ogni luogo di tradizione un luogo di traduzione, e che può generare le condizioni discorsive che sottraggono ai significati e ai simboli di una cultura qualunque fissità, “facendo sì che persino dei segni stessi ci si possa appropriare per tradurli, ristoricizzarli e interpretarli in modo nuovo” (Bhabha, 2001: 59).



Mauricio Lupini, *Observing ethnography*, 5 fotografie a colori 40x40 cm montate su alluminio, 1997.

contemporanea, ma mai in un museo etnografico prima di *Crossing Bodies* al museo Pigorini.

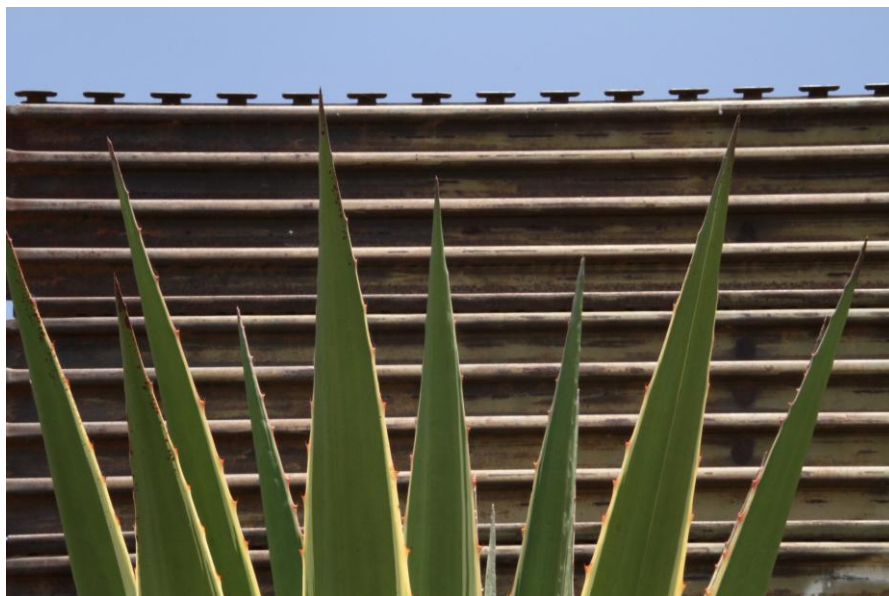


Mauricio Lupini, *Observing ethnography*, 5 fotografie a colori 40x40 cm montate su alluminio, 1997. Immagini dell'allestimento dell'opera per *Crossing Bodies – Immaginari Postcoloniali*, a cura di Routes Agency, Museo Preistorico Etnografico Luigi Pigorini di Roma, dicembre 2012.

I sensi del limite: this is not a story *to pass on*¹⁹

“We want to place flags in waters so that we can move with it”
(Lida Abdul, *What We Have Overlooked*, 2011, 2-channel video installation, Documenta (13), 2012)

¹⁹ La frase è tratta dal romanzo *Amatissima*, di Toni Morrison, e contiene tutta l'ambiguità di una storia (nel romanzo quella della schiavitù, qui quella delle migrazioni) che non si può in nessun modo tralasciare, sulla quale non si può passare sopra (*to pass on*), nonostante il desiderio di farlo, perché mette costantemente in crisi l'identità di chi la racconta, e che tuttavia è difficile tramandare (*to pass on*) per il suo essere un'esperienza o-scena, eccessiva, letteralmente irraccontabile.



Fiamma Montezemolo, *Traces*, video, 2012.

Essere migranti ha a che fare con un essere radicalmente posizionati su un confine: tra l'altrove e il qui, il prima e il dopo, il dentro e il fuori, tra storie e memorie. Ma non si tratta unicamente di un percorso di perdita, di dispersione, come a volte tende ad essere rappresentato. È anche un percorso di disseminazione e di *aspirazione*, di costruzione di nuovi racconti identitari, di nuove memorie e immaginazioni (Appadurai, 2003). *Crossing Bodies* in questo senso ha cercato di spingersi oltre l'ottica multiculturalista, affrontandone i limiti e portando letteralmente il confine, come luogo e immaginario perturbante, dentro il museo. Come afferma Iain Chambers, non si tratta di allargare gli spazi della sfera pubblica, per ospitare altre culture e altre storie, ma di interrogare radicalmente il nostro posizionamento e il nostro sguardo, dislocandolo e ricollocandolo in senso culturale e estetico, dunque in senso profondamente etico e politico (Chambers, 2003).

Il video *Traces* (2012), dell'artista e antropologa Fiamma Montezemolo²⁰, ha come soggetto il muro che divide Messico e Stati Uniti. L'artista conosce molto bene quel confine, avendo vissuto per sei anni a Tijuana da antropologa. Questo video in effetti segna in maniera inequivocabile il passaggio per Fiamma Montezemolo dall'essere un'antropologa che lavora con l'arte, all'essere un'artista che lavora con l'etnografia: questo video è una etnografia impossibile, una forte critica al linguaggio etnografico quando questo si chiude nelle proprie barricate disciplinari, che non permettono di comprendere a fondo ed esprimere gli aspetti più emozionali, corporei, affettivi dell'oggetto studiato. Ed è proprio questo confine tra oggettività e soggettività dello sguardo che costruisce nel video il legame tra l'approccio artistico e quello etnografico. Nel video una voce femminile si rivolge al muro tra Messico e Stati Uniti, gli parla come a una persona: il muro non solo come soggetto, ma come corpo geo-politicizzato, come corpo virile nel suo determinato rifiuto di essere penetrato. Eppure la

²⁰ www.fiammamontezemolo.com.

voce femminile che gli parla, si rivolge a un corpo esposto alla propria vulnerabilità: la sua potenza maschile viene continuamente interrotta e contestata dalle fessure, dai buchi, dalle porte e dagli spiragli che si aprono sulla sua superficie, a segnalare l'impossibilità di un controllo panottico totale, l'impossibilità della chiusura ermetica, la fragilità di quel corpo-muro sia rispetto ai corpi di carne che non smettono di passare dall'altra parte, sia rispetto alla propria stessa costituzione materica, sensibile suo malgrado al territorio che vorrebbe dominare e dal quale invece viene continuamente trasformato, minacciato nella sua monoliticità, sensibile alle acque "uterine" e "cannibali" dell'Oceano Pacifico, che "ti mangiano e sputano i tuoi resti. Ti masticano e non ti digeriscono". L'unica scelta possibile, da parte dell'artista, per entrare in relazione con la presenza arrogante del muro è la sua trasformazione attraverso un atto alchemico, che consenta di "snaturare" il suo potere, trasformandolo da soggetto *fantasmatico* in soggetto *perturbante*, una smaterializzazione che è anche un felice atto di profanazione di ogni narrazione essenzializzante.

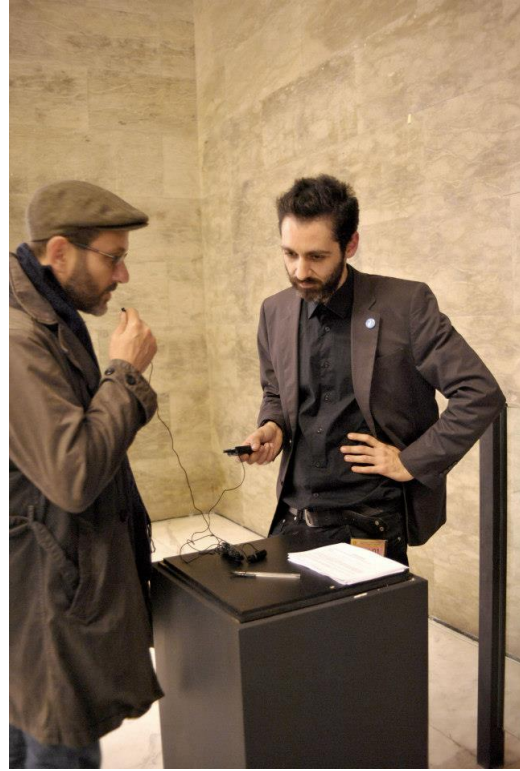
Come comportarsi quando gli oggetti non bastano?

"Sono quella
che va via, sempre
via con la casa
che può solo restarmi dentro
il sangue – la mia casa che non ha posto
in nessuna geografia."
(Bhatt, 2005: 109)

L'installazione interattiva *Spazi Vocali* (2012) dell'artista relazionale Massimiliano Di Franca espone in tre monitor tre differenti punti di vista, tre riflessioni sul concetto di migrazione e di diaspora, rilasciate per l'occasione dall'artista Jimmie Durham, dall'antropologo visuale Tarek Elhaik e dalla ricercatrice e storica della danza Susanne Franco, attraverso un'immagine e un contributo audio. Ognuno di loro, con la propria sensibilità e il proprio posizionamento che incrocia spesso il livello personale con quello professionale, contribuisce ad una visione stratificata e molteplice sulle diaspore contemporanee, anche mettendo in gioco l'intimità del proprio vissuto. L'artista ha inoltre messo a disposizione del pubblico un registratore audio per lasciare la propria opinione, il proprio pensiero o un qualunque feedback sul lavoro, aggiungendo la propria voce a quella dei tre soggetti invitati nella costruzione di un dialogo²¹, di una traccia condivisa che porti ad attivare, attraverso una dinamica partecipativa e relazionale, nuovi *spostamenti* di senso. L'artista ha voluto aprire uno spazio relazionale, generando una dinamica di attivazione del pubblico, non considerandolo semplice fruitore passivo di un'opera da contemplare nello spazio museale, ma suo protagonista attivo. Attivo anche nel condividere una concezione del patrimonio museale che possa essere slegata dall'oggetto o dalla collezione, e riguardare piuttosto narrazioni, memorie o esperienze complesse come quelle delle diaspore contemporanee. Inoltre l'attivazione di

²¹ Il lavoro finale di Massimiliano Di Franca, compresi gli audio lasciati dai visitatori, è visibile qui: <http://www.roots-routes.org/2013/04/04/relationships-spazi-vocali-spazi-vocali-di-massimiliano-di-franca-con-la-partecipazione-di-jimmie-durham-tarek-elhaik-susanne-franco/>.

altri sensi oltre quello del guardare, e la messa in gioco della voce del visitatore, lasciano emergere il vissuto privato, emozionale, e le concezioni di quest'ultimo, che possono essere depositati come traccia parziale di un diverso patrimonio, affettivo, relazionale, condiviso.



Massimiliano Di Franca, *Spazi Vocali*, installazione interattiva, 2012. *Crossing Bodies – Immaginari Postcoloniali*, a cura di Routes Agency, Museo Preistorico Etnografico Luigi Pigorini di Roma, dicembre 2012.

Prendere corpo: performing (colonial) archives

“La prima cosa che l’indigeno impara, è a stare al suo posto, a non oltrepassare i limiti. Perciò i sogni dell’indigeno sono sogni muscolari, sogni di azione, sogni aggressivi. Io sogno di saltare, di nuotare, di correre, di arrampicarmi. Sogno di scoppiare dalle risa, di varcare il fiume con un salto, di essere inseguito da mute di macchine che non mi prendono mai. (...) Nel mondo coloniale, l’affettività del colonizzato è mantenuta a fior di pelle come piaga viva che rifiuta ogni cicatrizzante. E la psiche si ritrae, si oblitera, si scarica in dimostrazioni muscolari che hanno fatto dire a uomini molto dotti che il colonizzato è un isterico.” (Fanon, 2007: 16-20)

Gli MK, formazione indipendente che si occupa di performance, coreografia e ricerca sonora, ha realizzato per *Crossing Bodies* una versione site specific del loro progetto *Danze*

coloniali, intitolata *Quattro danze coloniali viste da vicino*²². Le danze coloniali degli MK sono dei racconti coreografici che rielaborano con spietata ironia i gesti e le posture coloniali interiorizzati e rimessi in scena inconsciamente, in una forma apparentemente innocente, dai turisti del mercato culturale globale: quegli immaginari legati all'incontro con la differenza che costituiscono una sorta di sceneggiatura sotterranea, pronta ad essere rimessa in scena in rituali da villaggi turistici, safari, spettacoli esotizzanti. I corpi tracciano distanze e le colmano, negoziando incessantemente la loro relazione con lo spazio, se non altro per il presupposto semplice e spiazzante per il quale ciò che è distante è "sempre vicino a qualcos'altro". Queste tematiche, già trattate diversamente in precedenti coreografie come *speak spanish* (2010-2011), *Il giro del mondo in 80 giorni* (2011), o *Grand Tour* (2011), acquisiscono una risonanza particolare nel contesto di un museo etnografico (uno spazio normalmente non deputato agli spettacoli performativi), con il suo peccato originale coloniale. Nello spazio del Pigorini, appena prima dell'ingresso nelle sale del museo, le *Quattro danze coloniali viste da vicino* interrompono i flussi consueti dello spazio museale e la sua temporalità, aprendo la possibilità di una diversa esperienza sensoriale di fruizione, del tutto anomala, rovesciando quella "necropolitica" di cui parla Achille Mbembe a proposito del museo – il suo trasformare gli oggetti che contiene in cose morte – in una ironica vitalità, dove il movimento dei corpi segna il lavoro costante di traduzione di sé, nell'instabilità di ogni tragitto verso (o contro) l'altro:

"The community of time, that is the seemingly shared time of the narration of the European nation, is here interrupted when other times and constellations of belonging enter the museum. (...) All of this, as Achille Mbembe reminds us, is to transform the archive from a collection of seemingly past affairs and dead matters into a series of vital procedures; that is, into an exercise of living powers and possibilities. Here the past refuses to pass, it insists on its right to return and to interrogate and ghost the present" (Chambers, 2013).

Le danze degli MK al Pigorini infine riportano l'attenzione sui corpi che attraversano e abitano lo spazio museale, non come "oggetti" da disciplinare o regolare o educare. E chissà che anche gli oggetti nelle teche del museo possano così essere liberati dalla loro schiacciante oggettività per diventare, direbbe Marx, "cose sensibilmente sovrasensibili", tanto da accennare con leggerezza un passo di danza.

²² Performance con Philippe Barbut, Biagio Caravano e Laura Scarpini. Guida: Haitem Dhifallah. Musica: Lorenzo Bianchi. Coreografia: Michele Di Stefano. *Quattro danze coloniali* è una produzione mk e Armunia Festival Costa degli Etruschi con il contributo MiBAC.



MK, *Quattro danze coloniali viste da vicino*, 2012. Performance con Philippe Barbut, Biagio Caravano e Laura Scarpini. Guida: Haitem Dhifallah. Musica: Lorenzo Bianchi. Coreografia: Michele Di Stefano. *Crossing Bodies – Immaginari Postcoloniali*, a cura di Routes Agency, Museo Preistorico Etnografico Luigi Pigorini di Roma, dicembre 2012.

I would like a museum in the not-so-new XXI century...

“If objects, histories, cultures, people were once wrenched out of their context in order to be put on display and exhibited as European knowledge, today this has to be unwound from its colonial premises and handed back to the world it once presumed to define and own. In the harsh light of the gallery space and the illuminated caption can the *impossibility* of a healing be exposed? Can the modern museum house what amounts to a historical and ontological cut when its collection and criteria are re-routed through a radically diverse accounting of time and space? Beyond mere adjustment and modification, the museum as a critical space needs to become something more, something else” (Chambers, 2013).

Il museo dunque può resistere alle varie sentenze di morte che gli sono state dichiarate, e può dedicarsi a esplorare inediti spazi di vitalità, a patto di lasciarsi aprire e attraversare dal cambiamento, di lasciarsi “curare”, per poter tenere attive quelle sue funzioni sociali che possono essere estremamente utili proprio in questo momento storico, nel quale è evidente l’urgenza di rifare i discorsi culturali sulla cittadinanza e costruire un serio lavoro di mediazione culturale.

I musei etnografici sono particolarmente coinvolti in questa prospettiva, e da tempo stanno sperimentando diverse modalità di esposizione²³ e di curatela, come ad esempio gli esperimenti di co-curatela con le comunità diasporiche sul territorio, invitate a entrare in relazione con il patrimonio del museo, che molti musei etnografici (compreso il Pigorini) stanno esplorando, e che sollevano questioni di cruciale importanza: quali comunità coinvolgere, e come far sì che il criterio non sia basato su un’idea statica, nazionalistica o essenzialista, dell’identità? in base a quale principio strutturare il lavoro di relazione con il museo e il suo patrimonio? quanto il museo può o deve controllare il processo? come fare perché non rischi di essere un gesto “compensatorio”, o consolatorio, di semplice “inclusionione”, ma una reale apertura e condivisione dell’autorialità e dell’autorità?

Questi interrogativi sollevano questioni urgenti, e estremamente utili nell’ottica di capire come trasformare il museo dall’essere un tempio in cui conservare gli Archivi, la Storia, la Nazione, la Cultura, al porsi come un *attivatore di dinamiche* anche all’esterno dei propri confini, sul territorio e con diverse comunità di “cittadini”. Questo atteggiamento radicalmente riflessivo sollecita inoltre un posizionamento *etico*, che consiste nel pensare il museo come una *forma culturale* estremamente utile per la costruzione di comunità immaginate in senso transnazionale, interculturale, postcoloniale, del tutto slegate da prospettive essenzializzanti:

“il fatto da cui deve partire ogni discorso sull’etica è che l’uomo non è né ha da essere o da realizzare alcuna essenza, alcuna vocazione storica o spirituale, alcun destino biologico. Solo per questo qualcosa come un’etica può esistere: poiché è chiaro che se l’uomo fosse o avesse da essere questa o quella sostanza, questo o quel destino, non vi sarebbe alcuna esperienza etica possibile – vi sarebbero solo compiti da realizzare” (Agamben, 2001: 39).

²³ Un esempio è il lavoro che dalla metà degli anni ’80 porta avanti il MEN, Museo Etnografico di Neuchâtel in Svizzera, che nelle sue esposizioni, tra le altre cose, spesso ridiscute il concetto di patrimonio conservando, mostrando e narrando in modo critico le tracce della sua costruzione: <http://www.men.ch/>.

Il museo può porsi come attivatore di processi di memoria, in relazione al presente, che comprendano in loro stessi anche i conflitti di punti di vista non conformi sul passato, o sul modo di raccontarlo, soprattutto se il passato di cui si parla costituisce per una comunità un ricordo difficile da trattare. Si tratta di avere a che fare con quelle che Tarek Elhaik definisce “incurable images”:

“incurable images are sites of complex repetitions and zones of endurance for the spectator-patient who manages to bypass the enclosure of traumatic wounds by official narratives from both left and right sides of the politico-ideological spectrum” (Elhaik, 2013).

Anche Tarek Elhaik insiste sulla dimensione etica di quella che definisce una “curation-as-clinical practice”, il cui scopo è quello di generare una sorta di “creative relief” di fronte alle immagini incurabili, che sfidano profondamente le pratiche curatoriali stesse, e le istituzioni disciplinari che costruiscono e organizzano il sapere. Così si rende possibile recuperare una pratica di identificazione nello spazio pubblico e attraverso di esso, che possa essere tradotta in un “public dream-space” (Taussig, 1992: 46): un luogo in grado di contenere la forza affettiva delle strategie di memorializzazione, di attivare i corpi degli spettatori e la loro sensorialità, di andare oltre la coazione al mostrare, costruendo così uno spazio poroso e fortemente politico.

“I would like a museum in the not-so-new XXI century that abandons the idea of *looking* for the idea of *activation*; one that is not a building or even a fixed space but a series of events and a program; one where the institution gives up authority; one that is dedicated to research into the practical usefulness of art; one where art entails actual social transformation, instead of merely providing highly speculative strategies for bringing about such transformations. One where things are not excised from their contexts, where objects are contextualized instead of historicized. One where things are not exhibited but activated, given use-value instead of representing it. One that is not a structure but a moment; that is not a place to visit but a presence” (Bruguera, 2010: 299).

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Photographing Guests in a Soup Kitchen: Examining the Application of Exchange Theory

Abstract

This ethnographic project explored the question: How are the photographer and the homeless impacted by their exchanges over one year of photography in an urban soup kitchen? In this study, I explored how the exchange process played out when the subjects were homeless and guests at a church-based soup kitchen and I, the photographer, was a middle-class, middle-aged, White, female professor. Exchange theory was applied here because of the metaphor between producing and consuming photos of the homeless and the ethics of consuming the homeless being portrayed. Elements of critical and confessional tales are included to describe my feelings from initial entry into the soup kitchen until I was eventually given the affectionate title of "Picture Lady" by the soup kitchen guests.

Keywords

homelessness, soup kitchens, family, photography, visual methods

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Background

The project began when the pastor of a large Midwestern church, who had a strong interest in photography, asked me to work alone and with interested church members to shoot and exhibit photographs of various elements of church life as a way of improving relations between the church and the low income, inner city neighborhood surrounding the church. A small gallery space was established in the church for the photographs to be exhibited for public viewing. As a result of the pastor's request, I regularly took photos at indoor and outdoor church-community events, including free community dinners and a farmers market. I served as a judge for a church photo contest which asked members to take photos that illustrated a Lenten theme. We involved neighbors and church members in a joint "photographic field trip," using the church bus for transportation, to show the diverse aspects of the area and to visually define and represent their shared "neighborhood."

The soup kitchen was one element of the church's identity that was considered an integral part of the church-community linkage and which is the focus of this paper. The soup kitchen in this church began in the early-1980s as an inner city neighborhood nutrition program. The program was designed originally to provide lunches for the neighborhood children during the summer. What began as an outreach program for children became an outreach program to feed any hungry person who came to the church. In the beginning, volunteers prepared gallons of soup in the big kettle in the main church kitchen every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday morning. Some guests wanted to take the food home, so carryout service was provided, and is still available today. The soup kitchen currently averages approximately 50 guests each Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. It is staffed by volunteers and the food is provided by a non-profit organization delivering hot meals to several locations in the city. The breakdown of guests is as follows: 75% men, 5% families with children, 86% African American, average age-55 years, 75% currently or intermittently homeless, and 100% living below poverty. Some guests had been frequenting this soup kitchen for over 20 years, and several of the volunteers had been involved as long, as well. This ethnographic project explored the question: How are the photographer and the homeless impacted by their exchanges over one year of photography in an urban soup kitchen?

The following statistics from the 2011 annual Homeless Count paint a picture of the homeless situation in the metropolitan statistical area of approximately 1.7 million residents where this project was conducted (Coalition for Homelessness: Intervention and Prevention 2011): Of the 1,567 individuals found and identified as experiencing homelessness, a) 114 (7%) were unsheltered and found on the street, and 1,453 (93%) were staying in emergency shelters or in temporary housing programs (93%) ; b) 444 (28%) were members of families, including 248 children under the age of 18, and representing 155 families; c) 85 (15%) were employed while they were homeless; d) 457 (29%) cited a lost job or the inability to find employment as the reason for their homelessness; e) 642 (41%) suffered from a chronic addiction; and f) 219 (14%) suffered from severe mental illness. These data point out that at any given time, because of frequent mobility, not all of the homeless are living on the streets, unemployed or alone.

Literature

For this study, the initial literature review covered photography and the homeless, photography as an exchange process between the photographer and the homeless, and ethnographic studies of soup kitchens. As the year-long project evolved and new findings emerged, the literature was also reviewed concerning relationships between the homeless and their families, and identity development as a result of repeated social exchanges between the author as photographer and soup kitchen guests. Each area will be summarized below.

Photography and the Homeless

Numerous documentary photographers have produced portraits of the homeless, often when the subjects were on the street or in social service centers, such as shelters and soup kitchens. The levels of the homeless individuals' involvement in the photographic process, consent, and mutual subject-photographer exchange have varied. A high level of involvement, verbal consent, and exchange is evident in the auto-photography by the homeless themselves, particularly if followed by photo-elicitation interviews (Aiken & Wingate, 1993; Bradley, Hodgetts and Cullen, 2005; Dewdney, Gary & Minnon, 1994; Johnsen, May & Cloke, 2008). For example, Aiken and Wingate (1993) studied the auto-photography of middle-class, homeless, and mobility-impaired children. Johnsen, May, and Cloke (2008) explored the physical geography of where the homeless lived by having the subjects take photos of where they slept. Moderate involvement and exchange is seen when photographers produce photo essays of the homeless with their consent (Blodgett 2007; Hollyman & Irwin 1988; Mendel 1995; Zald 2004). And finally, photography of the homeless has little subject involvement and no exchange or verbal consent when it takes place in public areas where the homeless do not know they are being photographed (Rosenthal & Dreamwalker 2008; Wodiczko 1990). This project attempted to support a high level of involvement, exchange and consent on the part of the soup kitchen guests.

Photography as Exchange

Exchange theory operates on the assumption that all social life can be treated as an exchange of rewards or resources among actors (Zafirovski 20003). Homans (1961) described exchange theory as human behavior that often results in materialistic rewards. It is a type of reciprocal exchange which will eventually end if the mutual reciprocity is not continued or supported. Photography has been described as a means of social exchange between the photographer and the photographed (Hingley 2011). Durbin (2000, p. 9) explored the nature of the social exchange during the taking of another's photograph by asking: "How can this often brief encounter allow for the possibility of feeling for others, enable a consciousness of how others live and engage in the world? The very act of posing for a photograph is always situated within a social relationship between the photographer and the photographed-a moment of exchange." Within the cultural economy of image-making, the pose represents the point at which

value is set. This is the moment of transaction when the deal has finally been struck (Lowry 2000). Finally, Hunt (2000, p. 53) stated that “the most important aspect of the photograph is its exchange of interest with the viewer, but the agreement made with the subject is nonetheless indicative of the kind of society in which it is made.” The exchange of gazes and purposes that occur between the photographer and the subject(s) cannot be ignored, particularly if the subject is also the intended owner and viewer of the photograph, as was the case in this project.

In this study, I explored how the exchange process played out when the subjects were homeless or near homeless and guests at a church-based soup kitchen and I, the photographer, was a middle-class, middle-aged, White, female professor. Exchange theory was applied here because of the metaphor between producing and consuming photos of the homeless and the ethics of consuming the homeless being portrayed in the photos. Contemporary documentary photographers have to worry about, and justify, their relations with the people they shoot. Image-makers record lives with cameras that are often considered revealing and possibly unethical and exploitive (Aubert 2009). Becker (1986, 2007) expands on this risk of exploitation by summarizing that the subject can feel superior to, equal to, or inferior to the photographer. He refers to this process as a form of reciprocal exchange. The goal here was for the guests to feel equal to the photographer.

Hingley (2011, p. 266) used photography to explore the circumstances of urban faith communities along one road in Birmingham, England for one year. Her project had many similarities to the present study, although it was conducted at a slightly later time. She described the process of engagement and exchange that evolved during her project. Her subjects frequently questioned what right she had to document their lives and beliefs. She handled this issue by assuming a collaborative approach to image-making and gaining as deep an understanding as possible of the lives of subjects before capturing them on film. In addition, she asked people to take images of herself to explore how she was being perceived. She stated:

I see the personal as well as the intellectual rewards that come from relocating daily research in a shared space where boundaries between myself, as photographer, and subject, as stranger, become permeable. I offered people services in return for their hospitality, such as driving the Thai Buddhists monks to the wholesale market at 5am (their spiritual status means they cannot drive), and babysitting for a Muslim family...using digital camera equipment enabled me to share results and offer my subjects copies of their images quickly and easily; this became crucial in building trust and sustaining relationships and access. Photography then became the currency of our exchange.

The Homeless and Families of Origin

Studies of how the homeless lose connectedness with their families of origin have tended to concentrate on subgroups divided by gender and used a variety of theoretical approaches. Pippert (2007) conducted in-depth interviews with 45 homeless men about their extreme social isolation.

While applying social exchange theory, he reported that they a) had attenuated relationships with their families of origin with little or no contact; b) had fractured relations with their ex-partners and children; c) had on-going searches for companionship; d) were uncomfortable asking for help from families and ex-partners; and e) were unlikely to get emergency support from their families, which exacerbates problems of poverty and prolongs periods of being homelessness. In another study by Holt, Christian and Larkin (2011), they explored the experiences of older homeless men living temporarily in hostels. Using a model of interpretative phenomenological data analysis on the data from interviews with ten men, they described one of the reoccurring themes as the balancing independence with needed assistance from others. Losing a sense of connectedness to family was perceived as a precursor to becoming physically homeless. Feeling a lack of connectedness was primarily described in terms of the loss of relationships with partners, children, and friends, as well as the wider community as a whole.

On the other hand, Jackson-Wilson and Borgers (1993), studied how low income African American women who were, or had been, homeless perceived their families of origin. They compared how homeless and nonhomeless women perceived their families of origin and social support systems. Using a developmental model of disaffiliation, they randomly selected and compared 76 first time homeless and 74 nonhomeless women. They reported that a multi-dimensional model significantly discriminated between the two groups. Retrospective memories of the family of origin's ability to handle crises contributed to the disaffiliation function, which differentiated the two groups, and was correlated with the number of, and feelings of satisfaction with, personal social supports.

Anderson conducted intensive interviews with 20 women and interpreted the findings through a feminist framework. She reported that almost all of the women had negative perceptions of their families of origin, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Relations with their mothers were described as involving betrayal, devaluation of self by others, enmeshment, lack of emotion, and destructive family coalitions. Relations with their fathers involved devaluation of women and male oppression.

The Soup Kitchen as Living Room

Glasser and Suroviak (1989, 95) describe the soup kitchen as valuable beyond the physical nourishment that it provides. The relationships formed in this setting can compensate for the loss of contact and relationships with partners, children, friends, and extended family.

The soup kitchen is a symbolic living room whose marginality takes the forms of low income, long term unemployment, debilitating physical conditions, serious mental illness, loneliness and separation from conventional family relationships...the soup kitchen becomes the very center of their social existence...Most soup kitchen guests lack the sources of human contact that people take for granted in work, family relationships, and consumer activities.

Most soup kitchen guests miss the social aspect of sharing photographs with family members, as has been discussed by several authors. Many of the guests who frequented this soup kitchen had lost touch with their families, had lost their family photos, could not afford to take new photos, and/or hoped that sharing their new photos from this project with relatives would re-establish familial contact. According to Sit, Hollan, and Greenwold (2005), the process of sharing printed photos serves as an anchor for continued conversation. Chalfen (1987) described the important social component of sharing and discussing family photos around such communal space as the kitchen table or on the living room sofa. Such conversations bring out hidden meanings, strengthen relationships and give pleasure. They can involve telling stories, reminiscing, asking questions, giving information, and having reactions to the photos. In addition, sharing and discussing photos with other guests, volunteers, staff, and the Picture Lady served as a surrogate for filling social and familial needs in the home. While I was an outsider throughout the project, my sustained presence, informal conversations, and dual photographic approach served as means for the guests to revisit the value of family and family photos in their lives.

Ethnographic Tales from a Soup Kitchen

Miller, Creswell, and Olander (1998) adapted Van Maanen's (1988) three types of ethnographic tales (realist, critical, and confessional) to describe their experiences conducting qualitative research in a soup kitchen for the homeless or near-homeless. They defined realist tales as employing an impersonal point of view; conveying a concrete, scientific, and objective description of the experience. They provide ethnographic analysis of the culture of the soup kitchen.

Critical tales often involve social justice issues and address such questions as: Did you have appropriate permission(s) to have access to the site? Did you have permission from the homeless to study them? How did you reciprocate the homeless in exchange for the privilege of entering their lives, listening to their stories, and taking their photographs? And how did you "give back? The critical tale can include reflexive concerns pertaining to the research process.

They described confessional tales as focusing "on the researcher's experiences as his or her views of the setting and guests changed by the end of the project" p. 470. Confessional tales are methodological in that they are often told to other researchers or students as a way of educating them about what took place in the field. According to Flick (2009, 416), confessional tales display a personalized approach with the authors' viewpoints considered as integral data. Naturalism is used to tell the tale of the author and the culture finding each other. The field work is described as a learning process where the field researcher is or is not successful. In this project, I kept detailed field notes that included elements of critical and confessional tales in order to explore in detail how the process of exchange played out over one year of photography with the homeless who were guests at one church-based soup kitchen.

Evolution of My Identity from Outsider to the Picture Lady: Six Confessions

Although when the project began I was introduced to the guests as working on a project with the pastor, and this provided a level of acceptance, I was an outsider (not a church member, kitchen volunteer or homeless individual) and had to establish my own identity. As a result I attended the soup kitchen at lunchtime two days per week for one year (June 1, 2010 to May 31, 2011) in order to a) get to know the guests, some of whom had sporadic attendance due to illness, incarceration, lack of transportation, etc.; b) get to know the volunteers and church staff who were the “gatekeepers” to allow me direct access to the guests; and c) observe temporal and seasonal variations in relationships, guest attendance, neediness, life circumstances, employment, and places of residence. To further my acceptance, I took photos of both the volunteers and the guests and distributed and displayed them in the same manner. I also allowed the guests, volunteers, and staff to take photos of me and with me. In addition, I drove guests places if they needed to receive social services, get medical care, apply for jobs etc.

The idea of “giving back” (critical tale) to the guests was an important element from the beginning of the project. Pink (2007) describes how traditional ethnographers leave the research site and often very little remains for the participants. On the other hand, when visual ethnographers return copies of photographs to the participants, they are making a lasting exchange with the participants for their involvement in the fieldwork.

On the first day, I entered the soup kitchen at 11:30 with two cameras: a Kodak Easy Share Digital and a Polaroid 300. These cameras were purposely selected to be low key, small, unassuming, and inexpensive. I mingled among the tables and asked the guests if they would like their pictures taken. I told them that I would give them a Polaroid copy immediately and come back the next day with the 4 x 6 digital pictures to handout. Several accepted my invitation to get free photographs. I printed the images that evening in case the guests returned the next day specifically to get their digital photos. Two guests did return the next noon specifically to get their digital pictures. I was encouraged by their responses and decided to continue the dual Polaroid and digital approach. As another way of “giving back,” each digital photograph was stamped on the back with the date, church name, address, and telephone number. Guests were encouraged to sign their names, as well, for future identification purposes. If the photos were found on them or among their possessions the church could be contacted. The six confessions below show my concerns for my own well-being as well as the well-being of the guests, as in a critical tale.

Confession #1. Safety was one of my initial concerns that diminished somewhat during the project. The church employed security guards who watched the entrance to the building and the parking lot. In the beginning, I was told by the volunteers that my car would be stolen or vandalized at least once during the year. It did not happen but my winter coat was found slashed in the closet area. On two occasions male guests handed me notes asking me to meet them at nearby bars in the evening. It was difficult to establish feelings of security and trust when I did not accept their social invitations. I formed a type of “sisterhood” with the female guests. They looked out for my safety and whispered to me when particular male guests were drunk or should

not be approached at that time. One day when I had not yet arrived at the soup kitchen, a guest asked if the “Picture Lady” was coming and the name stuck for the rest of the project. From that point on, I was affectionately known as the “Picture Lady” and was treated with more respect. I was warmly greeted by the guests when I saw them at the church, at bus stops, or on the street.

Confession #2. I was concerned that I was going to cause the guests pain, embarrassment, or stigmatization from having their photographs displayed publically at the church, on the soup kitchen walls and in the church photo gallery. This did not appear to be the case for those who agreed to participate. In fact, some guests requested that copies of their photos be hung in separate areas outside of the soup kitchen facility for others to view, including in the new church gallery. Some guests left their photos on the soup kitchen wall for weeks because they wanted others to see them. After taking over 20 photos of one woman, she looked at her photograph and stated, “You finally got it right...leave it on the wall.” Periodically, a guest could be over heard remarking that he or she agreed to have another picture taken because the Picture Lady liked doing it so much, it was doing her a favor.

Confession #3. I was concerned throughout the project that I would in some way be exploiting the guests by taking their photographs, given some of their physical and mental conditions (critical tale). As a result, throughout the project I never took a photograph without asking for their verbal permission, even if I had taken more than 20 photos of the same guest during the year. While it was rare, some guests refused to have their pictures taken throughout the year. Others refused intermittently based on how they felt, what they were wearing, etc. Table 1 shows a summary of the reasons for not wanting their pictures taken. The responses ranged from feeling that they did not need any more photographs to feeling that they would get in trouble, particularly if the wrong people or the government got the photos. Racial tensions flared up occasionally. For example, one male guest said that “he would never have his photograph taken by a White woman,”

Table 1. *Guests’ Reasons for Not Wanting Their Pictures Taken*

Reasons	# of Guests With Similar Responses
1. You have already taken lots of me and I don’t need any more	10
2. I am wanted by the police/FBI	4
3. When you take my picture, you capture my soul	2
4. I better not let my husband see it because he will think I am sending it to another man.	2
5. I am illegal	1
6. I am homeless and have no place to keep it...no pockets or wallet	1
7. I don’t have anyone special to give it to	1

8. People can get you in trouble if they have your picture.	1
9. This is my first time here and I won't be back this way.	1
10. I will never let a White woman take my photograph.	1

Confession #4. I began by being unsure how to establish mutual trust, as trust was a critical part of the exchange that had to take place between the Picture Lady and the guests. I went “overboard” to honor all of the promises that I made to them and I made every effort to get their photographs to them, even if they had sporadic attendance at the soup kitchen. Experience showed me that the guests preferred to have the printed digital images distributed three ways and I accommodated their preferences: a) if the guest was present the next day, I personally handed the photograph to him or her and engaged in conversation about the photo; b) if the guest was not present the next day, I hung the photograph on the cork board on the wall of the soup kitchen which contained instructions that they were welcome to take their pictures any time; or c) I spread the photos out on a table and they were free to view the photos and take theirs. Some guests preferred to view and handle all of the photos (as many as 30 at a time) instead of just their own (see Figure 1.).



Fig. 1 - Photos on table

If a guest wanted more than one copy of a digital photo, I made sure he or she got all that were asked for within two days. I developed a filing system on my office computer so that each of the digital photos was categorized by day of the week and date when it was taken. It was not uncommon for a guest to appear after being gone for several months and ask to see his or her photographs. I was able to find their photos on my computer and distribute them the next day,

or leave them with the Assistant Pastor to give to them in the future, after the completion of the project.

As a result of mutual trust, a voluntary system emerged in which the guests would recognize other guests in photos and volunteer to give them the photos when they saw them on the street, in their apartment buildings, at the store buying beer at night, or at different social service centers. Anecdotal information pointed to the fact that most of them did pass the photos on to the owners. In addition, I asked for their help to identify individuals in the photographs and to give me advice about where they might be or when they might be returning to the soup kitchen. The regular guests generally knew the status of the others. In addition, one of the long time guests was murdered during this project. Some of the guests asked me to print the photos that I had of him and we made a memorial to him on the wall.

Confession #5. Approximately four months into the project, I was not in complete control of the process and was both pleased with their level of commitment and concerned about relinquishing my authority. The guests began to take charge of the shooting, and I had to relinquish some decision-making power, when they started a) selecting their own settings for the photos, both inside and outside; b) stating where to have their photographs taken; c) showing with whom they wanted to pose; and d) deciding ahead of time what they wanted to wear. It was popular in the winter to want their photographs taken in the snow. One man asked me to take a photo of him by a used truck he had just acquired so he could send it to his girlfriend, who was in prison. One woman wore a long dress and said that it was her birthday and she wanted to look beautiful in her photograph. They soon learned to express their preferences for having a head shot, waist, or full-body frame without being asked. They might say, "Just get my face today because my clothes are dirty." I originally suggested a spot for them to stand in the soup kitchen that had adequate lighting, and was not in the way of the volunteers as they worked. It soon became the spot where they would most often initiate picture-taking by standing there and asking to have their pictures taken. Many times they had to wait their turn to have this done. I showed the guests the digital display of their photographs in the camera and discussed what they liked or didn't like about them. Occasionally they would ask to have me retake the photo and I would.

The following are examples of how the guests valued the process and assumed ownership of it. One guest brought a different shirt, sweater or jacket for each of 25 photos that he wanted to give to his estranged relatives. The clothes were selected to please particular relatives. He got the clothes from a nearby Goodwill store and he carried them in large black plastic trash bag. He changed his clothes in the church restroom before each photo. Approximately six months into the project, some guests began to bring others (who were not necessarily homeless) with them to be included in the family photographs (See Figure 2.). They included sisters, brothers, in-laws, children, grandchildren, and a puppy. Several brought their grandchildren to have lunch with them on the children's birthdays so the Picture Lady could take birthday pictures (See Figure 3). Several newly married couples planned that these were going to be their only wedding photographs. One couple had me document the woman's pregnancy each month (See Figure 4).



Figure 2. Invited relatives



Figure 3. Grandparents and birthday party



Figure 4. Pregnant Couple

Confession #6. I feared that the guests would become bored with my repetitious questions and either refuse to be photographed and/or refuse to answer my questions because when I took a photograph I always asked: “What are you going to do with the photo?” This

often resulted in lengthy conversations about their life situations, medical conditions, estranged families, and children. I kept field notes quoting how the guests answered the question about what they were going to do with their Polaroid and/or digital photos. The results are summarized in Table 2. The most frequent response categories were that they were going to: give them to relatives; keep them in their wallets, bible or other special storage places; and/or put them to practical uses (i.e., plug holes where mice entered his apartment, help police identify her body if she were to die, put it on her homeless sign that she carries when she is begging for money, use it as an obituary photo, and use it for identification).

Table 2. *Guests' Descriptions of How They Would Use Their Polaroid and Digital Photos.*

Description	# of Guests With Similar Responses
1. Give/send it to my_____	+35
2. Keep it in my wallet	+30
3. I don't know	+20
4. Put it in my album/file folder	+10
5. Put it under/on a Christmas tree	5
6. Keep it-we have been dating for__ months and have no pictures of us together.	5
7. Send it to my wife/children's father/ brother -s/he is in prison	5
8. Treasure it/them	4
9. Frame it	3
10. Plug the holes where the mice are getting into my house	3
11. Give it as a Christmas card next year	3
12. Use it as our wedding picture-we don't have any	2
13. Use it as my obituary photo-my family does not have one	2
14. Put it on my refrigerator	1
15. I lay them out and look at how much improvement I have made since last year	1
16. Give it to my mother so if the police need a recent photo of me, she will have one	1
17. Sell it	1
18. My son's 12 year old birthday is tomorrow and this is going to be his gift	1
19. I write the date on the back of all of the pictures you take of me and I am collecting one each month for a year. I started in July and this is the September picture	1
20. Use it as my parole picture	1
21. Give them to our children who just been removed from us and placed in foster care	1
22. Show it to the mice in my apartment	1

23. Put it in my bible	1
24. I want to give it to my mother but I have not seen her in a year and I lost her address	1
25. Put it on my cardboard homeless sign that I use when I beg for money	1
26. Use it to scare away the mice in my apartment	1
27. Keep it forever-I don't have any pictures of myself	1
28. Save it so my grandchildren will have pictures of us	1
29. Give it to my brother because he wants a picture of me to have after I die.	1
30. Give it to the adoptive parents who took my son when he was two months old. He is eight now and they want a picture of me.	1
31. Use it for identification	1

The importance of using the photos to connect with family members was a strong theme and resulted in me or the church staff occasionally being asked to supply envelopes and stamps for the guests to mail their photos to relatives. Several individuals stated that they were going to send them to relatives who were in prison. Others mentioned giving them to their grandchildren, mother, or brother, none of whom had pictures of them. One young woman cried when she asked to have her picture taken because she told me that she had recently had a request for her photo from the family that adopted her son. He was removed from her eight years earlier because of her drug use. I felt empathy for her situation because I adopted my son. We took 15 photos because these had a special purpose. Unfortunately, she never returned to get her digital photos. We hung her photograph in several places in the soup kitchen and asked for information concerning her whereabouts. Six months after the year-long project ended, the Assistant Pastor called me and told me that he and some of the guests had tracked her down and given her the photographs.

Post-Project Thoughts

As a result of this work, I came to agree with Miller et al. (1998) when they described the soup kitchen as a useful setting to better understand the homeless population because it is where guests develop social groups and communicate with others like themselves. The researcher is able to see the problems that arise for the guests, volunteers, and staff because the soup kitchen is a microcosm for studying the homeless over time. The project elaborated on what the photographer believed she and the homeless gained from their exchanges. Both the photographer behind the camera and the homeless in front of it learned about and experienced mutual understanding, trust, and relationship-building. To summarize, positive feelings were exchanged between the Picture Lady and the guests as they became more involved in the project, such as when they: a) were given copies of their photographs in exchange for allowing their photos be taken; b) helped identify and locate missing individuals shown in photographs; c)

helped distribute unclaimed photographs to their owners who were not at the soup kitchen but were present in the neighborhood; d) assumed more responsibility for the shooting locations and poses they preferred, rather than having the Picture Lady make the decisions and arrangements; e) felt they were doing something that gave the Picture Lady pleasure by letting her take their pictures, and f) used the photographs to pursue connections with their estranged families.

Glasser and Suroviak (1989) proposed soup kitchens act as symbolic living rooms to the guests who frequent them. Several similarities can be drawn between the exchange process that took place in this soup kitchen “living room” and what Musello (1979, 101) coined as the term “home mode” to mean the body of photos produced and accumulated by and for family members within the context of family life. Musello (1979) described images made in the home mode as made for private, as opposed to artistic, use and more valued for their domestic intimacy as opposed to technical or formal qualities. As the guests assumed more control over the production of their photographs and provided input during the shooting, they moved closer to acting in a home mode and were more likely to plan to either keep and cherish the photographs or send them to family members.

Musello described the “family correspondence,” “communion” and “interaction” functions of family photographs as well. The “family correspondence” role was the most evident in this setting. In this mode, photographs are used as reminders or “surrogates” of people separated by space and time. Their role is to demonstrate the conditions of people, places and things which others cannot see. For example, a number of guests wanted pictures taken so they could be sent to relatives or significant others who were in prison. Others planned to get their photos to estranged family members to let them know that they were alive, and also so they would not be forgotten at the present time or after they died.

The “communion” mode is evident when the emphasis is on documenting rites of passage such as births, weddings, family events, deaths etc. As previously described, some of the guests in this project wanted specific photos of birthdays, weddings, pregnancies, memorials etc.

The “interaction” function of the home mode photograph involves looking at it as valuable in the social interaction it garners before, during, and after shooting versus the content of the image itself. Musello (1979) describes the shooting process as a form of interactional entertainment for the observers and actors. Picture-taking in this soup kitchen became a form of group entertainment. Guests, volunteers, and staff often watched as others were photographed. Some guests humorously suggested who should be paired in the photos (sometimes volunteers and/or Picture Lady and guests together), how they should pose, etc.

In addition, according to Musello (1979), home moders seem to take three broad approaches: idealization (formal and posed), natural portrayal (snapshots of everyday life), and demystification (alternative images such as when family members are asleep, half nude, strangely dressed, etc.). The guests overwhelmingly preferred the idealization approach and chose formal poses that showed them at their best in carefully selected settings, such a next to fir tree covered with new snow (See Figure 5.). Some were able to wear carefully selected second-hand clothing for the occasion; some women displayed carefully arranged hair styles (such as when long hair was tied,

rolled or clipped in creative ways). These behaviors were testimonies to the value they placed on the idealized photographs.



Figure 5

Sarvas and Frohlich (2011) describe the present age as on the “Digital Path” and discuss the potential role of social network services and the continued diffusion of cameras into computers, telephones, etc. In this project, I observed only one guest with a cell phone. The guests make up a group who, for the most part, have been left out of or dropped out of opportunities to experience the changes that are taking place in domestic photography and technology, yet they have needs for and value self and family photographs in this visually-soaked culture.

Conclusion

I began with some insecurity about how to manage this project and left with a sense of curiosity about its replicability. It would not have been possible to schedule separate individual photo-elicitation interviews with most of the guests given their life circumstances, physical conditions, and unpredictable attendance patterns. Therefore, information that I received from them had to be gathered informally, while eating lunch with them, driving them to appointments, distributing photos, etc. This informality and lack of structure was popular with the guests but also resulted in my having feelings of uncertainty at times, as evidenced in my confessions.

There are a host of unanswered methodological questions that need further examination as a result of this project. These include: What would the exchange process have been like if a) the guests had not been given copies of their photos in exchange for their permission to be photographed? b) the photographer had been male and/or a member of the homeless community? c) the project had not been sanctioned and supported by the pastor, the church staff, and the long time soup kitchen volunteers? d) the duration of the project had been significantly shorter or longer than one year? And e) the role of the Picture Lady became institutionalized and was an on-going feature of the soup kitchen?

Finally, a way to show the mutual impact of the project is to examine how the guests' responses changed over time. In the beginning, when the guests were asked to have their photographs taken, the typical comment was, "Sure, why not. It is free." By the end, their responses involved more than the self and were more like this one which included references to the Picture Lady and their families: "Sure, the Picture Lady sure likes to do this and my mother keeps asking for a picture of me before I die, she doesn't have any."

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A “Black Film”? - Conflicting Readings of Local Realities in the Albanian Shpati Mountains

Abstract

The article accompanying the ethnographic film "Polyphonia-Albania's forgotten voices" by film director Björn Reinhardt and ethnomusicologist Eckehard Pistrick, introduces an ethnographic perspective to the field of media perception studies. The convergence/divergence of the filmmakers perspective with the expectations of the villagers in Shpati, the ongoing discussion of how to represent local culture visually and aurally and the social relevance of inclusion-exclusion processes are prominent topics of the article. Its material is based on interviews after the screening of the film in April 2012 at the place where it was shot.

Keywords

Albania, polyphony, heritage, ethnographic film, media perception, ethnomusicology, local identity

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A Screening in the Shpati Mountains

Just a small announcement at the door of the local municipality: there would be a screening of a German film featuring two local shepherds: Anastas and Arif.¹ It was April 2012 and the villagers in Gjinar were excited: they had barely remarked the film directors and their small team in the last year who had appeared suddenly and who always disappeared in sudden way. Now they would see themselves for the first time on a huge screen.

The small bar in which the screening took place was overcrowded. Indeed it was a major media event in the village twenty years after the last open-air film screenings of mainly partizan films by the travelling *kino-operator* (film projectionist) Llazar Peci had been organized. Until the early 1990s he has had a huge success with his impressive soviet cinematograph “Ukraina” and his travelling cinema in the service of the communist party. Although most of the villagers had after the mid 1970s access to TV and were used to the small screen, the cinematographic event was something extraordinary to them. The main protagonists were seated in the first row together with the mayor and other collaborators. Behind them curious villagers of all ages filled the small hall – on the backseats and on tables was sitting the youth of the village, pupils from the nearby school dropped in and out for a beer. At the same time Kalia, an important character in the film was sitting less than 100 meters away from the bar in front of her provisory shelter, a wooden hut - without knowing what was going on. We invited her formally to join the screening – but despite our instant pleadings she refused. Obviously she feared the public and was afraid of getting mocked by the villagers. Indeed seating her with the mayor in the front row would have been a sacrilege in the eyes of most of the villagers. In this sense the established social hierarchies and her particular status as an “outsider of the community” prevented her to participate.

The event was initialized by a short speech both by the mayor and by the filmmakers Björn Reinhardt and Eckehard Pistrick. For us it was the moment to give account, to justify our presence and to make public what had been hidden:

“(…) The idea of the film was to depict the everyday life in a postcommunist village, a reality without falsifications and euphemisms. We hope that we can contribute with this to the development of the region in some way, or at least to stimulate an interest in Shpati beyond the region, particularly for the cultural values and songs, which we consider as being with much more value than any of the videoclips transmitted on the “Folk” channel. (...)”

Finally we would like to stress that we are well aware that we came here as foreigners in the sense that we have not lived through such a difficult life full with sorrows like you have lived it. That means we have an outsider perspective. During the filming process we have learned to respect the difficult life you live and face every day. “ (Pistrick/Reinhardt 2012)

The immediate reaction of the villagers in front of the screen was astonishing. The audience followed the film at the beginning with a tense concentration. The main interest was not on the message of the film or on the visual-esthetic aspects but on recognizing oneself, one’s relatives or neighbours. The protagonists were looking at themselves on the screen and

¹ All names in this article are changed in order to protect the anonymity of all those who commented on the film. Only the names of the main protagonists of the film appear in their original form.

were laughing about their “acting”, about their communication, they were mocking or mocked by their sitting neighbours. Occasionally laughter broke out.

Impressive was to see also the highly symbolic use of noise and silence in terms of social respect. Like in reality, the watchers remained silent and respectful when the mayor of the village was speaking with his authoritative voice acknowledging his “intellectual capacities” and his powerful socio-economic status. When Kalie, the outsider was appearing laughter was breaking out- a continuous murmuring and whispering especially by the village youth was accompanying all her appearances.

Filming as a representational issue

The film from our perspective was significant in different ways. First it was a collaboration between an ethnomusicologist and a documentary director – combining different sensibilities (that of the auditory and the visual senses), different ways of how to approach the field, and different ethics of how to work. Secondly the film was consciously avoiding a scriptboard and a pre-formulated narrative. It was favouring instead an improvisational multi-thematic approach, growing out of the everyday lives of our protagonists during the time of our stays in Shpati (August 2010, April 2011, August 2011). The film and its narrative line should develop without our active intervention. Indeed the faces and life stories of the protagonists were stronger than of any professional actor. Some of the protagonists, particularly Anastas internalized their role during the course of the shootings, as this role was the same they had in their own real life. Nevertheless we were conscious that our ethnographic film was still a constructed “text”, far from a direct representation of reality.

Our idea was that of a participatory filming, of filming with and in collaboration with the local people. A special role in this collaboration was taken by our local collaborators, particularly by the local cameraman Andon. His presence helped to explain the presence of a camera in several situations and in “bridging the cultural gap” between “Us” and “Them”.

Thematically the film follows four main lines: it intends to document the postsocial condition of an exemplary Albanian village (with the coexistence of tradition and modernity), it is a reflection about the rhetorics and the direct practical impact of “zhvillim” (development), it should bring to the attention interreligious tolerance evidenced through cultural practice, and it should focus on multipart singing (since 2005 UNESCO world heritage).

In all this visual representation was a main issue which we had to discuss lengthly with our local friends. What kind of individuals should represent the traditions and values of the *krabinë* (region)? Which role should play the past and the present in a visual representation? In which sense should the film represent the Shpati region as a homogenous religious entity? In which sense could Shpati be seen as a “typical example” for the contemporary Albanian village?

The other main question was whether we as *jabanxhi* (as outsiders) were authorized to decide what was and what was not to be represented in the film.

All elements which were seen as “disturbing” a purified, ideal image of the region were conspicuously examined and criticized. Representation was such a large issue as it was relating prominently to the outside image of the region. An ambiguous message transmitted to the outside world was not in the interest of the villagers.

While a considerable part of the villagers considered the ethnographic film as a “film i zi” (a black film), transmitting a dark image of Shpati to the outside world, others - among them the main protagonists - were defending the film fiercely as being “realist, aktual, konkret”. Nevertheless even these defenders saw in the film a simple shooting of reality but nothing “artistik”.

Anastas Karaj, an Orthodox shepherd and one of the main characters of the film ironically remarked: “The film shows the reality, it shows the truth. Next time you can make a film about the wealthy people here and give it to them, they will be delighted.” (Karaj 2013)

Both sides however agreed on the strength of the film in portraying cultural values and customs of the region as this was coinciding with their expectance stance: “The part about the folklore was positive.”

Our local collaborator, himself an experienced cameraman commented: “It is a film with thorns, a film which directly points on some sensitive points in our community.”

The film was heavily criticized particularly by the young people of the region. Most of them are acquainted with modern urban life in Elbasan (internet cafés, discos, bars) and they had a different concept of how their region should be represented on the screen. They also felt their absence on the screen (apart from two smaller sequences). Representative for this view is the opinion of Bukuria, daughter of one of the female protagonists from the Muslim village of Kabash:

“The film has shown only and exclusively the poor people, the lowest strata of society. Why did the film not show the other side, something more modern? Life in the village is also modern today. If others see such a miserable poverty they will say ‘Albania – what a poor place it is.’” (Toska 2013)

In this statement it is important to note that how the village is represented on the screen is seen as being related to concepts of pride (*krenari*) and shame (*turp*). For Bukuria it is shameful if a beggar appears, with his head bowed down, with a small piece of bread in his hand.

Representation was a major issue also for the mayor of the Komuna Gjinar who had suspiciously observed the shooting without ever actively supporting the filming project or trying to interfere. An important issue for him was the role Muslim villages had played in the film. According to him the film should have been concentrated exclusively on the orthodox populated villages of Shpati. Nevertheless he considered the film as a “promocion” for his region to the outside world. For him and other villagers such as Anastas the quality of the film was measured also in terms of its success in foreign countries.

The potential of the film as a case study, exemplifying the “Albanian village” in relation to the city (seen as a juxtaposed model of modernity) was brought forward by the villagers as well. Although many Shpataraks have migrated since the early 1990s to the nearby city of Elbasan or to Greece, having at least relatives in the city, they were conspicuously aware of

what image of their village was transmitted to the outside world. In this sense the film was criticized:

“Still there exists a kind of discrimination of the villagers by those who call themselves urban citizens. They still use the term ‘katundari’ as a peggiorative term. If you show with your film extreme poverty, and you show this film in the city, this strengthens these established prejudices.” (Balla 2013) Interestingly the gap between village life and urban life was very much accentuated when people talked about their perception of the film. The image of the village as a counter-concept to modernity and urbanity promoted by more than 40 years of communist propaganda and the politics of the Hoxha regime to erase or at least minimize the difference between life in the village and in the city were still present in the heads of the villagers.

Indeed the representation of time, the communist past and the postcommunist present was another important issue discussed widely in Gjinar, Pashtresh, Nezhan, Selta, and Kabash.

The film was showing a community between tradition and modernity, but several villagers argued, that the film was portraying intentionally a backward, retrospective image of Shpati and was excluding progress, development and modernity as a substantial part of their own life experience. Even Albanians from other regions commented on the temporal construction by the side of the filmmakers. An Albanian singer from Saranda remarked: “This film shows a world which is 100 years far away, with its old traditions and customs. For you it is a curiosity. But we have developed in the meantime – and you have forgotten to mention this in your film.” (Tralo 2013) The same opinion was brought up by other urban Albanians.

Indeed the film tried to take into account the co-existence/clashes of modernity and traditionality in different everyday life situations such in the case of the “brumi” (evening of the bride before the wedding) where the older generation dances/sings their multipart dances while at the same time a DJ plays popular light music from his laptop for the delight of the present youth. Also the Easter feast as the culmination of the film is a good example for this temporal hybridity. The film even opens emblematically with a sequence showing the road construction to Gjinar – introducing “zhvillim” (development) as a major controversial topic of the work.

Exposing and Personalizing Local Heritage – The role of Anastas

When we proposed the idea for a film to our main protagonist, Anastas Karaj, we were confronted with his own ideas of filming reality which differed significantly from ours: He imagined a privately sponsored videoclip like those shown in the Albanian TV on the Folk Channel: A folkloristic group with him as a main act dressed in traditional costumes with the *fyell* (shepherds flute) – posing in front of a beautiful lake or high up in the mountain. They would sing and dance in order to promote the tradition and the musical traditions of the region – which according to him are unique in the whole of Albania. What Anastas was proposing was reflecting the esthetics of commercial TV clips and the esthetics known from the videos of Andon, the local cameraman of the region. He had produced for the concert tour a short film “Muzik Folk – Shpati, Elbasan 2011-2012” which was exactly reflecting the expectations of the singers. Characteristic features were frontality, the use of natural setting as

an “authentic” stage, idealized pastoral images (the shepherd and his flock), and a staged rituality (i.e. the ritual shaving of the groom). Moreover traditional professions like that of craftsmen and shepherds were shown and depicted as intrinsically bound to musical practice. You could see dressed up men sitting around a *sofër* toasting and singing. The picturesque and the folkloric were essential reference points for the video of Andon. All in all it transmitted the fictive impression of a stable unchanged socio-cultural community nourishing a vital tradition. In musical terms the disciplination of the group (visual arrangement in rows) and the preference for arranged musical medleys with alternating sequences of male and female vocal repertoire and instrumental Saze music was striking. In fact the cultural practice appearing in the video was that of a decontextualized tradition – this became prominently visible through the interlocking announcement of the different musical acts through a speaker. In all these aspects the performance and the filming were following what was proposed as the folkloristic model in Albania dating back to the establishment of the first National Folk Festival in Gjirokastra in 1968.

When Anastas first watched the film he saw the outcome with mixed feelings: on the one hand it showed him as a main representant of Shpati culture, on the other hand it did not show him in an “appropriate setting” but in his ordinary life wearing a worn-out undershirt, feeding his goats, quarelling with his Muslim neighbours over the price of a small lamb. But Anastas, particularly after being invited for a concert tour to Germany in summer 2012 was convinced eventually of the significance of the film at least in terms of a “documentation”, even if not in terms of “art”. The film came closest what he had seen in television as a *telenovela*: something which “shows reality, which is based on direct experience and which is not artistic” (Karaj 2013). Anastas in the end had internalized both his role and even some of his statements of the film, statements which he was repeating to me word by word in later interviews. He even internalized some of the arguments in favour of the film by the filmmakers in discussions with his fellow villagers. For Anastas the film “shows how we live concretely in Shpati” (Karaj 2013). He appreciates that it opened up an opportunity to make the culture of his region known to the outside world as “if culture and art remain wrapped and packed in a jar it will eventually die” (Karaj 2013). The value of the film is seen by him particularly in his perception outside of Albania. Referring to a screening at the Burghof Festival in Klagenfurt, Austria he comments “If those foreigners who watch the film appreciate my comments as insightful and ‘philosophic’ then they have understood the message of the film and it was a success.” (Karaj 2013)

The concert tour for him was a high point in his life, which made sense to the suffering and exhausting he had witnessed during his whole life. “All my sorrows were outweighed by the tour to Germany. I thought I will go to Germany and even if I will die there, there could come nothing else after it.” (Karaj 2012)

For him both the concert tour and the film were attempts in a mission he had pursued as an individual: “Shpati will not die any more”. (Karaj 2012)

The edge of the society in the center of the film – The role of Kalie

Most villagers showed themselves disturbed or even angry that a “marginal figure” of their community, without any obvious virtue, not representing any traditional feature was

assuming an important role in the film. While we as filmmakers appreciated Kalie and her touching life story as a “natural character” who with her impressive face had undeniable expressive qualities for the purpose of the film, the villagers saw her in terms of shedding a dark light on their community. Anastas who in the beginning showed himself surprised that another character, who did not properly represent any of the virtues of Shpati, assumed such a dominant role, was in the end defending her presence in terms of an emergent “social call” to his community fiercely. He recalls the following dialogue – fictive or not – with the mayor of his village Selta:

‘What would you do as mayor to support people like Kalie?’

‘Nothing, nothing at all.’

‘So you don’t feel any responsibility as a state authority i.e. to accomodate here?’

‘No, she is not one of us.’

‘If so, I will not give you my vote, as you don’t think at all for the good of the community.’ (Karaj 2013)

Anastas appreciated the presence of Kalie in certain sequences: for example in the part where shots with the mayor explaining his rather utopic ideas for developing tourism on a fictive map alternate with images of Kalie facing directly the camera in front of her self-built wooden hut. But this ironic tension between political discourse and everyday reality was understood not by all villagers. Anastas goes even further: “When Kalie appears while gathering chestnuts or flowers the image tells us that even I have a right to live, as I am working for it.” (Karaj 2013) Even the mayor, in an interview conducted in April 2013, did accept the inclusion of Kalie in the film: “Her role was justified as she was part of this community. I accept that there are people like her in our reality.” (Zano 2013)

Indeed the perception of Kalie changed radically after her sudden death in June 2012, several days before a group of Shpatarak singers and musicians embarked for a concert tour in Germany and Austria. Indeed this concert tour was intended by the filmmakers as a way of returning in a non-material way the active help and involvement of the locals in the production of the film. The general opinion of Kalie as being “non-representative”, as a disturbing factor for the general message of the film, mixed with continuous mocking took another direction. Her ill-fate (*fatkeqesi*) was seen in terms of an accusation of local authorities for their ignorance towards socially excluded people. The film in this sense was seen as “investigative” and as calling for more social solidarity within their own community. In the same light was seen the short appearance of the epileptic son of Arif - as an accusation and as a call for help. In these terms the presence of both individuals in the film was justifiable.

Recognizing Oneself in front of the camera lense

Although most of the villagers understood what we were doing, very few people reacted negatively towards the camera. Most of the villagers used them (i.e. during shooting at the local vegetable bazaar in Gjinar and the animal bazaar in Zavalina) as a sort of possibility to advertise their work or their products, others consciously played with the camera taking the role of an actor – like the butcher on the animal market of Zavalina or a villager who showed a bunch of 1000 Lekë banknotes into the camera crying out “We have money in Albania!”

One of the few persons who did not actually understand the filming process was Kalie. For her the confrontation with the camera lense was an exciting moment with an unknown medium. Kalie strongly believed that we were photographing her for a passport photo – probably the last occasion she remembered. Consequently she prepared her presence in our lense as if she would go for a shooting in a photo studio: she took off her dirty headscarf, she combed her hair in the fading sunlight and sat down in a static posture without any sign of emotional involvement. Upon our return for the second shooting she asked us “Did you bring me the passport photo?”

How strange our technical equipment but also our interest in her person and her life as an “community outsider” was – became visible in her communication with the camera. Looking into the lense she looked for her mirror image on the surface of the lense, she was slightly lifting the corner of her mouth and contracting her eyebrows.

Foreign reception of the film and the Albanian Diaspora

When the Shpati singers and musicians arrived in Germany they brought their home with them. During the two weeks concert tour they continuously recalled their home through singing, discussions (also about the film) and through comparing the reality of a “modern Western country” with their own everyday reality. Moreover the relevance of the concept of “home” and homeliness for Shpataraks was further evidenced in practice during the concert tour: the idea of “home” was reproduced in their own tiny hotel rooms.

One evening Anastas and Arif invited me with the call “Hajde, lets drink a coffee together!” in their room where they had improvised a small *sofër* (round table) on a bed with a huge goat cheese, strong rakia and even leek (all brought in the bus from Albania) served on a *defi*-frame drum. While eating and drinking we followed the same drinking and toasting rituals like in Shpati – the “owner” of the hotel room was acting as the *zoti e shtëpisë* (head of the household).

While the film in Shpati was seen in terms of representing the *krahinë* (region), the village and in a more wider sense the contemporary condition of the “Albanian village”, Diaspora Albanians saw the film differently in attaching the ethnographic reality to the concept of *komb* (nation) – therefore watching the staged reality of the film in the light of ethnonationalism. During the concert tour, accompanying the screening of the film in Germany and Austria i.e. the group was confronted several times by this major question: “Why did you not bring an Albanian flag with you?” For Diaspora Albanians the regional identification of the group was too strong, an unambiguous national identification symbolized by a flag would have been needed.

Albanian intellectuals in the Diaspora also proved to be critical of the film. They were criticizing the pronounced presence of disabled people/outside of society but not in terms of a distorted representation of an “ideal community” but in using this aspect to overtly criticize the multi-thematic approach. Elisa, an Albanian woman living in Switzerland, put her first impression in this way: “Poverty and sorrows of the lives of individuals dominate over the musical aspect of the documentary, at least this is what remains in my head.” (Elisa 2012) In her argumentation the focus on traditional singing practices was distorted by several other characters in the film and several other narrative lines (some of them she considered as

adding an “exotizing” effect to the scenery). For some of the watchers the absence of a script was equalized with a labyrinthic narrative structure: “You don’t get tired watching it, but there is no red line.” Some of the viewers tended to see the multi-thematic approach positively, interpreting the title of the film in a metaphoric sense: as a polyphonic, multivocal texture of narrating.

Other individuals like Jean, an anthropologist-cineaste from France commented on the emotional aspect of the film – referring to what the Albanians called a “black film”: “It is in some respect a film a little difficult to stand, but it does not seem neither to slip into a pre-fabricated nostalgia, nor into a total despair. The impressive personalities make it a strong film, fully honest and seducing with a strong note of despair and solitude of the Albanian mountains. It shows a lost place in the sense that it is lost/abandoned under the feet of the protagonists.” (Jean 2012)

Despite its critics the film had an immediate success among foreign audiences who mainly appreciated the visual aspects of the film: the poetic approach highlighted through long shots and the alternation of interview sequences with “mute” mountain scenery, the sensitive approach towards sound treated as a separate feature, and the ethnographic value and cultural intimacy established between filmmakers and locals.

Living and Filming religious co-existence

When in August 2010 director Björn Reinhardt and me decided for a shooting of an ethnographic film in Shpati, we were not aware that the topic of religious co-existence would get a prominent role in the film. Our main interest was to document and make known the different vocal practices of the region, particularly the practice of “sung dances” (*valle të kënduara*) without musical accompaniment.

But during the shooting of the film this topic imposed itself by the mere physical presence and the inter-related life stories of our main protagonists: the Orthodox shepherd Anastas Karaj and the Muslim shepherd Arif Hoxholli. I had met Arif and Anastas two years before and their male friendship beyond a shared profession had impressed me. For us both protagonists seem to fit into a film which should make reflect about what terms such as “tradition”, “cohabitation”, “reciprocity” meant in the everyday life of a particular village. In the local imagination tradition and religious belonging were intrinsically tied to each other: “to keep one’s faith” (*ruaj fenë*) (in this case orthodoxy), helped traditions to survive, while keeping to traditional customs kept religious practice alive. Our approach to produce an realistic visual account of every-day life in a postcommunist village and the choice to involve Muslim villages in our research was therefore criticized. One of our local collaborators, himself earning his means of subsistence as a cameraman, used the same ideological concepts he applied to the Ghegs (North Albanians) to his Muslim neighbours. For him the main point of difference was the concept of culture (*kulturë*): while orthodox Christians had preserved a high standard of culture, Muslims had slowly taken the road towards a decadent life and a loosing of moral values. Beside the loose character of Muslims he insistently warned us about the hygienic conditions in villages like Zavalina, and forced us to eat instead at his home. Local stereotypes and interpersonal relations were forming the matrix for the construction of large scale representations of what does it means to be a Christian or a Muslim. This mental

representation of “Otherness” linked to religious affiliation, left us perplex. But then we encountered Anastas and Arif, which showed us that beside still existing ideological boundaries between Christians and Muslims the ethnographic reality in Shpati looks definitely different.

Anastas originates from the orthodox village of Selta, Arif forms with his two brothers a quarter of the Muslim village of Kabash. Although both earn their living today mainly by sheep and goat farming, their social status, based on different life histories is fundamentally different. While Anastas is seen in the eyes of the local population as the most prominent exponent of oral history, acknowledged as a *rapsod* (local poet-musician), with a particular knowledge of everything which is subsumed under the term *traditë* (tradition), which is song, dance, costumes, religious customs etc., Arif is considered as a hard-working but modest man, without a particular status.

This different social valuation is seen in relation to their age – Arif is much younger than Anastas – but also in their position they had during socialism. While Anastas had a particular status as brigadier in the cooperative, and has been a key informant for the ethnographic expedition of the then Institute for Folk Culture, Arif did start working under the instructions of Anastas. If we consider this case as exemplary we might argue that asymmetry (in socio-economic status) and a hierarchic situation are necessary for making interreligious personal relations possible. The cooperation between Arif and Anastas is possible because it relies on an intrinsic non-egalitarian configuration.

Their friendship seem to have developed particularly after Arif “invited” Anastas to join him with his flocks on the mountain pasture of Shirok. Pastures (*kullota*) in general are collective property of the village, even in communist times they were part of the village cooperative. The village of Kabash had its pastures on the Shirok pass. Arif as a *Kabashlliu* had therefore the right to graze his animals on the mountain meadow. Since then both have invited, together with Mehdiu, another villager from Kabash, an effective system of work sharing which allows for a continuous presence and working activity in the *stan* (sheep shelter). The wives of each alternate in the role of a *stanore* (shepherdess), which is responsible for the production of dairy products and the nutrition of the shepherds on the mountains. The season in the summer meadow usually begins around 13-14 May of each year. The shepherds return to their family home at the end of October.

The subject religion was rarely mentioned in the *muhabet* (discussions) Arif and Anastas had in front of us, but it is a matter of course that they visit each other for private and public feasts. Arif was invited guest at the wedding ceremony of Anastas daughter, he and one of his brothers is also frequently present at the orthodox Easter Feast and the feast of Shën Maria (Saint Mary) on 28 August. Attending these feasts is a question of honour and respect which is paid to the *zoti i shtëpisë* (head of the household), as a significant part of these feasts take place in the house of Anastas. In exchange Anastas is frequent guest at the highest feasts of the Muslims: *ramadan bajram* and *kurban bajram*. The feast of Shën Gjergji on 6th of May is celebrated in alternation in the household of Arif in Kabash and that of Anastas in Selta. As both are shepherds and the feast is dedicated to the well-being of the flock, this feast has assumed a particular importance for both friends. Feasts are understood by both shepherds not as manifestations of religiosity but as popular events, simply as an occasion to meet in a

joyful occasion. The religious meaning of feasts such as Saint Mary's Day, Easter or Bajram play a secondary role, instead the event is attributed a particular social relevance – as a occasion to utter toasts (*bejte*), jokes (*hoka*) and songs (*këngë*). For this reciprocal visiting of feasts both, Anastas and Arif have to do a 2 hour walk in the rough mountains, crossing the riverbed of the Holta stream. This reciprocal visiting on festive occasions can be confirmed by ethnographic sources. In the case of Lleshan the expedition of 1981 reports:

“In case of family feasts such as weddings and births was summoned the whole quarter. In a similar ways for both bajram they went to visit each other. In case of a death came the whole village.” (AE 1248/25).

During our presence several of such festive gatherings took place. One of it was the Easter feast in Selta in 2011, which was celebrated both in the small chapel of Selta and in the house of Anastas. The service in the newly reconstructed chapel, from which was hanging the Albanian flag, was guided by Kosta Pëllumbi, a popular orthodox priest, who is not officially authorized by the Albanian orthodox church. Villagers who were working and living in neighbouring Greece as migrants commented on the simplicity of the feast:

“It is more simple, the candles are thin and old, not like in Greece with big candles [lambdha]” The presence of the camera lead to an exorbitant event after the church procession: locals sung, danced and played the old men's games on the churchyard, inspired and motivated by Anastas. The aim of the village community was to produce an ideal image of the maintenance of traditions. After the religious service Arif and his older brother and two friends arrived from Kabash. Being seated at the table the Muslims utter the first toast honouring the head of the household:

“We have heard that you have Easter today – so we wish you the best for all the years which will come!” Again here the presence of the camera played its role. For the first time Anastas explained his guests the role and relevance of Easter eggs. By all protagonists this lesson of religious instruction was seen not as an imposing act, but as a playful event, which contributed to the good mood of a festive occasions.² This playful approach prevented even

the slightest impression of religious discord. As Anastas said to Arif's brother: “Jemi këtu për gëzim, jo për moral” (We are here for our pleasure, not for moralities).

Only on demand Arif and Anastas would speak about religious issues: For Anastas the tolerance he witnesses in relation with Arif is part of a wider religious tolerance, characteristic for the whole Albanian society:

“Luckily, not only our area is quiet, but also in the whole country relations between religions, between the church and the mosque, that is, between Muslims and Christians

² In general the borders between the profane and secular are blurred in Albanian feasts. This can be seen also in the terminology, the formerly strictly divided terms for religious feasts such as Festa e Shën Marisë (Feast of Saint Mary) have become synonyms for the profane *festa e fshatit* (Feasts of the village) or the *takimi i brezave* (Meetings of the generations). The feast on the meadow of Qorrasi above Gjinar, Shpati for example, originally a pilgrimage to the existent chapel, has become a primarily popular feast, emptied of religious content.

appear fairly peaceful. People understand each other's faith. Each has its' own faith." (Karaj 2011)

But he turns also to his own local experience, based on kinship links he creating with his Muslim neighbours:

"There is i.e. Lleshan, a (Muslim) village near here, with which we have completely normal and friendly relations. Or, if you ask me personally, I have married my two daughters to Muslims: the youngest one and the elder daughter. I engaged the younger one in Kavaja, the elder one in Peqin. But we don't feel offended. Luckily, there is a good relation between the religions in Albania." (Karaj 2011)

Arif sees the situation less idealized and refers to the strict boundaries, which have existed between both religious communities up to the fall of the communist regime:

"In former times they [the orthodox Christians] didn't get our women, and they didn't give us theirs. We just wouldn't give them to them! Never. It was impossible. Now after the time of

Enver we're much more open. Before, parents decided for your marriage. You didn't choose yourself (...) There were a lot of quarrels. 'Why did you marry a 'Turk' (Muslim)?'

Only now, Arif says these regional/religious barriers are disappearing slowly:

For the last 20 years we've had good relations. But before, life was hard, and I never went to see them. There was a wedge between us. What was I supposed to be looking for there [in the orthodox villages]? They simply would have mocked me." (Hoxholli 2011)

Also for the mayor of Gjinar saw the emergence of the religious topic after the shooting of the film and was using the film as a welcome justification for his own political actions. In 2012 he allowed the building of two mosques in the primarily Orthodox Shpati region – he used the film as an example that this decision was a just one:

"I allowed the building of two mosques in Lleshan and Pobrad although most of the villagers are orthodox. This shows that I am not doubting, not hesitating when our religious tolerance is put into question. It is the film which exemplifies this reality." (Zano 2013)

While the religious barriers seem to have been still persistent during the Hoxha regime, migration both to Greece and Italy and to the nearby urban centers Gramsh and Elbasan after 1991 seems to have an decisive impact for the reconfiguration of the image of the Other, and the "weakening" of established boundaries. It seems that in urban or Diaspora contexts rigid prohibition of intermarriage between Muslims and Christians has gradually lost its relevance as a social rule. Both Anastas and Arif have their own relation to migration, which has shaken the fundamentals of Albanian society in the last decades: Anastas has "lost" (*humbur*) his only son to migration, he did not see him for two years as he departed to Greece without documents. Arif at the contrary has himself crossed the border to Greece at the beginning of the 1990s.

Beside the sharing of work with their flocks, and the reciprocal visits for religious and non-religious feasts Anastas and Arif share another ground where their friendship is

communicated: the realm of songs. When Arif and Anastas sing together their friendship becomes manifest in sound. Primary goal is not a perfect performance but a “coming together in qejfi”, in delirious joy. The technique of singing *dyshe*, a sort of imitation technique, enables them to integrate more easily in an unknown song without knowing its text in advance. The right words can be read from the lips of the counter-part. In song as in everyday working life the Muslim Arif and the Orthodox Anastas are an excellent example of how friendship bonds, economic interests and the notion of cultural intimacy are locally prevailing over a pronounced religious and political identity construction.

Conclusion

As shown in the article the perception of the film “Polyphonia-Albania’s forgotten voices” is guided by different expectation horizons and points on different representational issues, and readings in terms of regional or national identifications. The echo on the film was primarily influenced by what has happened before and after the shooting of the film. The extensive ethnomusicological fieldwork done in the region of Shpati since 2008 had established already a “cultural intimacy” between filmmaker and locals before the actual shooting process. The concert tour organized after the filming was seen by the locals as a successful promotion of their local cultural values. Similarly the death of two protagonists of the film in 2012 – particularly that of Kalie - added a particular emotional dimension to the visual imagery and changed the meaning of the presence of some individuals in the film.

A key to understand the reactions towards the film is a different understanding of what “realism” means. For many Shpatarak the film was disturbing as it was not corresponding to their idea of realism largely influenced by the idea of a staged communist folklore.

Another discussed issue was that of authority by foreign filmmakers to address sensitive issues within the Shpatarak community such as social inequality, poverty and disability.

Also the personal stance towards ideas of tradition and modernity and their representation in the film (often a generational issue) proved to be important for individual evaluations.

Film as medium – at least during the screening in Gjinar – was interestingly seen as a mirror of social realities/hierarchies, or better as a second reality. The emotional reactions in front of the virtual protagonists on the screen were the same as if they would have been physically present.

About the long term and transforming effects of this film in the Shpati region can only be speculated – if there will be any.

The verdict of the shepherdess in the opening sequence of the film which we met again occasionally on her meadow was clear: instead of greeting us she recognized us as the filmmakers: “Don’t bring me again in television, it’s enough.”

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Ciriaca Coretti

SimbdeaLab

Mario Carbone. Un fotografo con la macchina da presa

Abstract

A short biography of Mario Carbone and some notes about his “ethnographic” films.

Ciriaca Coretti

Ciriaca Coretti laureata in Operatore dei Beni Culturali - indirizzo demoetnoantropologico presso l'Università degli Studi della Basilicata con una tesi di laurea in Antropologia visuale dal titolo “Il documentario sociale di Mario Carbone”, ha conseguito nel 2012 la Laurea Specialistica in Nuove Tecnologie per la Storia e i Beni Culturali - indirizzo demoetnoantropologico con una tesi in Antropologia Museale e dei Patrimoni Culturali dal titolo “I Fondi Fotografici del Centro di Documentazione Rocco Scotellaro e la Basilicata del secondo dopoguerra di Tricarico, che ha ricevuto nel giugno 2013 la menzione d'onore nell'ambito del Premio “Schettini-Lacapra” assegnato dal Lion Club Host della città di Potenza alle migliori tesi di laurea riguardanti la regione Basilicata. Nel 2008 ha conseguito il diploma di Perfezionamento Universitario Post-Lauream in Economia e gestione dei beni museali presso la Facoltà di Economia dell'Università Degli Studi di Firenze. Dal 2009 è socio fondatore e Presidente di SimbdeaLab Società Cooperativa a r.l.

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Mario Carbone nasce a San Sosti, provincia di Cosenza nel 1924 e inizia giovanissimo la sua attività di fotografo presso uno studio fotografico del suo paese. Dopo Napoli e Milano, nel 1954 si trasferisce a Roma dove entra presto in contatto con artisti e giovani appassionati di fotografia, tra cui Mimmo Rotella, Aldo Turchiaro, Tano Festa, Schifano e Franco Angeli. Nei salotti romani, tramite Linuccia Saba, figlia del poeta Umberto, fa la conoscenza di Carlo Levi che accompagna come fotografo nel suo viaggio in Lucania del 1961. Carbone scatta in quell'occasione circa 400 fotografie utili a Levi per realizzare il famoso dipinto "Lucania'61" commissionatogli da Mario Soldati per rappresentare la Basilicata alla Mostra delle Regioni allestita a Torino per il centenario dell'Unità d'Italia. A Roma conosce anche colei che diventerà sua moglie, Elisa Magri e che collaborerà con lui per la maggior parte dei suoi lavori cinematografici.

Mario Carbone, si avvicina negli stessi anni al mondo del cinema, iniziando la sua carriera come aiuto operatore, per diventare in seguito regista dei suoi lavori. Il cinema a differenza della fotografia gli permette di vivere di questa sola attività. Lui stesso ricorda che:

[...] c'era solo un giornale in Italia, negli anni Sessanta, Il Mondo, che pubblicava ogni tanto, fotografie di stampo sociale, acquistandomi in media una fotografia al mese [...]¹.

Come direttore della fotografia, è alquanto richiesto dai registi suoi contemporanei, collabora con Giorgio Albertazzi, Luigi Di Gianni, Libero Bizzarri e Giuseppe Ferrara. Conosce Pier Paolo Pasolini, Bernardo Bertolucci e Francesco Maselli. Alcuni registi si ispireranno ai cortometraggi di Mario Carbone per la realizzazione dei loro film; succede per Elio Petri con *La classe operaia va in Paradiso*, ispirato al cortometraggio di Carbone del 1961 *La fabbrica parla*, e per i diversi film di Francesco Rosi ambientati a Napoli e ispirati al cortometraggio di Carbone del 1963 *La città sul vuoto*. Nonostante le collaborazioni nel mondo del cinema la passione di Mario Carbone è il documentario, passione evidente anche nel tipo di fotografia che Mario continua a praticare. Egli stesso rivela di sentire il genere documentario "più personale" rispetto al fil di finzione.

Come documentarista Mario Carbone ottiene un discreto successo ottenendo importanti premi quali due Nastri d'Argento con *Stemmati di Calabria* del 1963 e *Firenze, Novembre 1966*, un Leone di San Marco a Venezia, ancora con *Firenze, novembre 1966* e diversi premi in Francia.

Autore dei suoi film, si occupa in prima persona della regia, della fotografia e del montaggio, ma gli scarsi finanziamenti e i mezzi insufficienti dati dal governo, a disposizione

¹ Intervista realizzata da Ciriaca Coretti il 7 aprile 2006 a casa di Mario Carbone.

dei documentaristi non permettono – secondo Carbone – di produrre lavori tecnicamente ed economicamente più impegnati, trascurando il potenziale sviluppo del genere documentario.

Agli inizi della sua attività di documentarista, Mario Carbone collabora con l'Unitelefilm, casa produttrice legata al PCI. In seguito, fino ai primi anni Settanta, i film di Carbone verranno finanziati da la Documento e la Corona Cinematografica, oltre a case produttrici minori. Dagli anni Ottanta le grandi case produttrici che sopravvivevano grazie ai premi governativi non si occuperanno più della produzione di documentari inducendo i documentaristi, tra cui Mario Carbone, a produrre da sé i propri lavori.

Dagli anni Ottanta è la stessa Elisa Magri, moglie di Carbone ad occuparsi dell'organizzazione e stesura dei testi. È opportuno però ricordare il lungometraggio *Terremoto* del 1968, accompagnato dal testo di Carlo Levi, e *Firenze, Novembre 1966*, il cui testo fu scritto da Vasco Pratolini.

In ogni caso in questi anni Mario Carbone ha la possibilità di girare documentari di maggiore durata non essendo più legato dal vincolo dei dieci minuti utili a garantire il premio governativo.

I documentari prodotti da Mario Carbone, circa un centinaio nell'arco di trent'anni, sono da lui stesso sommariamente raggruppati sotto l'unico termine di "documentario sociale". Riferendosi al documentario etnografico, Carbone definisce tali solo alcuni dei suoi lavori e lo fa rifacendosi alla scelta del soggetto.

Premesso che nessun film può essere considerato etnografico solo per il suo soggetto, gran parte dei lavori cinematografici di Mario Carbone sono frutto di una ricerca personale che il regista conduce attraverso la macchina da presa sui temi legati alla realtà sociale del paese servendosi di una ricerca espressiva, di un linguaggio filmico e di attente tecniche di documentazione che ci permettono di affermare che la produzione documentaristica di Carbone rientra a pieno titolo nella lunga lista di documentari etnografici realizzati in Italia tra gli anni Cinquanta e i primi anni Novanta, affiancandolo a registi quali Luigi Di Gianni, Michele Gandin, Vittorio De Seta, Gianfranco Mingozzi, Gabriele Palmieri e Cecilia Mangini.

Ci limiteremo, in questa sede, alla definizione di documentario etnografico che lo stesso regista ci da, individuando in cinque documentari prodotti tra il 1978 e il 1986 la produzione etnografica di Mario Carbone, composta essenzialmente da cinque documentari:

- il *Maggio di Accettura*. 1978, regia: Mario Carbone, organizzazione: Elisa Magri, consulenza e testo: Enzo Spera, voce: Riccardo Cucciola, durata: 32'. Il film illustra il rito arboreo che si tiene solitamente la prima domenica di giugno in onore dei festeggiamenti di San Giuliano nelle località di Gallipoli Cognato e Accettura.

Vengono descritti il taglio e il trasporto della cima ma il regista si sofferma anche sulle abitudini e sull'aspetto devozionale dei partecipanti. La descrizione della festa meglio conosciuta come "Il Maggio", riprende gli studi effettuati da Giovanni Bronzini;

- la *Madonna della Bruna*. 1978, regia: Mario Carbone, organizzazione: Elisa Magri, consulenza e testo: Enzo Spera, durata: 29'. Il film girato nella città di Matera, Basilicata, in occasione della festa patronale che si svolge il 2 luglio di ogni anno, descrive la processione mattutina dei pastori e il trasporto processionale del carro trionfale, soffermandosi su alcuni momenti come la vestizione del generale dei cavalieri, a cui è affidato il compito di scortare la statua della Madonna durante la processione e la distruzione del carro trionfale, momento conclusivo della festa;

- la *Madonna del Pollino*. 1978, regia: Mario Carbone, riprese: Antonio Arena, Domenico Curreri, Giancarlo Geri, montaggio: Giancarlo Carotenuto, consulenza e testo: Enzo Spera, durata: 29'. Il film ripercorre la festa della Madonna del Pollino, che vive il suo momento più importante nella processione per raggiungere il Santuario situato sulla fascia calabro-lucana del monte pollino e che si tiene solitamente nei giorni del venerdì e del sabato precedenti la prima domenica di Luglio;

- Una Festa Un Mistero*. 1984, regia: Mario Carbone, testo: Luca Iuliani, voce: Claudio Capone, durata: 16'. Il film realizzato nella località di Guardia Sanframondi, paese in provincia di Benevento, ripercorre il rito settennale dell'Assunta, di probabile origine medievale, che si tiene il lunedì successivo al 15 agosto per un'intera settimana e che richiama decine di fedeli anche dai territori circostanti. Il documentario illustra brevemente la storia del paese di Guardia Sanframondi, dove si svolge ogni sette anni, nella settimana della Penitenza, una rappresentazione sacra in onore dell'Assunta, durante la quale ognuno dei quattro rioni del paese interpreta scene di diverso soggetto sacro. Un posto di rilievo è riservato al coro, in cui si esprime la tradizione oratoria del paese. Il testo è affidato a Luca Iuliani, autore del libro *Guardia Sanframondi un Paese*, Edizioni Studio Dodici S.c.a.r.l., pubblicato nel 1989;

- Arbëresche*. 1986, regia: Mario Carbone, consulenza scientifica: Mario Bolognari, Mario Brunetti, testo: Mario Bolognari, voce: Anna Miserocchi, prodotto da: Cooperativa Regionale di Iniziativa Arbëresche, Spezzano Albanese, durata: 43'. Il film è realizzato in collaborazione con la Cooperativa Regionale di Iniziativa Arbëresche di Spezzano Albanese, promosso dalla Lega Italiana di Difesa della minoranza e patrocinato dalla Regione Calabria. In *Arbëresche* Mario Carbone illustra la storia e i costumi delle numerose comunità arbëresche presenti in Calabria, descrivendone le origini, gli usi e i costumi tradizionali; oltre all'elemento della festa e del rito, il regista approfondisce alcuni temi sociali, quali ad esempio: la lingua arbëresche, lo spopolamento delle comunità da parte delle generazioni più giovani e la costituzione di un circolo, ad opera dei più giovani, per la salvaguardia della cultura e

delle tradizioni. Le musiche, che fanno da sottofondo alle immagini insieme ai dialoghi originali in lingua arbëresche, sono eseguite dalla Cooperativa Musicale Arbëresche. In contemporanea ad *Arbëresche*, Mario Carbone realizza, nello stesso anno, il documentario Comunità albanesi fra storia e memoria, di durata 16 minuti.

I cinque documentari sono girati tutti a colori; nei primi tre casi la consulenza scientifica e la scrittura dei testi furono affidati a Enzo Spera, al tempo ricercatore dell'Istituto di Storia e Tradizioni Popolari dell'Università di Bari (oggi professore ordinario all'Università del Molise), come anche *Arbëresche*, in cui la consulenza scientifica e il testo sono di Mauro Bolognari, docente di Antropologia Culturale presso l'Università degli Studi di Messina.

Le immagini sono accompagnate in tutti i casi da un autorevole voce fuori campo sostituita a tratti dalla musica, dai suoni e dai dialoghi originali. In alcuni tratti viene utilizzata la ripresa delle fotografie. Nel caso di *Arbëresche*, Mario Carbone si serve dell'intervista, e sebbene la gran parte degli interventi siano demandati a personaggi autorevoli ed esperti del settore, il regista non disdegna di dare parola a tutti i protagonisti degli eventi filmati. Negli altri casi Carbone sopperisce alla tecnica dell'intervista con la presa diretta del suono, a causa delle difficoltà tecniche dovute, come lui stesso racconta, ai mezzi a disposizione.

I tempi di registrazione erano certamente molto brevi e variavano dai due ai quattro giorni; il primo giorno era solitamente dedicato al sopralluogo, quelli restanti alle riprese. I primi tre lavori sono stati realizzati dal regista a distanza quasi di poche settimane, perché come lui stesso afferma:

(...) era necessario ottimizzare i tempi e economizzare le spese, per cui capitava spesso, che trovandosi in un luogo si scopriva un soggetto interessante su cui poter girare un altro cortometraggio.

In omaggio a Mario Carbone ed ai suoi numerosi lavori, è di prossima uscita il lavoro cinematografico di Giuseppe D'Addino. Il film, realizzato con la consulenza scientifica di Silvia Lelli, antropologa, raccoglie le interviste realizzate dallo stesso D'Addino a Mario Carbone nel corso di un intero anno, oltre a numerose altre testimonianze ed a gran parte dei suoi documentari.

Di seguito la scheda tecnica del documentario:

Autore: Giuseppe D'Addino

Titolo: *Mario Carbone, il fotografo con la macchina da presa*

Anno: 2012

Formato: 16:9, Full HD, AVCHD, 1920*1080 25P

Genere: documentario

Durata: *Una versione quasi integrale* che raccoglie quasi tutto il girato e le interviste di Mario Carbone in omaggio alla sua opera e che potrà essere consultato negli archivi documentaristici e Mediateche. Una versione montata fruibile dal pubblico: 50' – 60' (circa).

Counsulenza: Silvia Lelli, antropologa

Sinossi: Nel contesto della storia politica, sociale, culturale e artistica italiana dalla fine degli anni Cinquanta in poi, il documentario si sviluppa attraverso il punto di vista di Mario Carbone, fotografo e documentarista che ne è stato testimone e ha fatto dell'osservazione diretta la sua professione.

Dal viaggio con Carlo Levi in Lucania nel 1960 alle prime immagini dell'alluvione di Firenze del 1966, dal terremoto del Belice del 1968 alla manifestazione studentesca di Valle Giulia, Mario Carbone opera con la macchina da presa e con quella fotografica in quello che egli stesso definisce “un modo intuitivo, spontaneo e non meditato”. Ha vissuto da protagonista gli anni del secondo dopo guerra, della rivoluzione industriale, del benessere e della povertà contemporanei, documentandoli in innumerevoli opere, in una storia che parla per immagini. Riportare oggi le testimonianze e i dettagli da lui raccolti, con “la nota ma non sufficientemente celebrata attività di documentarista”, costituisce parte del nostro patrimonio storico e culturale, così vicino e così dimenticato.

Metodologia: La metodologia utilizzata non prevede troupe, un solo operatore/regista, un consulente, nessuna manipolazione dei contesti e delle riprese: una telecamera non invasiva che interagisce, ammessa entro confini sottili tra il pubblico e il privato.

Inizio dei lavori: 1 gen 2012 - **Fine dei lavori:** 31 dic 2012

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Studi della Basilicata, anno accademico 2005-2006, relatore Francesco Marano.

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Nicola Scaldaferri

Università di Milano, Italy

Conversation with Hugo Zemp

Hugo Zemp

Biographical Note (from www.der.org)

As an adolescent Hugo Zemp wanted to become a jazz musician, and at the age of 20 entered in a three-year program of percussion at the Conservatory of Basle, his hometown in Switzerland. In 1958, at the age of 21, he travelled to Côte d'Ivoire to experience African percussion. There he met André Schaeffner, the father of French ethnomusicology from the Musée de l'Homme in Paris, and his wife Denise Paulme, professor of anthropology. Seeing Zemp's enthusiasm for African music, they invited him to come to Paris to study. He finished his musical studies and began studying anthropology, linguistic and ethnomusicology in Paris.

Conducting his fieldwork between 1961 and 1967 in the Côte d'Ivoire, mostly among the Dan people, Zemp wrote a doctoral thesis that garnered interest among French- and English-speaking ethnomusicologists studying West African music. He also made shorter stays among other peoples to document and record their music, among these the Senufo, whose balafon music impressed him so much that he returned to Côte d'Ivoire forty years after his first encounter to make the four-film series *Masters of the Balafon*. In 1967 he became researcher at the CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique) at the Ethnomusicology Department of the Musée de l'Homme, in Paris, where he worked until his retirement in 2004.

An important event for Zemp's professional life was an encounter with Daniel de Coppet, whose sound recordings from the 'Are'are people of the Solomon Islands almost let him forget African music for a time! Hugo Zemp started a new fieldwork period in 1969 with a 16mm camera, making all of the mistakes of a beginning filmmaker. Zemp began to find his way into ethnographic filmmaking with the help of friend and ethnographic filmmaker, Jean-Dominique Lajoux, as well as all of the books he could find on documentary filmmaking and the films of Jean Rouch.

An esthetic shock was watching Rouch's film *Tourou et Bitti*, a nine-minute sequence shot on a possession ritual in Niger. This film and the writings of Jean Rouch persuaded him that long takes with a moving camera, and without zooming, could be the ideal strategy for filming music in the field. On his second field trip to the Solomon Islands in 1974, Zemp made the film *'Are'are Music* to show the native classification of music, explained by a master musician. With its richness of musical types and the beauty of the polyphonic instrumental and vocal music in the film, it was and still is an important event for ethnomusicologists. Zemp, though, remained unsatisfied with

the artificial shooting techniques (he urged the musician to be short because of limited film stock), and because many musical types had to be shot out of context.

Zemp went on to make a series of four films about the traditional local yodelling of a mountain valley in his home country Switzerland, learning from watching David McDougall's films to use subtitled conversations to transmit verbal information. Next was a film about overtone or bi-phonic singing, *The Song of Harmonics*, which showed for the first time sound synchronized shots of x-ray and of spectral analyses. At the invitation of Georgian anthropologists met at a film festival in Estonia, he shot his two first videos in the Georgian Caucasus in 1991 and then returning to his first love, African music, he made his series on Senufo balafons, and two films on urban music of Côte d'Ivoire.

Besides his many publications, 18 recorded discs and position as the general editor of the record series "Collection CNRS/Musée de l'Homme", Zemp has written several articles on filming music and taught analysis and production of ethnomusicological films at the University of Paris X-Nanterre. He has presented his work at many ethnomusicology conferences and universities in Europe and America, and many of his films have received awards at international festivals.

Filmography (all films originally in French)

'Are'are Music (1979)

Shaping Bamboo (1979)

A Swiss Yodelling Series: Jüüzli of the Muotatal: The Wedding of Susanna and Josef (1986)

Glattalp (1986)

Yootzing and Yodelling (1987)

Head Voice, Chest Voice (1987)

The Song of Harmonics (1990)

The Music of Georgia (Caucasus) series:

The Feast-Day of Tamar and Lashari (1998)

Funeral Chants from the Georgian Caucasus (2007)

Duduki of Tbilisi: Eldar Shoshitashvili and His Students (2012)

The Masters of the Balafon series:

Funeral Festivities (2001)

The Joy of Youth (2002)

Friend, Well Come! (2002)

The Wood and the Calabash (2002)

An African Brass Band (2004-06)

Siaka, an African Musician (2005)

Polyphony of Ceriana: The Compagnia Sacco (2010)

Related Resources

Read Hugo Zemp's article, "Filming Music and Looking at Music Films", originally published in *Ethnomusicology*, Fall 1988.

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Southeastern Europe (with E. Pistrick and G. Schwörer 2011), *I Suoni dell'Albero* (with S. Feld, 2012), and the video documentary *Two Portraits from Ghana* (2013).

Nice, June 20th, 2012

The conversation, in French, started after seeing the film *The Feast-Day of Tamar and Lasbari*.

HZ

...this was the first time I was using a video camera. I had it just a week before leaving for Georgia. It was really new to me. I was used to a 16 mm camera with a separate tape recorder for the sound.

As I was using it for the first time, half of the materials had the time code recorded on the bottom of the frame. I had not understood yet that it could be switched off. Therefore I had to cut the images at the bottom and resize them, for this reason the video you have seen is in 16:9.

NS

It reminds me of the experience of Jean Rouch using a camera for the first time, when he was in a boat shooting alternately the two sides of the river, and being not aware of the same final result...

HZ

I have an anecdote about Rouch. When my first film of the balafon series was displayed at the *Maison des Cultures du Monde*, during the discussion, Rouch approached me about the scene and publicly told me: "I can tell you a secret: when you are looking through the viewer of the camera (held on the right shoulder), you are not able to see what is happening at your right; so you should have someone at your back who touches your shoulder to point other interesting things that may happen and you will turn to it." Having always used 16 mm cameras held on the shoulder, he was not aware that small hand video cameras have small screens and when the camera is held with both hands on the level of the belly, one can shoot, look at the screen and at the same time turn one's head and watch what happens out of the frame, left or right.

NS

Jean Rouch plays a landmark role experience in your activity.

HZ

Yes, you know that his film *Tourou et Bitti* was crucial for me. When I watched this long sequence shot of 9 minutes for the first time, and many times afterwards, I thought that sequence shots, or in general very long shots with a moving camera, would be a marvelous way to film long musical pieces without interruption. But in contrast to Rouch, I did not want to cover music with voice-over narration, so I found that short written texts in slightly transparent boxes allowed me to keep the full sound of music and the image. After that, I did this on all my films shot in video.

NS

I agree, the presence of written indications does not disturb the music. Some positions in your work are constantly maintained in a coherent way. At the same time, however, you changed between many fields of research – from Solomon Islands to Georgia, from West Africa to Switzerland.

I have a question for you on this topic – the same I asked some time ago to Michael Herzfeld, about his moving from the Mediterranean area to Thailand. What is the reason for your choices, so different in time and space? Are there some connections among them?

HZ

The main reasons are the encounters I had with other people.

I was a student at the Conservatory in Switzerland, and I wanted to become a professional jazz musician, so I went to Africa to listen to the African drums.

Some friends of mine went to Congo (at that time a Belgian territory) to play dance music for the white people there. I wanted to return there with them, but they changed their plans. I asked other friends but nobody wanted to come to Congo to play dance music for the whites... Eventually I decided to go to the Ivory Coast because the travel was not as long and it was cheaper. When I was there visiting a museum and explaining my interest to the director, he suggested going to a village where an ethnomusicologist was working. He was André Schaeffner, the “father” of French ethnomusicology. I traveled around for two months, and got in touch with the Dan and the Senufo people. I met Schaeffner again on the boat trip back to Europe; he suggested a list of books to me, and invited me to come to Paris the following summer to make some practical work in the ethnomusicology department of the Musée de l’Homme.

After six years of studies in Paris, at the final stage of my PhD thesis, I wanted to become a researcher at the CNRS (National Centre for Scientific Research) and I was required to do a presentation in Claude Lévi-Strauss’ seminar. After my presentation about Dan music, Daniel de Coppet, an anthropologist member of the seminar, invited me at home to listen to some recordings he made in the Pacific. I was so enthusiastic about this beautiful and completely unknown music (to the West), that he proposed I join him on a one-year field trip to the Solomon Islands.

During the editing of *‘Are’are Music* at the CNRS, I met the ethnologist Dominique Lajoux, who had taught me how to use a 16mm camera. He was going to East Switzerland to photograph maskers at a New Year festival, who performed strange shouts. I immediately thought of yodelling and took a tape recorder and went with him to this festival. I searched

through record shops for Swiss yodelling recorded in the field during festivals and peasant work and I did not find one single record. There were only official yodel choirs, recorded in the studio under the direction of a conductor. This led me to make the first two published field records on Appenzell and Muotatal yodelling. The latter was so strange, with intervals out of the tempered major scale and very high-pitched tense voices that I decided after the record to make four films about it.

NS

So, in this chain of encounters, you arrived at the yodel of your homeland whilst passing through the editing of the Solomon Islands music....

HZ

I thought: I am making research on the music of the Solomon Islands, and I ignore what happens at home.

After the *Swiss Yodelling Series*, I was at the Musée de l'Homme working with sonograms, which allowed me to visualize the sound spectrum with sync sound. Tran Quang Hai was there, practicing overtone singing from Mongolia and I had the idea of using the new medium for a film on this topic. When I presented the film *The Song of Harmonics* at a documentary festival in Estonia, I met colleagues from Georgia and they invited me to come to Georgia to film whatever I wanted.

So, all the changes in my life as an ethnomusicologist have been marked by meetings with someone.

However, I can tell you that I want to enjoy the music; if I choose to do new fieldwork in a different part of the world; there is also a personal element of pleasure, meetings are not enough.

NS

The answer of Herzfeld to my question about the choice was a little different. For him the quality of the food is an important element in choosing a place for research.

HZ

I have always thought that good food is connected with good music. However, this is not true for the Solomon Islands: no salt, no spices and sauces, no fish, only a little meat.

NS

In the *'Are'are Music* film we can see some appetizing images of pork...

HZ

Yes. But it happens 3-4 times per year for funeral celebrations. It was not a daily situation. Luckily, there was the beautiful music... otherwise, I may not have stayed there, since the living conditions were difficult: long walks in the mud (it was raining nearly every day) and dangerous open-sea travels on canoes.

NS

Do you think that your approach in observing the musical practices changed during your passage through all these different contexts? What is your feeling about your own perspective through all these encounters? My personal opinion is that we can recognize in your work a coherent perspective maintained throughout the time, despite the change of technology, from *'Are'are Music* to the most recent works. But I would like to know what you think about it.

HZ

In my personal perspective, the experience of *'Are'are Music* is apart from the others. It was my first film experience. Today I am unhappy about the result of that film. But at that time there was no other solution to working there. During my second stay there, the CNRS sent me a 16mm camera for 3-4 months, and during that period there were no festivities to see the music in context, so I worked mainly on ethno-theory and classification. There was certainly an impressive richness and variety of musical situations. Some of the traditional musical genres were no longer in common use, so the elders told me whom to contact and arranged recording and filming sessions. I thought of connecting them with some 'constructed' interviews. I had a limited quantity of film stock to use, and during the interviews I had to ask my main informant and friend to give short answers, which sounded a bit artificial.

After that, I worked on the *Swiss Yodelling Series*. Here we have only one musical genre, explored in different films with different approaches. In this case I had been influenced by the documentary film school of Beaconsfield, near London, which I visited during a workshop together with English ethnomusicologist John Baily. Another important influence was that of David McDougall, especially in using conversations instead of interviews.

From the perspective of that approach, I am more satisfied. However, technically the *Swiss Yodelling Series* were not shot as well as the *'Are'are Music*. For the new American distribution by *Documentary Educational Resources*, I restored the films with Final Cut, improving many things, shortening some shots without shortening the music, making new subtitles and color corrections.

NS

You mentioned the topic of conversation. An interesting aspect is to consider the films as a kind of collaborative work, or at least something to share with the musicians. Was this always important for you, since the beginning?

HZ

Yes, and it came to me from Rouch's ideas. Despite technical obstacles, I had already shown in 1977 a first version of *'Are'are Music* to the local people on an 8mm copy, using a generator for electricity. It was one of the most extraordinary experiences of my life: to see the reaction of the people, especially in seeing each other four years after the film, or recognizing people who had died in the meantime.

The local screening of *'Are'are Music* was also a crucial point. The regional council of Malaita island was consulted to obtain research permission from the national government, and for a reason that I ignored, the permission was refused. The *'Are'are* council of chiefs, after watching this first cut of the film, wrote to the general government that they wanted me to

continue research, and I got the research permission. I then filmed the whole part about vocal music, for which I had not had enough film stock during the preceding fieldwork.

NS

In the *Masters of the Balafon* series the idea of sharing experience and collaborating with local people and musicians is also very evident, even in the structure of the movies. But what about the local feedback?

HZ

You did not ask me why I went back to the Ivory Coast after thirty years of interruption! During all that time, I was thinking from time to time about my first encounter with the balafon music of the Senufo people. In 1998 I got an invitation to a conference on African music in Abidjan, organized by a former student of our ethnomusicology group in Paris. I thought this was the occasion to go back and took two video cameras with me. Here again I was lucky to meet a Senufo balafon player in Abidjan, Sikaman Soro, who became my research assistant and introduced me to the best musicians in the area where he came from.

To turn back to your question of local feedback: everyday, I copied the shots and watched them with my assistant and some of the people who were in the film, to get some accompanying information, and to program new shootings. I sent back the first VHS cassettes and some people have seen them. But the real event was two years ago, when all four of my films were projected in several villages during a regional music festival. People stayed whole nights and wanted to watch the films again and again! A funny thing is that many people took some sound from the films with their mobile phones. One man said that the films were like the painting of Mona Lisa: every time he looks at the films, he discovers something new! In one village, an old man was sitting in the first row for the screening, telling that he must be the first to see that film. He was the man who publicly announced the gifts for the funeral, announcing my name as a guest who had come from afar to film the funeral. Since that day, the people jokingly call him Hugo Zemp... so he had the right to see the film first!

My field assistant told me these stories. We still have monthly contacts by telephone and email since the first shooting in 1998, and he asks me for financial help for funerals of important musicians whom I filmed, for hospital costs, school fees for children, roof reparations, just like most anthropologists who give something back in exchange for what the people have given them for the research.

NS

In my opinion, one striking aspect of some of your films, is the analytical component, particularly, *Head Voice, Chest Voice*. I guess at that time the realization was really long and complex. Actually some graphic solutions work very well in explaining the polyphonic structure, as well as the melodic contours. How did this idea of doing the graphic animations come to you? Did it happen whilst you were working and shooting in the field? Or perhaps you arrived there with this analytical purpose?

HZ

No; after many weeks spent during three years in the Muotatal village and publishing the record, and making two thousand still photos as well, I just went back with the idea of making a film. Because the material was so rich, it became three films. During a screening in a local school, some teachers asked me how to explain the students the technique and structure of yodelling. I thought about the best way to visualize some musical elements and remembered graphics on millimeter paper which can be read by people not familiar with musical notation. My idea was to animate the graphics with sync sound in *Head Voice, Chest Voice*. I was also thinking of writing a small book for school purposes, but at that time no budget was found to print it.

Only today, while I am preparing the study guide for the four films of a 2-DVD set distributed by DER, I asked my assistant and sound man of the films, Peter Betschart, who still lives in his village, what the outcomes were of the films. He told me that the films have never been used in the schools... I had sent VHS cassettes to schools and made a German version especially for local people, besides the French and English versions. Performers and their families still have some copies, but nobody uses VHS cassette players any longer. Now that the English version is distributed on restored DVDs and that a local newspaper published an important article, many local people have ordered the DVDs, besides those for whom I sent free copies.

I was thinking about a continuation of the series. You can see in the film boy of a few years old, who today is a professional musician and travels around the world; however, he continues to yodel in the traditional way, learned from the elders, and not in the official folkloristic version. Today there is a new generation of performers, using drums and other instruments, and at the same time they are recovering the old style of yodelling.

NS

This is an interesting point; in many other contexts I know, the young performers are recovering the old musical styles, sometimes skipping their parents' generation – connected with folkloristic practice – and searching for a link with the musical style of their grandparents.

But I would like to come back to the topic of analysis. In *Head Voice, Chest Voice* you have a kind of double analytical perspective: the film itself is an analysis of the yodel in relationship to the context; and at the same time, there is an analysis of the structural element of the performance.

Usually when you make a film, do you think about it as an analytical process in itself?

HZ

It depends. Among my films, *The Songs of Harmonics* surely goes in that direction.

In that case I started with the idea of using spectral analysis of sound and of filming with x-ray what happens inside the mouth cavity. Whereas x-ray still photographs were already known, I could film for the first time the movements of the tongue in sync sound. A workshop held by Tran Quang Hai, who teaches the participants – allowed at the same time the audience of the film to get the information without voice over narration. In our

Ethnomusicology department of the Musée de l'Homme, we received a new sound spectrum analyzer that allowed the filming of the sound spectrum for the first time in sync sound. When I showed a first cut in our seminar, I was really enthusiastic. Nobody had ever seen such images in real time. But a colleague told me that it was too didactic – this was not really a compliment, he meant “boring”, and I was disappointed. I thought about how I could transmit to the audience the discovery of these never-before seen images, which were so exciting for me. I decided to try to make the audience experience the process of discovery, as I lived it during filming. The reaction of the audience was very positive. Also in the reviews it was underlined that actually the film is not just a result of research, but is the research in itself.

To come to more recent works, I can tell you that some of the ideas of the *Swiss Yodelling Series*, especially the relationship between folklore and the local tradition, are also present in *Polyphony of Ceriana: The Compagnia Sacco*. It is extraordinary in Ceriana to see the members of the Compagnia Sacco singing both amongst the local people and on stage.

I tried to show the two different aspects with two different ways of shooting. During the concert, I used two cameras, both on tripods, one with a fixed general shot to show the whole scene, the other with a tele-lens position and panning, just like a spectator “pans” with his eyes, looking from left to right, focusing on different performers. The singers asked me afterwards why I did not climb up on stage to film them more closely, like a TV cameraman who was there. I explained that to film them during the concert, I wanted to be in the middle of the audience, like the spectators who were sitting in a fixed place.

But when the singers performed in informal situations, I changed my position with traveling shots, moving from one performer to another with a mobile hand-held camera. I was among the performers who also changed places, but instead of singing, I was filming.

NS

In *Polyphony of Ceriana: The Compagnia Sacco*, the sequence with the performance of the famous ballad *Donna Lombarda*, at the very beginning of the movie, is very striking to me. Here, you selected and edited together different performances of a song...

HZ

Yes, I alternated stanzas coming from different performances; on stage, during informal gatherings, and even on the terrace of my house after eating and drinking together when the performers had come to watch a first cut of the film.

NS

One of your most relevant assertions is to never stop the continuity of a musical performance, and to keep its integrity. In this case your choice was different – or, at least, you proposed a different idea of the unity of a musical piece. To create an ideal unity of the ballad - on the bases of the lyrics - you assembled portions of many musical performances...

HZ

A complete performance of all the stanzas of *Donna Lombarda* lasts 10 minutes. I was wondering how I could deal with this. People watching concerts on TV are used to many

alternating shots from different positions; general shots, close-ups, etc. Concerts of classical music, as well as of rock music, are filmed with many cameras, up to a dozen! How do you keep the interest of an audience with a film shot with a single camera?

I was aware that this ballad was really crucial in the repertory of the Compagnia Sacco. Even at concerts the performers select only some stanzas. It would be difficult for an audience of non-Italian speakers to listen to 10 stanzas during 10 minutes without being able to understand the lyrics (and at a concert there are no subtitles like in my film!).

But I liked the idea of having an “entire” *Donna Lombarda*. Firstly, I had some stanzas filmed in different settings. Before the annual concert in their village, I asked them to sing it in its entirety, but it was not possible because of the presence of other groups that required their time; so I told the Compagnia to sing the stanzas which were missing during my earlier shootings, and they sung them. Eventually I had all the stanzas. It was also necessary, during the editing, to make some adjustments to the pitches, with digital editing, with the help of Giuliano D’Angiolini, whose role was crucial in this project. (He is another of my encounters...)

NS

In some way, in order to respect the idea of unity of this song, you made a kind of ‘falsification’ of the performances...

HZ

It is a “falsification” that eventually gives us the idea of the reality and its diversification, because if you listen to it during a concert, you will never hear a complete *Donna Lombarda*. All the songs, even the shorter ones, were shortened by the singers, not for the camera. Giuliano d’Angiolini, who has known the Compagnia Sacco for many years, told me that this was a recent phenomenon, probably related to our time in which everything is going in a hurry! I suspect that the performers at informal meetings enjoy singing many songs together that they like, without feeling necessary to sing all the stanzas.

NS

The relationship between shooting and editing is always a sensitive point in making a film. My feeling, looking at your documentaries, is that from your perspective the moment of shooting is perhaps the most important, thanks also to the use of techniques like sequence shots, or the presence of a special microphone.

HZ

Unlike *‘Are’are Music*, where a stereo microphone was always put on a stand for ambient sound (but the 16 mm film of the time did not allow stereo sound!), in the *Swiss Yodelling Series* my co-researcher and soundman followed me with a stereo microphone, therefore the sound changes at the same time as the framing of the camera. For the films shot with a video camera, I used a microphone fixed on top with very good isolation, to avoid noises made by touching the camera. This microphone, which is not commercially produced, is a modified

electret microphone, where the stereo heads are replaced by one shotgun head and one cardioid head. There are other devices available, every filmmaker has his favorite one.

NS

But do you think the editing process is in any way crucial in the construction of the film? And not only from a technological perspective, but also from the narrative perspective?

HZ

Yes. Since the beginning, I worked at the CNRS with a professional editor. He was always my advisor, and also edited the documentaries from the Ivory Coast. We worked a lot at my house during the night, because during the day he had his own job. Of course, over time I started to learn to edit by myself. *An African Brass Band* and *Siaka, an African Musician*, and also *Polyphony of Ceriana* and my newest film *Duduki of Tbilisi*, I edited by myself. But a very important aspect is that his perspective is different, and sometimes he completely changed the structure of the editing.

NS

Do you pay attention to his suggestions, even when they seem to contrast with your ideas?

HZ

Yes, and I show him all the modifications I make.

NS

So do you agree with the idea of an external eye proposed by Rouch?

HZ

Yes, absolutely. Thanks to my adviser I decided to start the film with *Donna Lombarda*. In a first version of editing I was beginning in a more usual way, by showing the village, the geographical environment, and planning to put *Donna Lombarda* in the middle. But he convinced me of a different solution, which I am happy with.

NS

A last question brings us back to Africa. Not to your films, but to a crucial and controversial point of African musicology. You did landmark research on the musical practice of West Africa, also in the presence and the use of the balafon. In your opinion, following your experience on this topic, do you think that this instrument ultimately “speaks” or “sings”?

HZ

The instruments speak, absolutely. During fieldwork, with my assistant, we verified this point a lot of times. But of course, music is not limited to three pitches of *senar*, the language of the Senufo people. What is important is the relation of the pitches, the melodic structure going up or down or staying on the same level. There are variations and improvisations. With the help of my local assistant, I have written an article about that, in which I also quote the results of other researchers, foreigners and locals (Zemp 2010).

But, in conclusion, I would like to recall a point of a documentary on which you collaborated with the filmmaker Rossella Schillaci, whose work I believe is the opposite of what I want to do.

There is a moment in *Pratica e Maestria*, when the two old *zampogna* musicians are watching the images of a report about themselves on the TV: do you remember what they say, when complaining about the journalists?

NS

Yes: “They could have waited until the end of our tune...”

HZ

Voilà. And the filmmaker in that documentary - just like many other filmmakers - did the same: never waited until the end of a musical piece...

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